



# D1.3: Assessment of Rural and Farming Policy and Legal Frameworks in relation to Women-led Innovation

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Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained in this report is correct. All errors are the authors own.

<sup>1</sup> PU= Public, SEN= Sensitive.



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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>CAP</b>	Common Agricultural Policy
<b>CSP</b>	CAP Strategic Plan
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>LAG</b>	Local Action Group
<b>LTVRA</b>	Long Term Vision for Rural Areas
<b>PMEF</b>	Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
<b>SO8</b>	Specific Objective 8
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>SWOT</b>	Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat
<b>Project Partners</b>	
Galway	<b>NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND GALWAY</b>
TU Delft	<b>TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITEIT DELFT</b>
TEAGASC	<b>TEAGASC - AGRICULTURE AND FOOD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY</b>
UNICAL	<b>UNIVERSITA DELLA CALABRIA</b>
LWL	<b>LONGFORD WOMEN S LINK CLG</b>
UTU	<b>TURUN YLIOPISTO</b>
UL	<b>UNIVERZA V LJUBLJANI</b>
CE	<b>CONSULTA EUROPA PROJECTS AND INNOVATION SL</b>
HNEE	<b>HOCHSCHULE FUR NACHHALTIGE ENTWICKLUNG EBERSWALDE</b>
ELARD	<b>ASSOCIATION EUROPEENNE LEADER POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT RURAL</b>
UOULU	<b>OULUN YLIOPISTO</b>
ECOLISE	<b>RESEAU EUROPEEN POUR DES INITIATIVES COMMUNAUTAIRES SUR LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES ET LE DEVELOPPEMENT DURABLE</b>
MENDELU	<b>MENDELOVA UNIVERZITA V BRNE</b>
LNU	<b>LINNEUNIVERSITETET</b>
HLK	<b>HOGSKOLAN FOR LARANDE OCH KOMMUNIKATION I JONKOPING - HLK SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION, JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITY</b>



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an assessment of policy and legal frameworks in relation to women-led innovation from across the EU. The focus is on the extent to which current frameworks directly and indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. The scope of this assessment is also shaped by the FLIARA Conceptual Framework as well as our analysis of relevant strategies, particularly the European Gender Equality Strategy. In the FLIARA project proposal, our initial interest was rural and farming policy and legal frameworks. However, as the project developed, one of our core concepts understands women-led innovation as an occurring part of an innovation ecosystem where there is an innovation journey that follows a pathway with a number of steps. This led us to a broader focus for this assessment which sees it guided by seven principles, derived largely from the European Gender Equality Strategy.

This assessment aims to uncover a comprehensive framework of policies and laws impacting the innovation ecosystem and pathway towards women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. The emphasis is on a scoping-type exercise that provides a descriptive yet detailed inventory-like review of existing policy and law in the areas examined. The assessment is carried out in ten countries (Finland, Romania, Germany, Ireland, Slovenia, Italy, Sweden, Czech Republic, The Netherlands and Spain) where focus is placed on European and national level policy and law. This is not an exhaustive assessment however it does provide an insight on key policy issues and sets up a foundational knowledge base for the remaining policy related tasks of the FLIARA project. For FLIARA's future work on policy, particular priority areas of need may need to be identified to ensure we can make a strong contribution. In this context, based on the areas assessed here, a number of high-level overall observations are drawn together below.

### **Farming, Rural Development and Innovation Policy**

- This assessment has identified a range of policies that include measures supporting rural and farm women in areas such as civic engagement, entrepreneurship and farm investment. However, our assessment would also indicate that a clear, strong and targeted focus on supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas through policy is too weak.
- Generalisations are difficult because of the complexity of policy analysis. However, it is still important to point out that a strong and direct focus on supporting women-led innovation in CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs) was not identified. Despite the focus on enhancing the position of women in farming and accelerating the social inclusion of rural women in CAP Specific Objective 8 (SO8) greater attention to these issues appears needed.



- The range of issues impacting rural and farm women identified in CSP SWOT analyses at national levels does not appear to be met with the same level of support in terms of specific measures in CSPs.
- Assessing how the CAP indirectly supports women-led innovation in farming and rural areas is challenging. In theory all interventions that support innovation in farming and rural areas could also support women-led innovation. Better understanding of the gap between this theory and practice is needed.
- More specifically in relation to LEADER, some national evidence suggests that LEADER has been a significant support to rural and farm women innovators, including that this role could be further enhanced. LEADER also has strong potential to support women-led innovation because of the LEADER method, as a bottom-up locally-led approach to rural development. Again, better understanding of the gap between more anecdotal evidence, policy impact and areas for improvement is needed.
- More broadly in relation to Rural Development Programmes under the CAP and wider national-level rural policies, while examples are identified, overall based on our assessment there is weakness in rural policy in terms of focused attention to women-led innovation and a lack of direct targeted supports. National agri-food policies described in national assessments display varied themes of promoting innovation, sustainability, competitiveness, productivity, digitalisation and application of new technologies in the agri-food sector. This potentially supports women-led innovation indirectly, but national assessments do not often highlight a strong direct focus on women-led innovation in farming as a clear and targeted aspect of such policies.
- National assessments identified some targeted policies and initiatives related to supporting women-led innovation, or more specifically in relation to women's entrepreneurship. However, when a specific, targeted policy existed it was not found that this policy had measures included specifically related to farming and rural areas. More broadly, the results of our assessment show that wider innovation policy in the countries assessed does not directly focus on supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. This of course does not mean such policies cannot support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas, however the lack of direct focus is an important observation.

### **Wider Policy Observations**

- The potential for women-led innovation in farming and rural areas is impacted by the wider challenges facing rural places such as rural service provision. The challenge of better supporting women-led innovation in rural areas and farming therefore links to a range of policy areas, from transport, childcare, education to innovation, social welfare and pensions.
- Access to education, building skills and innovation capacities is one area often discussed as a gap in the rural innovation ecosystem. Generally and overall, as part of national assessments, direct support for women in rural areas and farming to access further education and training was assessed to exist to some extent.





Supports and initiatives are found in a number of areas, but are generally not rural or farm focused. There is a potential need for more focused action on education for farming careers for women.

- A lack of cooperation and networking can be a gap in rural innovation ecosystems. While wider programmes and initiatives were identified, networking programmes focused directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas were not identified strongly in national assessments. Mentoring and peer to peer learning programmes that focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas were not identified strongly either. Some notable exceptions are identified.
- Increasing women's participation in decision making and providing greater opportunities for women to take part in influencing the decisions that impact them is important. Based on our national assessments there are a number of specific areas that emerge where specific wider action exists on this topic, including politics and the election of political representatives, participation in decision making bodies and initiatives focused on skills and capacity building to support women's participation in politics and governance roles.
- An innovation ecosystem supportive of women-led innovation must assess family policy issues, such as childcare, parental and maternity leave. This assessment provides details on national situations. Family policies provide important supports to parents and their design impacts gender equality in domestic and professional life. One notable finding was that childcare availability and cost in rural areas was identified as an issue in all countries, however to different extents and with varied issues associated with this.



## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report - D1.3: Assessment of Rural and Farming Policy and Legal Frameworks in relation to Women-led Innovation - emerges from FLIARA Task 1.4 that carries out an assessment of policy and legal frameworks to support policy benchmarking. This task involves an inventory of EU policy and legal frameworks on farming and rural development, as well as at the national level in ten countries (Finland, Romania, Germany, Ireland, Slovenia, Italy, Sweden, Czech Republic, The Netherlands and Spain). Due to the Federal State structure in Germany an adapted approach was taken with a focus on two Federal States in some contexts. This approach is further detailed in the German questionnaire in Annex 2.

The overall focus is on the extent to which current frameworks directly and indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. Two interlinked reports emerge from this task, this report and D1.5: Initial Guidelines for Policy Benchmarking. The D1.5 report will detail preliminary guidelines for policy benchmarking on gender equality performance. This task also provides an important baseline of information for Work Package 5 on Policy Design and Assessment as well as the policy related aspects of Work Package 4, the FLIARA Community of Practice Network.

This report outlines the main results of the policy and legal framework assessment derived from a questionnaire completed by FLIARA partners at national levels in ten countries (see Annex 1 for details of the assessment approach). The questionnaire included a series of closed questions and text responses. In this report we provide an overall view of the closed responses. They are best seen in the context of the full assessments and each country assessment questionnaire is included in Annex 2.

The EU level assessment is focused on European policy with relevance to farming and rural development. This is mainly a desk-based analysis (see Section 2). However, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) gains more detailed assessment because of its core position as a farming and rural development policy. This involved analysis at the Member State level in the partner countries by assessing CSPs and the direct and indirect supports for women-led innovation in farming and rural areas (Section 3). The wider national assessment aims to assess a range of policies and laws, beyond direct rural and farm relevance, that exist in the partner countries and are linked to the seven principles, innovation ecosystem and pathway for women-led innovation (Section 4).

The assessment overall is largely framed by insights derived from policy and law documents rather than assessment of impacts through focus on evaluations or policy outcomes. This assessment is not exhaustive and is more a scoping exercise to gain broad insight on the nature and contents of existing policies and laws.

### 1.1 GUIDANCE FOR THE ASSESSMENT APPROACH

Task 1.4 also involves analysis of the European Gender Equality Strategy, and other relevant strategies, to identify an initial guiding approach for policy benchmarking on its gender equality performance (further detail on this in D1.5). The analysis identified seven



initial principles that were also used to frame and guide the scope of this assessment (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Assessment principles**

Rural and farm economy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Closing gender gaps in the labour market</li> <li>2. Achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy</li> </ol>
Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Achieving gender balance in decision making and politics</li> <li>4. Ending gender based violence</li> <li>5. Challenging gender stereotypes</li> </ol>
Pay, pension, work-life and family	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Addressing the gender pay and pension gap</li> <li>7. Closing the gender care gap</li> </ol>

Work Package 1 provides a foundation of core knowledge and concepts to guide the FLIARA project. Throughout this report we also draw on the policy implications arising from the findings of the Women-led Innovation Research Review (D1.2) (McGuinness et al. forthcoming). The Conceptual Framework developed for the FLIARA project (Farrell et al. forthcoming) is also important to help provide insights to direct our assessment of policy and legal frameworks in relation to women-led innovation. Particularly the concepts of innovation ecosystem and innovation journey call for FLIARA to take a more integrated approach to this assessment.

- **As part of the innovation journey, women-led innovation involves a set of steps:** This creates a diverse set of policy needs in a range of areas. The journey starts with a motivation and then moves on to decision to act and preparatory activities. The innovation then becomes developed and starts to show impacts. After this it may step further to scaling up and more widespread adaptation of the innovation.
- **Women-led innovation is not an isolated phenomenon but occurs within an innovation ecosystem.** These steps can be enabled by the rural innovation ecosystem, and this includes: “resources, actors, governance, and support for female innovators that are located at different levels including individual, family, farm, community, rural region, state, and EU. Rural innovation ecosystems are embedded within gender relations, roles, stereotypes, and constructs that diverge across societies and cultures” (Farrell et al. forthcoming, p.9).

The Conceptual Framework also provides wider insight on policy needs and a number of issues emerge:

- **Affirmative governance and targeted policies:** Rural and farm women face a variety of disadvantages in terms of opportunities and it is argued affirmative governance is needed, until a level playing field and gender equality is achieved. This would call for policies and laws that specifically target women to improve the



opportunities available to them because of existing inequalities (see Concept Note 30, p.117-8, Farrell et al. forthcoming).

- **Recognise the distinctiveness of rural and farm female-led innovation:** Distinctiveness links to gender, but also disadvantages and opportunities related to the rural and farming context that impact opportunities available.
- **Support rural and farm women through a move away from uncertain and volatile support mechanisms:** For example, Farrell et al. (forthcoming) outlines “Examples relate to constant availability of childcare services, availability of farm relief at all times, and availability of access to other resources and expertise that help work in farms and agriculture. Therefore, multiple and overlapping support mechanisms for gender equality can ensure that support is available also in times of crises and difficulty” (p.13).
- **Increase women’s participation in decision making:** Greater opportunities for women to take part in influencing decisions that impact them.
- **Different rural women experience different enabling and constraining conditions:** Rural women are not a homogenous group and underlying power relations impacting different groups of women are important to take into account in more transformative policy.
- **Different sectors present different challenges and opportunities:** Depending on the sector women-led innovations occur in, such as more traditionally male sectors (e.g. farming, technology) or sectors more commonly occupied by women (e.g. caring professions) different opportunities and challenges can arise. A more targeted sectoral approach could also result in more transformative policy.
- **Structural barriers and root causes need attention:** Structural barriers are institutional, social and economic constraints, which have their origins in unfair power and resource distribution as well as discriminatory norms and practices. Structural barriers are linked to root causes of gender inequality.
- **The complexity around work-life conflict needs attention:** A range of policies come together to create a supportive system in terms of the gender norms and work-life issues that inhibit women-led innovation. Outside of policies, wider factors also interact: “Current policies, like parental leave or flexible working hours, may attempt to address the work-life conflict, but they fail to address underlying issues such as the wage gap, insufficient or affordable childcare and the glass ceiling. Even portraying work and life as dichotomies is a common phenomenon that can limit how the two influence each other, and vice versa” (Concept Note 13, Garces Ortiz in Farrell et al., forthcoming, p.84). Dealing with this conflict is a significant policy challenge for a more supportive innovation ecosystem for rural and farm women.



## 2. EUROPEAN LEVEL - OVERVIEW

Focusing on how women-led innovation is supported, in this section we present a desk-based analysis of European policy and the associated legal frameworks related to farming and rural development.

### 2.1 CONTEXT AND STRATEGIES

#### The Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas

The European Commission Long Term Vision for Rural Areas (LTVRA) includes four specific action area strands (see Féret et al., 2023 and Pagnon et al., 2023 for more detailed analysis). These include the ‘stronger’ and ‘resilient’ rural areas strands. One area of action under the resilient strand is ‘Social resilience and women in rural areas’. Under the stronger strand ‘creating a stronger innovation ecosystem for rural areas’ is an action area. Under each strand flagship initiatives support action. The Rural Pact and EU Rural Action plan are also central to achieving the goals of the vision (Féret et al., 2023; Pagnon et al., 2023).

CAP objectives have strong cross-over with the LTVRA action strands, however they have broader policy scope than just CAP (Féret et al., 2023). Part of the commitment in the LTVRA is to take stock of actions. In key achievements of the LTVRA reported by the EC (2024) how EU policies contribute to rural areas is outlined. The focus in this taking stock exercise is CAP and Cohesion Policy. In relation to women, it is noted that in several CSPs, relating to LEADER, women and young people’s participation is incentivised. This is linked with contributing to addressing generational renewal and gender equality issues. Generally, it is also noted that LEADER absolute budgets have not increased meaning: “LEADER is expected to do more with less” (EC, 2024, p.5). More broadly in relation to innovation, LEADER again is cited as part of unlocking “the potential of digital, social and technological innovation in rural areas” (EC, 2024, p.5). It is also further observed that in CSPs “areas such as rural business and innovation, connectivity or social inclusion would deserve greater attention” (EC, 2024, p.5).

Looking forward it is said that under the EU Rural Action Plan there will be continued support for “innovation in digital transformation for agriculture and other rural sectors” (EC, 2024, p11). The continued engagement with stakeholders is also part of the Rural Pact’s approach and one area reported that support for rural areas could be enhanced in the future is to better support both women and rural youth by: “facilitating their access to funding, providing diverse and flexible employment and training and educational opportunities, and involving them in policy design and in local decision-making processes (EC, 2024, p15).

### 2.2 CAP

A range of policy strategies are intended to influence CAP implementation and the development of the CSPs at the Member State level. There are of course the core objectives of the CAP, but also the EU Green Deal, as well as the strategies to support



this (the Farm to Fork strategy, the EU 2030 Biodiversity strategy and the 2030 Climate Target Plan). All are dealt with in recommendations issued by the EC to Member States regarding the development of their CSP. In relation to gender equality and the EU Gender Equality Strategy specifically noted in these recommendations is that Member States: "...are recommended to ensure that their CAP Strategic Plans include targeted measures to address specific needs of women in agriculture and rural areas and to ensure that gender equality in the agricultural sector is strengthened. Particular attention needs to be paid to provision of good quality childcare services in rural areas and to closing gender gaps, in particular in employment" (EC 2020b, p.14). This point is made in the context of ways forward and using the CAP alongside other European policies and funds as well as private resources and initiatives to address structural challenges and create more favourable dynamics in rural areas (EC 2020b).

It is argued by the EC that CAP 2023-2027 support is directed to those most in need of it and improving gender balance in farming is noted as one area in need: "gender equality and increasing the participation of women in farming are – for the first time – part of the objectives for CAP Strategic Plans. EU countries must assess these issues and address the identified challenges" (EC, no dateb). The 2023-2027 CAP reform also introduced a new delivery model involving Member States developing a CSP. The CSP details how the Member State will meet the CAP objectives and outlines interventions under Pillar 1 (Direct Payments) and Pillar 2 (Rural Development) (Mottershead et al. 2020; Pagnon et al. 2023). The procedural requirements for drawing up CSPs include that a partnership with regional and local authorities is drawn up to at least include, among others: "relevant bodies representing civil society and where relevant bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, fundamental rights, gender equality and non-discrimination" (EU, 2021).

CAP 2023-2027 SO8 references enhancing the position of women in farming and accelerating the social inclusion of rural women. This objective is "to promote employment, growth, gender equality, including the participation of women in farming, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including the circular bio-economy and sustainable forestry" (EU, 2021). According to an EC (2022) assessment of proposed CSPs just five Member States (Austria, Germany, Spain, Ireland and Italy) propose measures supporting rural women and two (Ireland and Spain) focus in particular on addressing the issue of improving women's participation in farming. This low level of commitment towards gender equality is flagged as a concern: "...given the lower proportion of female farm managers compared to male cohorts. In particular, only a few Member States made efforts in this direction. Greater attention to equality will be needed in those Member States where this remains a challenge" (EC, 2022 p.31).

Data is also key to understanding more broadly how CAP indirectly supports women in farming. The European Commission's Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (PMEF) for CAP includes a set of indicators to monitor performance at Member State levels. In relation to SO8, there are no specific result indicators related to gender equality. There is an impact indicator that mentions gender: "Contributing to jobs in rural areas: Evolution of the employment rate in rural areas, including a gender breakdown" (EU, 2021). One area where this CAP will have better data in this regard is



relating to generational renewal. Supporting generational renewal is one of the objectives of CAP and increasing the younger population of farmers is a key challenge for European farming. Increasing the proportion of female young farmers is also a core challenge within this. The CAP result indicator on generational renewal records the 'Number of young farmers benefitting from setting up with support from the CAP, including a gender breakdown'. Although this is not a direct targeting of support towards younger female farmers, the gathering of this data at national and EU level will allow assessment of the gender balance of uptake. This includes an overall target value of young farmers to receive support and is broken down from 2023-2029 (European Commission, no datea). There are however no gender specific targets. Monitoring of the uptake of setting up support by young female farmers is required by the PMEF. The result indicator number 36 for generational renewal requires Member States, where this result indicator is planned, to monitor the number of young farmers benefitting from setting up support and must include a gender breakdown (European Commission, no datea).

Research has identified the importance of the LEADER programme in rural innovation. This is both to support greater levels of innovation in rural areas and greater recognition of innovation in rural contexts. Its strength is also said to lie in social and cultural practices as part of innovation and not necessarily high-tech sectors such as scientific and technological innovation (Dargan and Shucksmith, 2008). Finding "new responses to the specific problems of rural areas" (EC, 2006, p.12) is part of the LEADER approach and innovation is a key principle underpinning achieving this. Rural innovation in a LEADER context does not have to present novel ideas but can see: "the transfer and adaptation of innovations developed elsewhere, the modernisation of traditional forms of know-how, or finding new solutions to persistent rural problems" (EC, 2006, p.12). And of course, women can be beneficiaries of, but also creators and participants in rural innovation (Valero and López-Marco, 2018). The innovation LEADER embodies overlaps with observations on the specific and distinct nature of women-led innovation as outlined in the FLIARA Conceptual Framework (D1.1) and Research Review (D1.2).

LEADER therefore has strong potential to support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas and to be a key part of supports within the innovation ecosystem. That said room for improvement is also observed. For example, in a study focused on the Andalusia region of Spain, Cejudo et al. (2020) note the positive discrimination towards LEADER funding of women-led entrepreneur projects and the increase in women's participation, particularly young women. However, despite this, it is also argued the outcomes are still not satisfactory in terms of gender equality in LEADER project funding. Wider issues are cited that limit women-led enterprise development such as choosing certain sectors that are more conducive to reconciling family commitments with professional ones, as well as wider access to finance issues and large investments needed in some sectors to gain a foothold, for example technology and agriculture are noted. LEADER of course cannot address all issues linked to women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. It is still just one part of the support system.

A key strength of LEADER is its bottom-up local engagement however the under-representation of certain groups, including women, in LEADER Local Action Groups is



shown (ECA, 2022). Some evidence suggests slight improvement, such as in Germany (Pollermann and Fynn, 2022). This is further discussed in Section 3.3 below.

LEADER also has strong potential because of the LEADER method. However, an ongoing part of the LEADER debate is how to assess the added value of the method (e.g. see ECA, 2022). Evaluating the impacts of LEADER on issues of social exclusion and excluded groups such as women can be difficult. For example, in an EC LEADER evaluation the situation in Austria is described where it is noted “projects including gender equality goals tend to be classified by other categories (e.g. education, culture, disadvantaged groups) and are thus under-reported” (EC et al., 2022, p.100). This study also measures the perceived effect of LAG activities (as evaluated by LAGs and Managing Authorities) on reducing gender disparities and the majority indicated a medium or low effect. Further to this, still a significant proportion (19.7%) indicated it had no effect. This EC evaluation also identifies evidence that points to the strength of LEADER in addressing gender disparities is perhaps not in relation to women’s wider social exclusion, but assisting their improved opportunities to contribute to society and economy, such as through support for women entrepreneurs.

## 2.3 COHESION POLICY

Cohesion policy is also a core EU policy framework supporting rural areas (Pagnon et al. 2023). For the 2021-2027 period there are four main funds through which this policy is delivered - European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Cohesion Fund (CF), European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and Just Transition Fund (JTF). In terms of the specific rural relevance, analysis by the SHERPA project highlights that the ERDF, CF and JTF have most important linkages (Pagnon et al. 2023). At national levels, partnership agreements detail how the Common Strategic Framework translate to the national context and operational programmes set out priorities for funding delivery at regional levels (Mottershead et al. 2020).

In these funds, under the Common Provisions Regulation, gender equality is required to be considered as a cross-cutting horizontal principle. This also includes a requirement to organise a partnership and involve bodies responsible for promoting gender equality in preparing programmes, implementation and monitoring of Cohesion programmes (Spasova, et al. 2023; EIGE, 2024). This is largely what governs Cohesion policy in relation to considering gender equality, however the ESF+ also includes a specific objective to promote women’s labour market participation and support the improvement of better work-life balance (EIGE, 2024). Innovation actions are a key part of how resources are allocated as part of Cohesion policy because it responds to the European Green Deal and Digital Strategy. Smart Specialisation Strategies are key to enable actions (GENDERACTION, 2021).

Cohesion policy shows promise in relation to promoting gender equality. Its focus also on innovation brings two core FLIARA concerns together. Despite this, based on analysis of the previous programming period it is argued that particularly in relation to ERDF a focus on gender equality is lacking in national and regional programmes, and if





addressed in the programming phase it is much weaker when it came to implementation and monitoring (Lodovici et al., 2018). Generally, the approach to incorporation of a gender dimension in the current Cohesion Policy programme (2021-2027) has also been criticised in a variety of ways. The GENDER ACTION project argues as a horizontal principle, gender equality has become less prominent and is also not seen in the core five objectives of the current programme (GENDERACTION, 2021). D'Ambrogio (2023, p.2) outlines how MEPs have raised that gender equality is addressed too generally, is mainly limited to the ESF as well as the analysis and programming phase of this policy. Further and crucially, it is highlighted that greater "attention is needed in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases" (D'Ambrogio, 2023, p.2) Further to this, D'Ambrogio (2023) also highlights how the European Committee of Regions has called for greater monitoring of the gender equality impact of cohesion policy. The need for greater targeting of cohesion funds in relation to gender equality is also raised. In relation to specific sectors that women are under-represented, D'Ambrogio (2023) also outlines the potential within the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund. This point is specifically linked to female entrepreneurship and gender gaps in the digital sector. Specific groups of rural women are also highlighted as important to cohesion. In the resolution on the 8<sup>th</sup> Cohesion report, the European Parliament stresses the importance of young women in rural areas and women in remote areas in sustainable growth, but also highlights the challenges they face.



### 3. EUROPEAN POLICY AT COUNTRY LEVEL

#### 3.1 CAP DIRECT SUPPORTS

The national level assessments aimed to analyse how gender equality, including the participation of women in the farming aspect of SO8 were reflected in the SWOT analysis, identification of needs and intervention logic of the CSP of each country. We also aimed to assess if CSPs 2023-2027 include interventions that directly support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. Overall, in most of the countries there was no strong or direct focus on this:

- Finland: Due to the Act on Equality between Women and Men it is not possible to have a direct focus on targeted measures for women as this act means that all genders must be equally treated.
- Sweden: A number of disadvantages for women in farming and rural areas are highlighted in the SWOT, such as their lower disposable income and underrepresentation of women in a number of areas such as farming, entrepreneurship, land ownership and company board membership. No direct support exists. Support for farm diversification is however linked to SO8, but this does not explicitly target women. As such, support for farm diversification is a more indirect support (discussed further in Section 3.2 below).
- Czech Republic: In the SWOT analysis the issue of inequality of women in the labour market is noted and the improvement of the position of women in the labour market identified as an opportunity. However there is no mention of women in the Czech Republic CSP.
- Romania: A number of gender imbalances are highlighted in the Romanian SWOT for the CSP including in agricultural and forestry managerial positions as well as the lower employment rates of the rural female working age population. The issue of addressing patriarchal mindsets is highlighted and the need for tailored facilities for women to increase involvement in business management. Promoting female entrepreneurship is identified as a moderate need. This is only partly addressed and does not include specific interventions to address this because it is argued women can benefit from sector-specific interventions where women are more often active, such as those targeted at the vegetable, flower or agri-tourism sectors. In the national assessment questionnaire this is said to represent a static gendered view of agriculture and where women are active. The Ministry of Agriculture in Romania notes a natural increase in women in entrepreneurship in the agri-food sector without the need for prioritisation of women's needs and targeted interventions. It is also noted that included in recommendations made by the EC to Romania based on the first CSP was that the specific needs of women in agriculture and rural areas should have careful consideration in the plan.
- The Netherlands: There are no direct financial subsidy supports targeting women. Measures focus on networks. In relation to AKIS networks there is focus on building networks tackling issues specifically facing female farmers. Support also exists for practical networks providing information and building knowledge around



strengthening female agricultural entrepreneurship. Based on the draft CSP, a recommendation was issued by the EC that younger people, and especially women, should be supported to work in agriculture. The national authorities indicated the trend would be monitored and as necessary supported with appropriate measures.

- Italy: Women's needs are identified, but in a very limited way. Needs identified are in relation to creating and supporting employment and social inclusion and strengthening the non-agricultural economy. For some planned interventions, the selection principles indicated by some Italian regions leave room for potential support specifically for women. Issues in relation to young people and women are both addressed in this way.
- Germany: A number of gender-related aspects are identified in the SWOT such as the opportunity in breaking the role of stereotypes in career choices and the threat of female unemployment and rural outmigration. In relation to SO8, gender equality and the inclusion of all social groups, serves as a cross-cutting task and also as a high priority issue, but not only within the specific objective but across all objectives. More specifically two interventions are explicitly linked to this priority issue, but focus on these is confined to certain federal states. The case of Baden-Württemberg is noted where the interventions 'promotion of investment in the development of non-agricultural enterprises' and 'knowledge transfer and information measures' can be linked to supporting women-led innovation in rural areas.
- Slovenia: The SWOT and identification of needs in Slovenia does include a focus on rural women. The needs of rural women are linked to areas such as generational renewal, employment in rural areas and strengthening social inclusion. Within interventions and certain strategic goals, where relevant, gender equality is promoted through criteria for selecting operations e.g. additional points for women.

In each of the countries below there is some direct focus on interventions targeting women, gender equality, including the participation of women in farming. They are to varying degrees and in a variety of different ways:

- Spain: The SWOT analysis highlights the low presence of women in decision making bodies as a significant weakness. This impacts the CSP intervention logic with targeted measures included to enhance women's participation in leadership roles within the agricultural sector and rural development initiatives, as well as targeted interventions aimed at promoting gender equality. This includes training and mentorship programs for women, initiatives to increase women's access to resources and decision-making platforms, and efforts to streamline administrative processes to be more inclusive of women-led projects. The CSP in Spain also focuses on social sustainability in its approach and this includes seeking a gender balanced approach in financial aid. This also includes additional financial resources for women seeking to develop new agricultural ventures, helping address financial obstacles faced by women. Further to this, the CSP in Spain seeks to coordinate with other EU funding sources (e.g. the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)) in order to help construct a stronger support system. More directly in



relation to support for rural women, the focus is on fostering greater employment opportunities for women.

- Ireland: The SWOT identified as key issues the low share of women in the farming, forestry and fishing sector, a perception of farming as a male occupation and significant underrepresentation of women in management roles. Support at early and start-up stage of business development is noted as important to creating opportunities, as well as peer to peer learning. Further issues highlighted are the levels of female farm succession and land inheritance. Direct interventions are linked to the need to increase opportunities for women in agriculture and business development. Depending on local need women-only knowledge transfer groups can be set up. The On-Farm Capital Investment Scheme aims to support increased farm efficiency and competitiveness and provides grants covering a percentage of investment costs. The standard rate is 40%, however female and young farmers can claim 60%. Gender balance is included as a theme in European Innovation Partnerships Operational Group competitive calls for projects. Operational Groups aim to address challenges related to environment, biodiversity and climate change. The Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme provides finance to support improvements in animal housing to increase animal welfare. Within this scheme, the Women Farmer Capital Investment Scheme is a direct support for women.

### 3.2 CAP INDIRECT SUPPORTS

Assessing how the CAP indirectly supports women-led innovation in farming and rural areas is challenging. For example, in some national assessments the point arises that all interventions that support innovation in farming and rural areas can, in theory, also support women-led innovation. More specifically in Germany, a gender mainstreaming approach within the CSP is described where gender equality, but also the inclusion of all social groups, is as cross-cutting task in all objectives. However, the FLIARA Conceptual Framework highlights the need for more affirmative governance and targeted policies (see Section 1.1 above).

More broadly however in relation to how CAP indirectly supports women-led innovation, national assessments do also raise some important specific observations. While a generalisation, there are still differences observed in how women farm. For example, some farm innovations that represent more diversified farming practices have been described as more a 'feminised' style of farming such as organic farming, smaller scale extensive farming, local food supply chains, agri-tourism and care farming (Heggem, 2014; Ball, 2019). Following this understanding of women-led farm innovation, farm diversification is an important innovation that can involve women-led innovations and support wider rural economy diversification and sustainable development. Therefore, this is an important area of interest in relation to how CAP can indirectly support women.

- In the Czech Republic national assessment for example it is highlighted that measures to support the expansion of non-conventional forms of agriculture could be seen as an indirect support because of women's greater tendency to towards alternative farming methods.



- In the Italian CSP there is an intervention included that supports investments in agricultural holdings for diversification into non-agricultural activities. In Italy women are also more directly targeted with women's enterprise included as a priority area in terms of beneficiary selection. Further to this in three Italian regions an intervention supports non-agricultural investment in wider entrepreneurial activities that for example can support improved quality of life by supporting services. Again, women are a priority beneficiary hence this becomes a more direct support.
- In the Swedish CSP farm diversification supports are focused on tangible assets (e.g. buildings, equipment), but also services and immaterial investments (such as a patent, for example). However, an issue noted is that mostly recipients tend to be male and this does not account for the gender of the recipient.
- Diversification is also supported under the CSP in Romania with investment available for non-agricultural activities and both tangible and intangible assets to support business development in production, services and tourism. Priority is also given to certain areas including those that support digitalisation bio-economy, circular economy and agri-tourism. Investment for innovation in agriculture more broadly is also identified such as related to irrigation, agricultural product processing and marketing.
- In Ireland's CSP measures related to supporting farm diversification are also noted as a potential indirect support for women-led innovation, such as the Organic Farming Scheme and the AECM (A collective approach to the agri-environment-climate) Cooperation Measure.

In Ireland, beyond the theme of diversification some supports linked to innovation are mentioned as potentially indirectly supporting women-led innovation. The wider potential relevance of European Innovation Partnerships, beyond their gender theme, is also noted as this scheme provides funding for innovative, multi-actor, locally-led projects addressing challenges in the agri-food sector. The Knowledge Transfer Programme is also noted and its link to the aim of innovation, modernisation and digitalisation of agriculture and more specifically the knowledge transfer groups across the farming sector that provide a key vehicle for implementation of the programme aligned with local needs. In Slovenia the fact that women received additional points when their applications are assessed under some interventions is noted, such as the support for the establishment of young farmers businesses. Also, in the wider Slovenian assessment the important role of CAP Networks to help promote innovation in agriculture and rural development is also noted.

### 3.3 CAP AND LEADER

In relation to LEADER, the evaluation of the national assessments was that in most cases the national LEADER Programme does not directly support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. This assessment was in terms of including goals or measures that directly target women. However, it is also clear from the national assessments that



there is a huge grey area that limits drawing such a conclusion. There is a need for more focused assessment for true understanding of the direct targeting of LEADER.

Only an initial and broad assessment can be made in this report, such as because of the early stage of programming for the 2023-2027 period. Analysis of Local Action Group (LAG) Local Development Plans would be important to understand the actual situation. For example, further evidence of the importance of this point is also shown in the Swedish and Italian national assessments. In the Swedish context it is noted that evidence exists that in the 2014-2020 period improving levels of women's entrepreneurship was a goal in Local Development Plans. In addition, LAG strategies can highlight key issues local women face. For example, issues highlighted in one Swedish context are female outmigration and challenges to involve women in voluntary organisations. In Ireland evidence suggests LEADER has been a significant support to rural and farm women innovators as demonstrated in a National Rural Network case study on women in agriculture.

The direct focus on women as a target group through the LEADER programme did emerge in some national assessments. Romania notes that the LEADER Strategic Development Guidelines for 2023-2027 include measures to increase women's role in rural economic development. LAGs in Romania are required to choose several types of interventions in their strategies to qualify for additional funding. One of these intervention types is related to operations with an economic purpose whose direct beneficiaries are women. In Germany the LEADER funded programme 'Innovative Measures for Women' in Baden-Württemberg is described which includes qualification and coaching measures for rural women and provides grants for the development of women's non-agricultural enterprises. Evidence of different types of LAG initiatives that supported female-led innovation is also presented in Italy such as supporting start-ups and business networks. Potential for further initiatives in the current programme is also flagged, depending on if interventions (e.g. focused on non-agricultural entrepreneurship and start-ups) applied by certain LAGs target women. In Ireland, the LEADER Programme Operating Rules 2023-2027 include a recommendation that there should be an increased focus on supporting female entrepreneurs under the wider theme of enterprise development. The potential for targeted calls for LEADER funding that could specifically target women are also highlighted in the Italian and Irish assessments. In addition, some wider observations are also relevant because of the specific national level approaches:

- Sweden: The Swedish assessment notes that Local Development Strategy design and implementation must align with Sweden's gender mainstreaming policy and take its principles (sustainable development, equal treatment and gender equality) into account.
- Germany: There is strategic gender mainstreaming within the LEADER approach. This is seen as an important part of the LEADER approach in Germany with regard to innovations in rural areas.
- Italy: LEADER is mainly linked to the need 'raising quality of life in rural areas' and a diverse range of potential innovation areas are specifically highlighted that could be applied depending on local contexts. Gender equality is among the



criteria to assess proposed Local Development Strategies and selection of LAGs, but the weight this is finally given cannot be determined from our assessment.

- Slovenia: Similarly, gender equality criteria influence Local Development Strategy development. Supporting women is awarded an additional 2 out of 16 points in the project selection criteria.

Our assessment also identified some specific measures regarding better representation of women in LEADER LAGs. In Romania, the direct focus on women also extends to LAG governance where they must have one organisation representing women's interests involved. In addition, the selection criteria quota, that at least 30% of the representatives within the partnership must be young or female, indirectly supports initiatives led by women by ensuring a significant proportion of leadership and decision-making roles within LAGs are held by women. Gender balance in LEADER governance also potentially increases the likely indirect impact of LEADER on women-led innovation. As Romania points out in its assessment, with greater participation of women in LEADER decision-making the greater chances of the needs and challenges they face being represented and supported. Ireland's CSP outlines that LAGs must aim to include a diversity of local actors and gender balanced representation. In Germany the inclusive nature of the LAG and LEADER decision-making bodies is noted. The Slovenia national assessment notes rural women are encouraged to participate in the Local Development Strategy preparation and are involved in the decision-making bodies of the LAG.

Beyond the question of how LEADER directly supports women-led innovation, as already discussed in Section 2.2 above, LEADER also has strong potential to support women-led innovation because of the LEADER method, as a bottom-up locally-led approach to rural development. Many of the national assessments make this point. For example, Spain highlights how the community-led approach identifies initiatives of local need, builds on local strengths, can support a diverse range of projects, as well as facilitating networking and cooperation projects, which may include women-led innovation projects. The Czech Republic assessment outlines how the type of activities that LEADER supports is said to potentially align with places where women can be more active in rural development (e.g. associations and NGOs with social or cultural goals). In Romania it is noted that the community-led empowerment of local actors and their needs contributes to creating important conditions or 'fertile ground' for emergence and flourishing of women-led innovations. National assessments in Sweden, Italy and Ireland also specifically point to the important role of LEADER in rural social innovation. The Slovenia assessment outlines how the bottom-up approach and stakeholder collaboration builds trust and helps achieve one of the aims of LEADER in Slovenia. That is to increase social capital and increase engagement of youth, women, and other vulnerable groups in the local rural area. More broadly the goal of the LEADER intervention is to promote employment, growth, social inclusion and local development in rural areas. Through funding for different projects it is said women are involved. In both the Slovenia and Irish national assessments a focus on the development of the Smart Villages concept is noted in the LEADER programme which could link to indirect support for women-led innovation. Further to this, in Ireland in the LEADER Programme Operating Rules 2023-2027, the existence of a set of themes and sub-themes (e.g. the green economy; agricultural



diversification, social, community and cooperative enterprises) around which supports should be focused are noted. The national assessment notes that they potentially interlink and support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas.

However, while all of this is valid to note, the lack of a systematic, direct and targeted focus on women and innovation does also create potential variability and uncertainty in how women-led innovation will be supported. If not targeted directly, the importance of monitoring the impact on women-led innovation becomes doubly important. For example in national assessments key points are:

- Sweden: The LAG itself can be a key driver of what issues are identified locally and promoted as well as the emphasis on certain issues in project evaluation. Sweden highlights how one particular LAG noted potentially more women are interested in applying for LEADER funding than men. Projects women lead tend to be of a different nature, with a focus on softer outcomes rather than physical infrastructure projects. However, there is a lack of data in relation to these observations.
- Spain: While LEADER may support women-led innovative projects, with no direct targeting of LEADER support there is likely variability in how this translates at the regional level and no guarantees women will receive certain support.
- Romania: For the period 2014-2020 information on women involved in LEADER is not available as this indicator was not monitored by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Some information on job creation linked to LEADER funded projects is available - from 9950 projects, 4891 new jobs were created and 1299 (27%) were occupied by women. This highlights the importance of gender disaggregated data.





## 4. NATIONAL LEVEL

### 4.1 RURAL

Our assessment also aimed to assess national rural development policies (beyond the Rural Development Programme under the CAP) as well as other significant policies (e.g. regional development policies with rural relevance) and laws related to rural areas and how they directly and indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas.

While there are isolated examples, overall, based on our assessment, in rural policy there is poor attention to women-led innovation and an overall marked absence of direct targeted supports. Measures that were found are discussed in the following section. In relation to indirect support for women-led innovation, as well as wider support for gender equality and supporting the needs of women in rural areas, a range of broad key themes can be identified from the national assessments. The discussion in the following section is structured around these areas.

One wider tentative observation to make that would merit further investigation is how often gender equality issues in rural areas are discussed in policies, but do not then translate into actions and targeted measures. For example, discussion of issues is noted in the Czech Republic's national assessment, but follow on policies in response are not identified. In Sweden, the government proposal of a Coherent Policy for Rural Areas focuses on women as a strategic area and this proposal is intended to shape other strategies such as the National Strategy for Sustainable Regional Development. However, this strategy does not have a direct focus on women.

#### **Employment and entrepreneurship**

The FLIARA Knowledge Review discusses the lack of women and gender balance in certain economic sectors and gendered social norms around certain professions, such as farming and engineering. Innovation can be linked to areas such as science and technology meaning areas where women tend to be more active, such as tourism or food business, may not get recognition for their innovation contribution. These types of issues emerge in national rural policies. For example, in the Czech Republic gender inequality in the armed forces is mentioned in the concept of rural development that is part of the Regional Development Strategy. The National Rural Policy Programme 2021-2017 in Finland includes proposals for measures to promote women's education in traditionally male sectors. In Sweden, the government proposal of a Coherent Policy for Rural Areas highlights forestry and tourism as two sectors important for women's entrepreneurship.

Digitalisation supports the remote work opportunity in rural areas and the Covid-19 pandemic has led to an expansion of its practice. Rural policies highlight the potential of remote work to also improve rural women's participation in the labour market. Remote work is sometimes directly linked to opportunities for women in rural policy, while at other



times it is not, nevertheless such measures can still support rural women. For example, in Finland the National Rural Policy Programme 2021-2017 proposes measures to increase and promote acceptance of remote working because of its potential to provide opportunities for women. In Ireland's rural development policy Our Rural Future there are actions related to investment in remote working, however this is not specifically linked to opportunities for women.

The FLIARA Knowledge Review discusses how women's entrepreneurship can be an important pathway to sustainable rural development. A focus on increasing levels of women's entrepreneurship emerges in a number of national rural development strategies. Sweden's government proposal for a Coherent Policy for Rural Areas calls for more women entrepreneurs and strengthening the conditions for women's entrepreneurship. The National Rural Policy Programme 2021-2017 in Finland includes proposals for measures to promote women's entrepreneurship. In Ireland, Regional Enterprise Plans include measures to support women's entrepreneurship such as women-only entrepreneurship programmes and business networks. Entrepreneurship and rural innovation can also be more clearly linked in some policies. This is seen in Italy where the Fund for the Development of Italian Mountains includes a Fund for Innovative Women's Enterprises. In Spain, the Rural Women's Advancement Program supports women through training, mentoring and finance, which also includes a focus on entrepreneurship and innovation.

Rural policies were also found to include measures that would indirectly support women-led entrepreneurship in rural areas. In Italy, while the National Strategy for Inner Areas does not have a specific focus on women its actions to support local activities such as grants in relation to tourism and agriculture are a potential support for women-led innovation. Our Rural Future in Ireland focuses on encouraging rural innovation, rural economy development, diversification and enterprise development more broadly which could be described as indirectly relating to supporting women-led innovation in rural areas. Some specific actions relate to innovative rural economic activities such as support for local food supply chains, farm diversification and innovation networks. More specifically, in Ireland the Rural Innovation and Development Fund includes an agri-food tourism measure and provides grants to part fund projects. More broadly in Romania it is noted that a range of funds and programs target rural entrepreneurs and women are noted as a part of this group rather than being specifically targeted for a certain level of support. Similarly the Law for Sustainable Development of Rural Areas and Strategy for Rural Development in Spain is noted to support entrepreneurship and innovation and therefore can benefit women, but does not directly target them. In Sweden, the National Strategy for Sustainable Regional Development has an extensive focus on innovation, but not women-led innovation however it potentially provides indirect support because of its focus on microbusiness and social entrepreneurship.

### **Civic engagement**

Supporting the role of women in rural governance and communities also emerges in different ways as a theme in rural policy. This could be for example where physical



spaces are provided for local associations, such as rural women's groups, to meet and run activities, as is highlighted in the Netherlands national assessment. In the National Rural Policy Programme 2021-2027 in Finland, measures to promote the greater role of women in chairing municipal councils are included (this issue is also discussed further in Section 4.5 on Empowerment). In Germany, as part of the Federal Programme for Rural Development and Regional Value Creation (BULEplus), the special measure Digital.Networked – Strengthening Women in Volunteering supported women's civic engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Wider laws are highlighted in Slovenia of rural relevance in relation to supporting civic engagement. As part of the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the action 'Strengthening the role of women in agriculture' there is a focus on women's rights and supporting organisations that assist with for example networking and knowledge transfer. Organisations that are supported include the Association of Farming Women of Slovenia.

### **Services and social inclusion**

Both the FLIARA Knowledge Review and Conceptual Framework raise rural service provision as challenge facing women's participation and success in rural innovation and gender equality in rural areas. Lower population densities mean rural areas cannot sustain the same level of services as urban, which can then lead to out-migration, depopulation and the phenomenon of brain drain. Areas where rural areas can be disadvantaged in terms of services include broadband infrastructure, childcare services, transport, healthcare and education.

As highlighted in the FLIARA Knowledge Review, rural women are understood to devote more time to care and domestic work compared to rural men. Childcare service provision can then influence women's participation in the labour market. The provision of childcare in rural areas can be a focus in national level rural policies and this is discussed specifically in relation to rural policy in the national assessments of the Czech Republic, Finland and Ireland. In the Czech Republic, support for the development of kindergartens in the countryside is mentioned in the Concept of Rural Development that is part of the Strategy for Regional Development, but no clear measures or proposed measures to address this are identified. In Finland in the National Rural Policy Programme 2021-2017 proposals for measures to ensure local childcare is available everywhere are included. In Ireland, the national rural policy Our Rural Future identifies the thematic action area of Enhancing Public Services in Rural Areas and one of the areas listed that will achieve investment is early learning and childcare facilities (also see Section 4.6 for further analysis of this issue).

The availability of basic services in rural areas is also highlighted as an issue for rural women and their potential social exclusion. In the Czech Republic insufficient public transport is linked to issues facing rural women and during motherhood. However this is more reference to the issue rather than comprehensive action. More broadly, it is the Ministry of Transport that deals with transport issues and gender issues are a concern noted. It is noted women can be greater users of public transport using multiple modes and taking shorter trips. Wider laws are highlighted in Slovenia of rural relevance in



relation to reducing rural women's social exclusion. As part of the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men there is an action on adoption of measures and programs to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion of the most vulnerable groups of women and rural women are one group highlighted.

## 4.2 FARM

### National Agri-Food Policy

Broadly speaking, national agri-food policies described in national assessments display varied themes of promoting innovation, sustainability, competitiveness, productivity, digitalisation and application of new technologies in the agri-food sector. This potentially supports women-led innovation indirectly, but national assessments do not often highlight a strong direct focus on women-led innovation in farming as a clear and targeted aspect of such policies.

The idea of more feminised farming practices (e.g. care farming, agri-tourism) is discussed in relation to CSPs as a potential indirect support for women-led innovation in farming in Section 3.2. A similar point emerges in the context of national agri-food policy. For example, in Italy national laws on social agriculture, agritourism and organic farming are discussed in relation to potential indirect supports for women-led innovation in farming. In relation to short food supply chains, such as farm shops and farmers' markets, which can be another more feminised agri-food space, policy and law can either support or hinder such spaces. For example, law in Italy exists to regulate the establishment of farmers' markets and the provision of spaces dedicated to sale of farm products by farmers. On the other hand, in the Netherlands some examples provided indicate that regulations can make local food production more challenging, such as health and safety regulations. Local land use plans may allow such practices, but rules differ depending on the local authority.

Potential indirect supports were also highlighted linked to farm innovation. In Spain programs linked to digital transformation in agriculture are described as well as a National Plan for the Application of Agricultural Technologies. In Ireland in relation to improving farm-level innovation the role of Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development authority is noted through the range of services provided to farmers. More broadly in Ireland potential indirect supports for women-led innovation highlighted are the Future Growth Loan Scheme that provides loans to support strategic long-term investments on farms. Another policy in Ireland that is said to link to potential sustainability and ecological innovations is Ag Climatise. It is focused on climate neutrality in the agri-food and forestry sectors and focuses on promoting development in areas such as the bioeconomy and land use diversification.

Direct support for both youth and women's entrepreneurship in agriculture is outlined in the Italian assessment through the availability of non-repayable grants and interest free finance, however at the time this assessment was carried out funds for this scheme were exhausted and could not be applied for. Support for agri-tourism are also outlined, a non-repayable grant and tax credit, with additional allocation of funds for women's



enterprises. A broader critique of the regulatory framework is also highlighted in the Italian assessment where it is identified that more systematic and long-term interventions are needed. Women in farming are focused directly on in Ireland's Food Vision 2030, however the key actions do not provide financial supports and are wider measures (e.g. knowledge transfer groups, capture and publish better data and represent the agri-food sector in the development of the next National Women and Girl's Strategy). Another key action is to address gender balance at the primary production level and also more broadly across the agri-food sector, with particular focus on senior management and board level. In Sweden the only place women are directly targeted in the National Food Strategy is in relation to Sami women who are highlighted as traditional knowledge holders in Sami food. This is noted to need preservation and government have invested in this.

A further similar type of direct support is noted both in Slovenia and Ireland where dialogue and advisory type policy-related activities exist in relation to women in farming. Also emerging from Food Vision 2030 in Ireland was the first National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture that was held in 2023 and its outcomes generated a 12-point Women in Agriculture Action Plan published in January 2024. The Women in Agriculture Working Group includes representatives from across the sector and facilitates and guides implementation of the action plan. In Slovenia the Rural Women's Council was established in 2019 within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food as an advisory body to the Minister and to shape opinions on important decisions relating to women in rural areas. However, the effectiveness of the Women's Council is questioned in the Slovenia assessment with poor recognition for its work and role.

### **Access to land, farm ownership and inheritance**

Shortall (2015) argues a key underlying and root cause of gender inequality in European farming relates to access to land. Addressing issues such as low uptake of agricultural training and participation in agricultural organisations are described as symptoms of gender inequality in agriculture. To farm, access to land for women is needed which makes it a root cause, transformative and key starting point to address gender inequality (Shortall, 2015). Based on research in the Scottish context, Shortall et al. (2017) observes that female new entrants, rather than access land through inheritance, may more often lease or buy land. Different legal frameworks are discussed by Shortall (2015), but whatever the legal system, women still do not often inherit land. The example of Norway is noted where law was changed to attempt to address gender inequalities. This law provided for the eldest child to inherit land, regardless of gender. However despite the law, according to Shortall (2015) gender equality in farmland inheritance is still an issue.

Farm ownership is an important issue to assess in relation to how policy and law supports women-led innovation. Based on our national level assessments specific laws governing farm ownership do not include any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm ownership. For example, in the Swedish assessment it is noted that the law treats men and women equally. In the Czech Republic the Civil Code enshrines equal



rights in decision-making and benefits for family members. However, national assessments highlight that farmland is generally more often owned by men. Eurostat data also suggests that in 2016 only 13.7% of the EU's farmland was held by women (see Korthals Altes, 2020 for detailed analysis of wider land market trends). This means that laws that govern farm ownership are not gender neutral. This fact impacts who benefits from specific policies that are linked to farm ownership. It is noted for example in Sweden that most farms are male owned, which also has implications for who benefits from support when it comes to for example farm diversification supports for buildings and equipment. Although this support is linked to SO8, given farm ownership structures, women are less likely to benefit. In the Netherlands assessment a similar point is made. More support is received by male farmers due to their dominance in the sector, but also because of farm size and women-led farms tend to be on average smaller. In Ireland it is noted that while farms can be co-owned, there is a pattern that the farm owner is usually male. Barriers to moving farms into joint ownership among spouses are highlighted in the Irish assessment. It is reported that farm families can lack clarity on the pension and tax implications of moving into joint ownership. There is a formal scheme run by the Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine in Ireland for Registered Farm Partnerships that provide a formal arrangement where at least two farmers can work together in a formal business arrangement. This system, in theory, supports improved gender equality by providing a system where women who traditionally had an informal role on farms can be formally part of the farm business through a partnership arrangement. The Irish assessment described it as a useful model to assist more women get into farm co-management. However, a number of issues in relation to how the current rules apply and their restrictive nature is noted. While not a direct support for women to access land, the pre-emption rights in land law in Romania gives rights to certain groups, including young farmers. This could support young female farmers access land. This is part of a tiered system where there are seven categories of pre-emptors. The first tier are co-owners or relatives, then the leaseholder, followed by owners or lessees of neighbouring land. The fourth tier is young farmers.

Wider laws and policies can also in theory support improved gender equality in farm ownership and the wider issue of women's access to land. For example, in Spain the Organic Law for Effective Equality between Women and Men aims to eliminate gender discrimination and supports equal opportunities between men and women. This applies to a range of sectors and within this would also apply to agriculture, land access and ownership. Similarly, the law on inheritance and property rights includes principles of equality and non-discrimination. Another potential legal lever highlighted in the Spanish assessment is the Law of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development which can include provisions on redistribution of land in the context of rural economic viability. Through this law's implementation greater access to land for women could be supported.

It is observed in research that patterns of farm succession and land inheritance can have a cultural tendency towards male inheritance of land, as well as the existence of wider cultural barriers, such as patriarchal norms, to female succession (Cassidy, 2019; Shortall et al., 2017). Farm diversification, such as into areas like tourism and care



farming, have been highlighted as a potential facilitator to improving female succession (Heggem, 2014). National assessments highlight that no specific laws or provisions exist to address gender equality in farm inheritance. The principle of equality between men and women can exist in law, but in practice traditional cultural norms and male succession patterns are described to generally persist. National assessments point to the existence of traditional land inheritance patterns of male succession.

#### 4.3 INNOVATION

The gender biases in innovation ecosystems is a key point underpinning the FLIARA Conceptual Framework. It is stated: “Women-led innovations are likely to confront some challenges including structural biases undermining women’s opportunities to innovate, gendered mindsets and stereotypes that do not recognise women’s roles in innovation development, and gendered biases in innovation ecosystems influencing access and availability of support, funding, resources, expertise and networks for women innovators” (McGuinness et al. forthcoming, p.35). Innovation and entrepreneurship policy is not gender neutral if sectors supported are those where women are less well represented. The point is made in analysis of female entrepreneur supports in countries in the Danube region that: “financing programs often implicitly discriminate against female entrepreneurship by focusing on areas where women are less active (e.g. technological innovations) and by not considering the specific characteristics and needs of women-owned businesses” (Zlateva et al., 2019, p.42).

While not specifically related to rural areas and farming, the national assessments identified some targeted policies and initiatives related to supporting women-led innovation, or more specifically in relation to women’s entrepreneurship. However when a specific, targeted policy existed related to women-led innovation and entrepreneurship it was not found that this policy had measures included specifically related to farming and rural areas. One exception is in Germany where some regional programs that provide important targeted supports towards rural women are discussed - the Business Start-ups by Women in Rural Areas program and Innovative Measures for Women in Rural Areas. This of course does not mean policies cannot support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas, however the lack of direct focus is an important observation. Examples of policies focused on women’s entrepreneurship (not rural or farm focuses) discussed in national assessments were:

- Romania: The Woman Entrepreneur programme focuses on information and training to support business start-up and development in the fields of research, development, innovation and digitalisation.
- Italy: The National Recovery and Resilience Plan has a cross-cutting theme of policies for women which includes supports for women’s entrepreneurship such as start-up or development grants, as well as mentoring assistance available through the Women’s Enterprise Fund. Other supports focus on both women and young people to start-up or develop enterprise providing grants or no interest finance. ‘Smart&Start Italia’ focuses on innovative start-ups while ‘On - oltre



nuove imprese a tasso zero' is focused on supporting manufacturing, services, trade and tourism sectors. Outside of this the 'Female entrepreneurship' programme aims to build and increase a female entrepreneurial culture with a focus on scientific and technological fields. In addition the Guarantee Fund for SMEs has a specific focus on women's business and provides state guarantee for bank credit. However it is also noted some supports can be suspended when funds are exhausted.

- Ireland: The Enterprise Ireland Action Plan for Women in Business introduces 24 actions across four key objectives to increase the representation of women in enterprise. Its objectives include increasing the number of women-led established companies growing internationally, increasing the number of women becoming entrepreneurs and number of women-led start-ups with high growth potential.
- Slovenia: The National Employment Strategy includes specific measures for encouraging female entrepreneurship. For example, a programme to support unemployed women (they must be unemployed for at least three months) with higher education start their own business provides a two-month entrepreneurship training course and a grant of €3,000 to €5,000 for self-employment to those with a convincing business idea.
- Germany: A range of smaller programs and initiatives in relation to women's entrepreneurship are discussed such as specific grants and awards. The significant EU funded regional program the ESF Plus Guideline on Gender Equality in Working Life is also outlined and targets sectors with persistent gender-related underrepresentation or structural discrimination. Its measures aim to address women's diverse life circumstances, such as career interruptions or caregiving responsibilities to support women's entrepreneurship and labour market participation.

There are also some greyer areas to note where the assessments concluded targeted policy existed related to women-led innovation to some extent:

- Spain noted initiatives supporting women-led innovation as part of a national strategy to support innovation and entrepreneurship among underrepresented groups. Women are one group that is focused on and those in rural areas and farming can benefit. The Women's Institute is cited as one example that develops programs that can focus on overcoming barriers for women's participation in the economy. Seven regions are identified to have developed support programmes for rural women entrepreneurs tailored to local needs and offering supports such as training, mentorship and finance.
- In the Czech Republic the activities of non-government organisations were flagged as important to support women-led innovation, such as supporting education, advocacy for women's needs and monitoring of this.
- In the Netherlands reference was made to policies that support better gender equality and women in research, as well as better representation in corporate leadership.





- The National Innovation Agency in Sweden, Vinnova, can issue targeted calls for projects and programs and these have occasionally been targeted towards women. It is also observed that it is becoming more of an add-on in recent years, rather than taking a direct focus on gender equality. Scalability potential is noted as a key focus of Vinnova supports, which can be found in sectors more traditionally occupied by men, hence impacting gender equality of funding uptake and distribution. Measures specifically related to farming and/or rural areas are also said to be included to some extent. Specific sectors (biomass, foodtech, and bio-innovation) that funding is available for could be considered relevant to rural areas. Also relating to Vinnova grants, often farmers cannot apply because funding primary production is considered the remit of the Swedish Board of Agriculture which has potential implications for farmers and innovation ability.

More broadly, the results of our assessment show that wider innovation policy in the countries assessed does not directly focus on supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. As also stated above, this of course does not mean these policies cannot support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas, however the lack of direct focus is an important observation. Some wider context is also important to note. Sweden explains that because of the gender mainstreaming of all policies targeting of support towards women is not a usual approach and funding should be equally available to men and women. However as already noted above in practice it is thought not to be the case. Innovation policy in Sweden is described as focusing on more traditionally male dominated sectors, such as scalable high-tech areas, both at national and regional levels. The tendency for these sectors not to be rurally based is also noted. While sectors such as biomass and bio innovation could be more rural, in reality funding tends to be gained by larger research companies or universities. In the German assessment it is noted robust innovation policies exist in various sectors, including agriculture and rural development, however the targeting of support for women-led innovation is not generally done explicitly. That said, this needs to be situated in the context that gender equality and women's empowerment are overarching goals in Germany's policies, as well as gender mainstreaming efforts in innovation policy. In Ireland, innovation policies are described to have some focus on agriculture but in relation to women-led innovation there was not clear focus identified, apart from strengthening equality, diversity and inclusion in the research community and better representation of women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) careers. The Slovenia assessment notes a similar point where in the Resolution on Slovenia's Science Research and Innovation Strategy 2030 women are only addressed in relation to research careers and there is very little focus on agriculture and rural areas in this strategy.

Wider innovation policy was said to support women-led innovation in farming to some extent in Italy. Also discussed in section 4.1, the Innovative Mountain Women's Enterprise fund provides repayable grant support for businesses developing high technological and innovative content. In relation to farming, the ISMEA (Istituto di Servizi per il Mercato Agricolo Alimentare) manages a number of incentives to support start up



and agricultural businesses such as grant and no interest finance support for newcomer women and also young people in farming. However, this measure is not available when funds are exhausted, as was the case in 2024. This links to a wider critique of the policy framework. It can consist of temporary, exceptional measures and lack a systematic approach. Wider innovation supports managed by ISMEA also highlighted in Italy were the Innovation Fund that provides grants to support increased productivity through digital and technological solutions and incentives (tax credit, grants) for tourism enterprises that benefits agritourism. Higher grant rates are available for women's enterprise.

The assessment also aimed to identify any other important innovation policies and laws in the countries that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. While all types of innovation policy can potentially support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas, some national assessments highlighted policies that could be more likely to impact rural and farm women. For example:

- Based on a range of country assessments (Spain, Czech Republic, Italy, Ireland) policies and supports that exist in relation to certain activities and sectors are highlighted because women can be more commonly involved in these. Examples of such areas are: social entrepreneurship, rural and agri-tourism, creative industries, organic farming, social agriculture and short food supply chains. Sweden also notes that women tend to be more active in certain sectors (culture, creativity, tourism, services) and it is other more traditionally male sectors that are prioritised by Swedish innovation policy.
- More specifically in Ireland potential indirect supports referred to are through the state agency Enterprise Ireland. More broadly in relation to innovation supports some funds in specific areas are highlighted such as the bioeconomy, disruptive technologies and related to the green and digital transition.
- In the Netherlands equal opportunities policies are noted to exist in some areas which ensure innovation funding success rates are gender balanced.
- A range of measures related to employment and entrepreneurship are contained in the Italian National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021 to 2026. This includes reform of support for women entrepreneurs who are mothers and remote working entitlements for parents with children of a specific age.
- While not focused on rural areas or farming and with a modest budget, Sweden notes an initiative announced on International Women's Day to promote women's entrepreneurship, with a focus on young women, by the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth. However, in light of the issues already highlighted above in relation to the innovation support system, the national assessment notes this can encourage women to become entrepreneurs, nevertheless wider issues persist and economic growth such as through scalability is still the focus of wider policy.



#### 4.4 EDUCATION, TRAINING AND NETWORKS

##### **Direct support to access further education and training**

Access to education, building skills and innovation capacities is one area often discussed as a gap in the rural innovation ecosystem. The Knowledge Review carried out for FLIARA highlights how lack of information, education, training opportunities, also with fewer higher education institutions present, can be a gap in rural innovation ecosystems. This can disadvantage and hinder women's participation (e.g. to continue leading or start leading) and success in innovation on farms or in rural areas (McGuinness et al, forthcoming). The Innovation Journey developed as part of the FLIARA Conceptual Framework (D1.1) includes building skillsets and expertise in step 2, which is about deciding and preparing to act (Farrell et al. forthcoming).

The Knowledge Review and Conceptual Framework carried out for FLIARA also highlights the complexity of the education issue. It is not just one of a generalised lack of opportunities. Outmigration or entrepreneurship are choices women can make if their education level and skills does not match available rural opportunities. This underlines the importance of further education and training availability to support a successful pathway in innovation and entrepreneurship. For example, areas such as business skills and confidence may still need to be built (Farrell et al. forthcoming; McGuinness et al, forthcoming). Another important point made in the Knowledge Review carried out for FLIARA is innovation and entrepreneurship in specific areas also potentially requires specialist skills. For example, in relation to women in the specific area of digital entrepreneurship specialist and wider digital skills are of course highlighted as key, but so are other wider skills such as planning, management and financial literacy. The specific roles carried out by women, such as often taking on more caring and domestic responsibilities can also be a barrier to pursuing education. More broadly it is highlighted that educational innovations such as distance and online learning education can help education access in rural areas (McGuinness et al, forthcoming). The FLIARA Conceptual Framework (D1.1) also embeds the notion that digital tools help overcome the rural tyranny of distance (Farrell et al. forthcoming).

Direct support for women in rural areas and farming to access further education and training was not identified strongly in the national assessments. CAP is discussed in this regard, but mostly not with direct targeting, however those measures discussed could indirectly provide support. In Ireland the potential for women-only knowledge transfer groups based on local need is provided for in the CSP (also discussed in Section 3.1). In Italy, while not targeted towards women there is an intervention that focuses on the training of agricultural entrepreneurs as well as employees in certain areas. Similarly, in Spain's assessment, in the CAP Rural Development Plan training courses in new agricultural techniques, sustainable practices, business management, and digital skills are foreseen. The need for greater update of education related to farming for women was highlighted in Ireland's assessment. Greater uptake of such education options for women should then link into more farm and farm-related careers. Greater female participation in one course, the Green Cert is noted, but the need for more focused action



on education for farming careers for women is still an issue, for example highlighted clearly in Ireland's recent National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture. Two of the resulting actions emerging from this published in 2024 related to education and link both to action at primary, post-primary and third level education.

Wider context on education levels and provision also emerges as important. For example, it was noted in the assessments of the Czech Republic and Sweden that women are more educated than men. The European Gender Equality Strategy also notes education is one area where the gender gap is being closed. In Sweden it is noted that financial barriers to education access are low because all levels of education are free and the student loan programme provides generous support while in education. In Spain, Agricultural Cooperatives and Associations as well as National and Regional Entrepreneurship and Innovation Centers, while not targeting women directly, are described to play an important role in building skills and capacities in rural and farm innovation and entrepreneurship.

Generally and overall, as part of national assessments, direct support for women in rural areas and farming to access further education and training was assessed to exist to some extent. Supports and initiatives are found in a number of areas, but are generally not rural or farm focused. In unpacking this and to show why some extent of support was identified, a number of key areas or themes emerge. One is a focus on the general empowerment of women through education. For example, while not rurally targeted, in Spain programs and workshops (e.g. entrepreneurship training, and leadership development) delivered by the Women Institute generally aim to empower women. Another theme identified can be described as attempts to improve gender balance in particular disciplines, skill areas and professions. In the earlier sections we have discussed issues of gender stereotypes and norms attached to certain occupations, such as farming as a male profession, and activities, such as rural areas not being places for innovation. While not focused on women in rural areas or farming, tackling gender imbalances also emerges as an important policy focus in some areas:

- Italy: The National Strategy for Gender Equality was highlighted for its focus on improving women's involvement in STEM subjects through scholarships, educational career guidance services and reserved places for women in STEM disciplines at university level with very low participation of women. It also includes a measure to promote and provide guidance for vocational qualifications in traditionally male dominated jobs, as well as including a focus on encouraging female entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector. A number of measures also focus on improving digital, computer and ICT literacy among women.
- Netherlands: Attempts to attract more women into technical studies have been carried out via communication campaigns.
- Finland: The Government work plan 2023 includes incentives related to education and career choices in relation to the gendered nature of some jobs and to reduce gender imbalances. The Innovation and Skills in Finland 2021–2027 programme also has a focus on institutional frameworks to remove stereotypes



in education and employment and promotion of possibilities for women to gain education in traditional male sectors.

- Germany: As part of the ESF Plus Guideline on Gender Equality in Working Life there is a focus on combating gender stereotypes in career and educational choices.
- Ireland: Both gender balance in STEM and low female participation in apprenticeships are issues and actions at government level are noted, such as those published by the Department of Education on Gender Balance in STEM Education.
- Slovenia: The National Program for Education promotes the inclusion of gender perspectives in educational content and supports initiatives that increase female participation in STEM fields.

Measures to support women and families access education at particular life stages were also identified such as:

- Italy: The National Strategy for Gender Equality support for mothers at university are noted (e.g. exemption from fees).
- Finland: Morning and afterschool clubs are provided for children at primary level intended to assist parents by providing more available time to pursue education.

In general, some policies and initiatives that support education access and skills development more broadly are noted:

- Sweden: There is a focus on digital delivery of education and combined with the education institutions (folk high schools, study associations) present in rural areas this results in a variety of education options. The National Resource Centre for Artisan Food, Eldrimner, provides courses that develops skills in adding value to farm produce and can be linked with supporting farm and rural diversification and innovation. It is understood more women access these courses than men.
- Czech Republic: Women's education is not seen as a priority issue as women are generally more educated than men. Rather lower education more broadly in rural areas is highlighted as an issue, as well as lower digital skills with older generations.
- Ireland: A focus in Ireland's rural development policy Our Rural Future is on improving capacities for remote learning. While this is outlined to assist young people this could also link indirectly to supporting rural and farm women innovators once actions are implemented.
- Germany: As part of the programmes supporting women-led rural start-ups 'Business Start-ups by Women in Rural Areas' and 'Innovative Measures for Women in Rural Areas' they support further education and training. A range of wider policies and supports related to education and upskilling are also mentioned. While not targeted towards women, of particular note is the Aufstiegs-Bafög program that provides funding support for training at a technical school to become a master in industrial and craft professions, technicians, specialist clerks, state-certified educators or business economists.



### **Mentoring and peer to peer learning programmes**

Mentoring and peer to peer learning programmes that focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas were not identified strongly in the national assessments. Some notable exceptions are identified. In Ireland, the ACORNS peer-led support network for rural female entrepreneurs is focused on supporting nascent start-ups and aims to accelerate their establishment and development. It is considered a very successful programme generally. Also in Ireland's CSP the SWOT highlighted the success of ACORNS and the opportunity to pilot other programmes building on its success. The programs described in Germany also have a direct women and rural focus. Through providing mentoring supports the Mentor Program for Migrant Women assists migrant women enter employment. The Landheldinnen mentoring programme supports rural women and girls engage in politics and civil society. In Sweden there were no long-term programmes identified. Otherwise where mentoring and peer to peer learning programmes were deemed to exist the following further observations can be made:

- Spain: No national and dedicated to rural areas or farming but learning supporting innovation and entrepreneurship through wider training and education is referenced, as well as wider networking opportunities available through Agricultural Cooperatives and Associations, as well as National and Regional Entrepreneurship and Innovation Centers.
- Czech Republic: These types of programmes can emerge from NGOs, such as the Association of Private Agriculture of the Czech Republic or the Czech Women's Union.
- The Netherlands: Mentoring programmes do exist, such as Future Female Leaders B.V, but is more associated with urban areas. Farming organisations can have sub-organisations active in this area such as Woman and Enterprise (Vrouw en Bedrijf) in the Dutch Farmers Association.
- Finland: No significant programmes were identified however the existence of small, funded projects was noted.
- Slovenia: The project TERA (Balancing Professional and Private Life in the Countryside) is described that involves 20 mentoring pairs selected from the Association of Young Farmers and Association of Rural Women who are themselves trained and then offer workshops and individual mentoring based on the TERA programme.
- Italy: Farming organisations can have female sub-organisations active in this area such as Confagricoltura Donna, Donne in Campo and Coldiretti Donne impresa. In addition, the EWA (Empowering Women in Agrifood) programme, promoted by EIT Food and co-funded by the EU, is also implemented in Italy, with the support of an NGO. It aims to provide support to women in their early-stage entrepreneurial path.



### Networking supports and programmes

The Knowledge Review carried out for FLIARA also highlighted how a lack of cooperation and networking can be a gap in rural innovation ecosystems, also contributing to disadvantaging and hindering women's participation and success in innovation and entrepreneurship (McGuinness et al, forthcoming). Networking programmes focused directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas were not identified strongly in national assessments. However, some wider points to note are:

- Sweden: No long-term current programmes are identified, but it is noted they have existed in short term and past. More generally it is noted that women-only business networks tend to be created through projects therefore long-term existence can be challenged outside of project lifespan. Also the networks created through one programme that is cited, while they connected women entrepreneurs, the impact on innovation is questioned.
- Czech Republic: Women's networks exist, but do not focus directly on agriculture or rural issues (e.g. the Czech Women's Lobby has 41 sub-organisations).
- Finland: No significant programmes were identified however the existence of small, funded projects was noted.
- Slovenia: The role of the Association of Farming Women of Slovenia in networking farm and rural women is noted, such as running social events and the Female Farmer of the Year competition. Pressure on this type of organisation is also noted due to its voluntary nature, ageing members and limited funding support. The annual Agribusiness conference, themed in 2024 around 'Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Agriculture' also provides an important space for networking and women feature as part of its visibility campaign.
- Ireland: Run by LAGs in county Cork and Limerick and specifically rural focused is the Women's Rural Entrepreneurial Network that targets self-employed women, start-up or established women entrepreneurs. The Local Enterprise Office facilitated Women in Business Networks would also interact with rural areas. Under the agri-food sector policy Food Vision 2030 there is an action to promote and support women's networks in the agri-food sector. The CERES women in agri-business leadership network is given as an example and was founded by women in the agri-business sector. There are also some wider groups that involve networks of women in rural and farm innovation, such as the Women in Agriculture Working Group.
- Germany: Initiated by the German Agricultural Society, Female Agri Fellows is a national level program that aims to bring together a network of competence and expertise for women in the agriculture allowing for discussion and networking individually with female leaders. Other non-government organisations also play a role in networking.
- Italy: No significant national programmes are identified, but all the three main farmers organisations have women subsections which also organise networking activities/events.



## 4.5 EMPOWERMENT

### **Women's representation and participation in decision-making**

The FLIARA Conceptual Framework highlights the importance of increasing women's participation in decision making and providing greater opportunities for rural and farm women to take part in influencing the decisions that impact them. It also highlights how in politics and public life women are still underrepresented (Farrell et al., forthcoming). Women's representation in LEADER LAGs has seen some improvements with measures introduced through national CSPs (discussed further in Section 3.3).

While not specific to farming and rural areas, policy measures, laws and initiatives to increase women's representation and participation in decision-making can take different forms, both more generalised and specific actions. In Sweden, the gender equality law applies, but no specific policy measures exist. Perhaps this is the case as action is not critical as gender representation is already relatively balanced in for example parliament and state boards, as highlighted in the national assessment. In Italy the constitution outlines that all citizens can access public offices and elective positions under conditions of equality. In the Czech Republic it is reported that measures that support women's representation and participation in decision-making are widely debated where women themselves can view them negatively and measures that exist are said to have varied results. Where figures are available, gender equality in decision making bodies is mixed.

Based on our national assessments there are a number of specific arenas that emerge where specific action exists. Politics and the election of political representatives is one. This can take the form of gender quotas for electoral lists as is the case in Romania, Ireland and Slovenia. In Romania, for national and European elections women must make up 20% of the electoral list. In Slovenia a quota exists for electoral lists for parliamentary and local elections. There must be at least 40% candidates from the underrepresented gender (usually women). In Ireland quotas exist for national politics where political parties must select at least 30% female candidates and the current programme for government commits to introduce measures for local government. Also in Ireland, programmes, such as 'See Her Elected' focus on addressing the underrepresentation of women in political life. In Italy the constitution provides for removal of any obstacle that prevents full equality of men and women in social, cultural and economic life and promotes equal access between women and men to elective positions. Italian law also provides for the rebalancing of gender representation in the councils and boards of local authorities and in regional councils. In the Netherlands, rather than being formal policy or law, political parties themselves can have rules in relation to women's participation. Similar is also noted in Slovenia where political parties, as well as government institutions, are encouraged to develop gender equality plans that promote women's participation in decision-making. In Germany, the national assessment notes the existence of two prizes, the Helene Weber Kolleg and Helene Weber Prizes for recognition of outstanding achievements in local politics, where the winners are said to provide role models to women.





Policy and law is also identified that influences women's representation and participation in decision making bodies. For example, Gender Equality Law in Romania encourages increased women's participation in decision making bodies such as on public boards and committees by specifying that there must be equal opportunities for women and men, which can include taking affirmative action such as implementing quotas or targets. In Finland, the National Rural Policy Programme 2021-2027 proposes, due to low (20-28% women) representation, that women's role in chairing municipality councils and boards should be promoted. In Spain, the Organic Law for Effective Equality between Women and Men aims to address the gender gap in political and institutional representation. In Ireland focus is placed on improving women's representation on state boards to reach at least 40% while underrepresentation exists, improvements are noted. Fair gender balance is also a focus in the Ireland's CSP monitoring committee that aims at better involving women and women's interest groups.

Boards of enterprises are also an area that emerges. Italy has a law on the representation of women on the board of directors and auditors of listed companies, as well as non-listed companies controlled by public companies, with a quota in place. Amendments have increased this from an initial 20% in 2011 to now 40%. In Sweden the assessment raises that private enterprise can have weaknesses in women's representation on boards. In Ireland this issue is raised in the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-20 where under-representation of women on corporate boards is highlighted as an issue. In Slovenia, a law is also being prepared to introduce gender quotas in private enterprises.

Initiatives focused on skills and capacity building to support women's participation in politics and governance roles are also identified. Romania outlines a number of programs emerging from political parties, local governance as well as civil society organisations, for example the Women in Politics Program by National Democratic Institute. EU funding programmes, such as the European Social Fund, have also funded women's empowerment initiatives in Romania. In Spain programs developed by the Women's Institute help build capacity around taking on leadership roles and participation in decision making. In Slovenia measures exist related to training and capacity building supporting women engaging in leadership roles in politics and public administration.

The activities of non-government organisations are also important to support women's representation and participation in decision-making. In Romania a range of organisations are highlighted, such as the Romanian Women's Lobby, that lobby and promote women's interests. Women's under-representation in farming organisations and cooperatives is identified in Ireland's assessment and the independent and voluntary Women in Agriculture Stakeholders Group has called for a quota system of 30% female representation on their boards.

### **Harassment and violence against women**

This assessment only touches briefly on the issue of harassment and violence against women. It is beyond the scope of FLIARA to assess this grave and serious issue in the



context of policy and legal frameworks. Our initial aim was to identify policies and laws in relation to how these issues impact women in their professional capacities and in the realm of public life. For example, the European Gender Equality Strategy points to the #MeToo movement which has highlighted and demonstrated the extent of the issue of violence and harassment against women in workplace contexts. As women move into spheres of life previously not commonly occupied by them, issues of harassment and threats can become a greater issue. For example, in Ireland's assessment the increasing discussion of the issue of threats and harassment to women in politics is highlighted, as well as the need for greater protections.

National assessments focused on identifying if measures exist that work to protect against and/or combat harassment (online or otherwise) and violence against women in public life. The assessment also identified wider laws and policies related to violence against women, harassment and discrimination. Some measures were reported in all countries. Broader observations are also important to note in relation to this issue. Also relevant to our national assessment is the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in the countries analysed. In the European Gender Equality Strategy, the European Commission calls on Member States to ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention. This is an international instrument to combat and prevent violence against women and girls, support victims and punish perpetrators. All Member States part of this assessment have ratified this convention, apart from the Czech Republic (European Parliament, 2024). In Czech Republic national assessment, it is reported its non-approval is in contrast to wider laws on violence against women and it was viewed to threaten the traditional family and introduced a gender ideology.

Wider issues related to the rural and farm context itself also emerge in national assessments. For example, in Ireland it is noted, based on a report from the National Women's Council, that in small communities where people are close-knit this can impact getting support meaning domestic violence can remain more hidden. Further to this distance from support services and meetings can impact getting help. In relation to farming it is noted that if a barring order is needed and the farm is located beside the family home this can present challenges as the farm could also be the perpetrator's place of work.

More widely, measures that focus on a culture change are also noted in some assessments. In the Netherlands assessment action against gender-based violence includes a focus on culture change in different areas of life such as within the cultural and care sectors. In Spain the State Pact Against Gender-Based Violence emphasises the importance of education, awareness-raising, and the role of media in preventing violence and harassment. More broadly tackling mental health issues could also have impact and in Slovenia it is noted that women are more likely to come forward for help. In the Slovenian context also the promising results of the 'Rural Powerlessness' project are noted that tackled mental health in farming and has now led to further and more secure support services.



### Visibility of women-led innovation

Rural areas can be conceived as traditional. The Knowledge Review carried out for FLIARA highlights how the dominant view of rural places can be one where patriarchy remains where stereotypes of women as homemakers and men as breadwinners can still persist. Traditional gender roles place limitations on rural opportunities for women. It is observed that the actual true roles women hold in rural areas can have poor visibility and their contributions need greater visibility (McGuinness et al, forthcoming).

The national assessments aimed to identify measures that aim to increase the visibility of women-led innovation in rural areas and farming. Policy measures and wider initiatives do exist, but were not identified strongly. In Sweden and the Czech Republic the role of the media in this space is highlighted. The role of the National Rural Networks (now CAP Networks) is highlighted in Italy and Ireland. In Spain it is noted that explicit initiatives are not found but increasing visibility of women-led innovation in both rural areas and farming is part of broader strategies to promote rural development, gender equality, and innovation. In the Romania context a similar point is made. It is noted that a range of wider initiatives from agricultural agencies collaborating with NGOs would have as part of their aims to showcase women-led innovation in farming and rural areas as well as address gender disparities. However, the effect is unclear and the need for monitoring is also noted in the national assessment.

Where measures are identified awards are a common initiative identified. In Slovenia, the Association of Rural Women of Slovenia awards the Female farmer/rural women of the Year. The Agribusiness Conference awards women recipients each year and in 2024 the theme was Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Agriculture. In Italy it is noted the three main agricultural organisations take actions, including awards to increase the visibility of women-led innovations. Some assessments also highlight initiatives that celebrate women's achievements more widely in the areas of entrepreneurship and innovation, such as the Czech Republic and Ireland. This includes the Top Women of the Czech Republic competition that honours inspiring women across various fields including entrepreneurship and innovation. The assessment in Ireland identifies the National Women's Enterprise Day and Women Mean Business awards.

## 4.6 PAY PENSION, WORK-LIFE AND FAMILY

The FLIARA Knowledge Review notes how rural women can be time poor when compared to rural men as they devote more of their resources to care and domestic work. This impacts the amount of time women have available to devote to professional activities such as entrepreneurship and impacts the potential for women's participation and success in innovation. An innovation ecosystem supportive of women-led innovation must then assess family policy issues, such as childcare, parental and maternity leave. Wider policy related to pay and pensions is also important. Time taken out of professional life can then impact pension entitlements creating knock on gender equality issues because of the roles women, including rural and farm women, tend to focus on. These issues impact the attractiveness of professional life in rural and farm innovation for women. For example, Zlateva et al. (2019, p.42) argue that such policies can influence



women's "choice of a more stable job over the choice of being an entrepreneur" and recommend "Development of a strategy and taking concrete actions to harmonize the business environment with the family environment for support and relief for women in their care for children, elderly parents, family life and recreation" (Zlateva et al., 2019, p.43). The Netherlands assessment also raises a similar point. Employees in the social service system are entitled to benefits, such as unemployment benefit and parental leave. Irregular income and the nature of freelance work can impact access to mortgages. These types of issues may make professional life in self-employment less attractive for rural women.

Further to this, the importance of our focus on pay, pension, work-life and family issues is highlighted through the concept of gender conflict and work life detailed in the FLIARA Conceptual Framework. Core to this theory is that particular gender roles persist "because the dominant group strives to maintain their power and status. Social issues arise from the exploitation or oppression of one group by a dominant group, as per conflict theory. These include the unequal distribution of domestic and care responsibilities between men and women" (Concept Note 13, Garces Ortiz in Farrell et al. forthcoming, p.85). In the context of an innovation ecosystem supportive of women-led innovation this calls for us to assess policy and legal frameworks related to family policies, work-life balance, pay and pensions. Research has also argued strongly for such an approach. For example, Ahl et al. (2023) raises the question of what policies are most supportive of rural women's entrepreneurship and argues that in the Swedish context analysed that existing rural and agricultural policies "missed women", they did not find a place for their work in what was available. Business training and seed financing were found to be useful measures. Overall it is argued "entrepreneurship and rural development policy cannot be separated from family policy and welfare state policy. These policy areas intersect in important ways, and policy makers must recognise that they need to work horizontally across policy areas" (Ahl et al., 2023, p.22).

### **Family policies**

Different challenges face women depending on their life-stage and family circumstances. Taking motherhood into account in an assessment of policy and law supporting women-led innovation is part of acknowledging that women are not a homogenous group. Combining motherhood and women-led innovation can be supported by family policies that enable women to gain the resource of time to focus on their innovative practice and gain work-life balance, or also take time out of this professional role at certain life stages. Women do successfully combine motherhood, entrepreneurship and innovation as the 'Mumpreneur' phenomenon demonstrates how women combine business with family responsibilities (e.g. see Ekinsmyth, 2013). Its emergence has also been linked to deficiencies in family policies such as parental leave and childcare services attracting mothers to entrepreneurship and self-employment because of the greater flexibility and possibility to balance work and family life (Sheikh et al. 2018).

Family policies provide important supports to parents and their design impacts gender equality in domestic and professional life. Maternity and parental leave benefits of



different kinds were identified in all countries. In general entitlement to maternity and parental leave do not depend on the sector and type of work (e.g. agriculture and self-employed) or residential location (e.g. rural). However, there are some exceptions which have implications for rural and farm based self-employed women. In the Netherlands it is noted that parental leave only applies to employees and not self-employed entrepreneurs. In the German assessment it is noted that while entrepreneurs are entitled to maternity leave benefits, organising and managing this leave presents challenges and they generally tend to take lower leave days compared to employed people.

Maternity leave is generally an entitlement for birth mothers, unless particular exceptional circumstances arise when another parent can avail of this leave. However, in Spain both parents have entitlements to maternity leave under the birth and care of a minor leave. Part of the maternity leave can be shared among parents which demonstrates a commitment to supporting families and gender equality. In Sweden both parents are also entitled to leave, there is no specific maternity leave scheme, only parental leave. However 90 days (of a total of 480) are reserved for each parent exclusively. In the Netherlands a different system exists for maternity leave for self-employed and this is available to co-working partners of self-employed people. In Italy changes are foreseen under the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2026 with proposed measures to encourage the sharing of parental responsibilities. Paternity leave is also a type of leave that applies following the birth of a child. It can be a short period of leave (e.g. around two weeks), for example as described in the Ireland, Romania and Italy assessments, while a longer period (30 days) is reported in Slovenia and significantly longer in Spain (16 weeks).

Parental leave is a benefit available to both mothers and fathers, however in the past this was not the case. Slovenia was one of the early adopters of this approach with parental leave available to both parents since 1976. Length of leave differs among countries, as does the level of benefit provided. The approach in Slovenia allows for one-year parental leave and includes full salary compensation while on this leave. In Germany, parental allowance is paid based on wage levels before the leave is taken and is a minimum of €300 and maximum €1,800 per month. In the German assessment it is also noted that taking parental leave for self-employed is not the norm and farmers are rare recipients of it. In Sweden a possible weakness is noted in relation to parental leave in that paid work is not permitted while on leave. This can present a challenge for entrepreneurs and farmers. For example, according to the Federation of Swedish Farmers, due to the low profitability of farms and salary of farmers this can be a push factor for young women to leave farming due to the higher salaries and hence better parental benefits obtained from working elsewhere.

### **Childcare**

The FLIARA Knowledge Review particularly highlights childcare provision as a key issue that impacts women's time and resources and hence ability to participate in women-led innovation, as well as influencing their work-life balance. Childcare availability and cost



in rural areas was identified as an issue in all countries, however to different extents and with varied issues associated with this. In Slovenia in general there is a good network of childcare in rural areas but there is also a discussion about costs. Alongside this in some vibrant rural areas, due to rapid population increases, there can be a lack of infrastructure and enough spaces in public childcare. In Sweden, childcare availability in sparsely populated areas appears as an issue in relation to availability weaknesses. Generally in Sweden, children from age one are guaranteed a childcare place with the highest fee payable €150 per month per child. In Germany and Romania, the cost in public facilities is said to be a lesser problem than private. While government supports exist towards the costs and improvements to these schemes are planned, Ireland's national assessment reports childcare costs of up to €1350 per month per child. It has also been reported that childcare costs in Ireland are some of the highest in the EU. An area of continuing debate in the Netherlands is the case to make childcare free.

Lack of childcare places is a problem described in rural areas for various reasons. Historical lack of investment and growing population are cited in the Czech Republic assessment. Increasing investment, such as in construction of new facilities, is described to be part of policies in Spain, Italy, the Czech Republic and Ireland. Some differences are observed in national assessments based on the type of rural area. In Spain geographical distance to available childcare is an issue in some rural areas. In Finland access in remote rural areas can be a challenge. In Italy data shows the lowest availability of places in ultra peripheral areas. In Romania it is noted that in some rural areas, access to formal childcare facilities such as daycare centres may be limited because of lower population density and resource allocation for childcare infrastructure. In the Netherlands assessment, provision of childcare on farms is highlighted as an opportunity as government support exists to help develop such facilities. Opening hours are also an issue mentioned in the Spain and Slovenia national assessments. It is also observed in the Slovenia assessment that the demands of farming can also require childcare outside of conventional day-time working hours.

Supports to cover childcare costs are also identified in national assessments, such as fee supports for parents on low incomes are identified in Ireland and the Netherlands. Supports towards the cost of childcare in Spain are open to all but different criteria determine the level of support received e.g. income, family composition. In Slovenia a subsidy system across 10 income groups is described where depending on the income assessment the costs of childcare varies from 0% to 77% of the full price.

### **Work-life balance**

The national assessments also aimed to capture if other supports exist that can assist rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs achieve work-life balance and a number of supports emerged related to this. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, measures such as flexible and remote working have become more commonplace and accepted. However, as is noted in the Czech Republic assessment such measures cannot be practiced in agriculture, however for wider rural women entrepreneurs these practices can help combine family responsibilities with entrepreneurship. However, in the context of rural



women entrepreneurs, this is their practice rather than the effect of policy. Similarly in the Irish assessment it is noted that remote and flexible working measures tend to target employees.

In relation to farming, farm relief schemes are mentioned as a support for farmers to take leave. In Finland the publicly funded farm relief scheme supports farmers to take holiday leave. It also covers the cost of temporary workers to allow for parental leave or leave for women during pregnancy. This model has been recognised by the farming sector in Sweden as a promising approach and the potential for a similar programme has been debated. Sweden does not have a public funded farm relief system, however private companies providing farm relief services exist. A cooperative providing Farm Relief services exists in Ireland.

A number of wider social security and employment supports are discussed in national assessments in relation to assisting rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs achieve work-life balance, including childcare and wider family supports. For example, payments to families with dependent children provide income support towards child rearing and examples are cited in Romania and Italy. In relation to female entrepreneurs, supports towards taking on employees are noted in the assessments of Sweden and Spain. In Sweden support is available to business owners when they employ a person with a disability, health issues, in long-term unemployment or has newly immigrated. In Spain subsidies for hiring employees exist including reductions in social security contributions for hiring family members or permanent staff. Also related to supporting entrepreneurs and specifically start-ups, in the Netherlands tax measures are mentioned as a support. However to be considered an entrepreneur at least 1225 hours must be committed annually to the enterprise. There is compensation for time taken while on maternity leave which can be considered part of these hours but not for other care-related activities.

### **Gender and pay issues**

The assessment aimed to identify if measures existed that address the gender pay gap in relation to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs. National assessments show that a common part of approaches to work towards dealing with the pay gap issue is to monitor it. In the Czech Republic there is the gender pay gap indicator, however this lacks regular monitoring by sector or place. In Finland a similar observation is made, as there are measures to analyse and provide more open information on pay levels and close this gap, however this takes a universal approach and does not have sector specific aspects. Similarly in Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands it is noted pay gap measures exist however there is not a farm or rural focus within these. Sector-specific issues are also noted in Slovenia where pay differences are a noted issue in the private and business sector, but cannot exist in public services because of regulated and harmonised pay. The Czech Republic assessment also observes that the pay gap is also linked to reinforcing the tendency for women to take time out of work to devote time to caring roles, such as through parental leave, because women tend to earn less than men.



Laws that prohibit gender-based pay discrimination and ensuring there is equal pay for work of equal value are outlined in the national assessments of Spain, Sweden and Slovenia. The Swedish assessment also notes a weakness because it is just large employers that must analyse pay structures and correct imbalances. Both in Spain and Slovenia the role of gender equality plans are mentioned as a place where pay equality can be dealt with at organisational levels.

### **Gender and pension issues**

Gender inequality in pensions is an issue that emerges in national assessments in relation to women in general, but also linked to rural areas, farming and the wider category of self-employed. Women can have lower pension entitlements than men. In the German context it is noted that in the broad field of 'green professions' recent analysis has found that a third of women do not consider that they have sufficient pension provision. In Sweden, women's work patterns are highlighted and these impact on pension entitlements. They tend to work in low wage industries, part time and take the majority of parental leave. This situation is not unique to rural women in Sweden, but issues can be exacerbated by the rural context where jobs are fewer and many women are self-employed or work in family businesses. In Sweden, Italy and the Netherlands it is also raised that the gender pay gap impacts pensions. In the Netherlands it is also noted that in relation to private pension schemes that spouses have a claim on the pension rights of their partners. Rights build up during the relationship and can be distributed equally. In Ireland it is noted that women are far less likely to have an entitlement to a full state pension compared to men. This is also the case in farming. In the case of farm spouses, historically women's role on the farm can be informal and unpaid, therefore if this was their only employment they would not likely have adequate contributions towards a state pension. In Romania a similar issue is noted, that both rural and farm women are more likely to engage in informal or unpaid work and informal employment may not be covered by state pension schemes. Certain groups of women are also highlighted in the Romania context as particularly at risk of being marginalised (such as by age, disability, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status). In Ireland a system exists where women can claim retrospectively that a farm partnership existed in order to entitle them to a contributory state pension. That said, the system and criteria to meet have been critiqued as restrictive. Similar issues are also highlighted in Spain where it is noted while the pension system is designed to be gender neutral, but in practice disparities in contributions can arise from gendered differences in labour market participation and earnings, as well as traditional employment patterns in rural areas.

In Slovenia and Spain there are specific schemes that apply to farm workers relating to pensions. In Slovenia farm workers pay lower contributions to pensions than other employees. The Special Agrarian Social Security Regime in Spain covers farm workers, aiming to address the specific circumstances and realities of agricultural employment that can impact pension entitlements. Underreporting of income or informal work arrangements potentially has greater impacts on women. In Spain it is also noted that even with these efforts gender related differences in income and employment stability may still influence pension entitlements for women.





In relation to pensions, female rural entrepreneurs and innovators can fall into the self-employed category. Relating to private pensions in the Netherlands a regulation allows self-employed people to opt-in to a scheme voluntarily, but many do not as it is considered too costly. This potentially leaves self-employed people with limited income at pension age. This is an increasing issue of concern as growth in self-employment and freelance work is also identified in the Netherlands and the growth rate of female freelancers is higher than males.

Similarly in Spain it is noted self-employed female entrepreneurs and innovators in rural areas often fall under the Self-Employed Workers' Social Security Regime but higher contribution levels are voluntary and fluctuating incomes can impact this leading to lower pension entitlements. In relation to self-employed women and gender disparities in pensions, the assessment in Spain also highlights the need for measures to encourage fair contributions and provide information on the long-term benefits of higher pension contributions.



## 5. CONCLUSION

This assessment took a broad scope, beyond traditionally understood rural and farm policy and legal frameworks. The results underline the relevance of this approach showing how a range of policies and laws, and their associated measures and supports, impact women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. This also brings into prominence the extent of the challenge of boosting and better supporting women-led innovation in these contexts through improved support via the levers of policy and law.

However, for FLIARA's future work on policy and legal frameworks, particular priority areas of need may need to be identified to ensure we can make a strong contribution. For example, this could include a focus on specific support measures such as access to finance. Another potential area of more focused attention could be the role of innovative policy delivery models such as the LEADER, locally-led bottom-up approach. Bringing together the findings of this task, the wider work of WP1 as well as WP2 and WP3 will be important to further guide FLIARA. Digging deeper into this assessment through further and more focused analysis could also provide guidance on this. Finally, to bring together some wider key points emerging from this assessment, a number of broader observations emerge:

- A motivation underpinning FLIARA is that current evidence suggests the potential of rural women to contribute to sustainability transitions remains untapped, in particular due to a lack of targeting in policy frameworks and innovation support systems. Our assessment here further supports this assertion.
- FLIARA does not view women as a homogenous group, but women of different ages, cultures and ethnicities engage in rural and farm innovation. Particularly in CSPs, policy can target young women, but only to a minor extent. More widely, and more often than not, an intersectional approach, such as taking into account issues like race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, in policy and legal frameworks is not identified in this assessment.
- A place-based approach in policy supports is not identified strongly in this assessment. This potentially could be enhanced with supports for women tied to the challenges and opportunities of particular places, such as remote rural mountain areas versus rural places adjacent to urban areas.
- When policies do focus on women in rural areas and farming the focus can be placed broadly on better supporting women to overcome challenges and capitalise on opportunities, as well as improving gender equality. Our assessment would indicate that a clear and targeted focus on supporting women-led innovation is generally weak.
- Access to finance is a key issue all innovators face, particularly women. Grants of various types are identified, also to some extent low or no interest loans. However, there is also a clear need for more innovative and targeted measures to support access to finance supporting women-led innovation, such as women-



only start-up and scale-up grants and loans, tax incentives and grants to test new innovation ideas.

- Analysis by Shortall and Marangudakis (2024) argues that agricultural policies generally fail to and need to better consider how women farm differently. Our assessment would allow support this argument. For CAP to better support women-led innovation in farming a greater focus is needed on areas where women tend to be more active e.g. organic farming, smaller scale extensive farming, local food supply chains, agri-tourism, and care farming. However, care is also needed here and more broadly a wider focus on supporting gender equality and women's access to all other farming sub-sectors is also important.
- Similarly, in relation to rural women-led innovation more broadly the need to consider how women do business differently also appears an area of need. For example based on analysis of women's entrepreneurship policy in countries in the Danube region it is recommended the need for fostering the establishment and development of women owned or managed companies in specific areas such as: "knowledge-based services, social entrepreneurship, part-time self-employment, group entrepreneurship" (Zlateva et al., 2019, p.43).



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## ANNEX 1: ASSESSMENT APPROACH

In parts 1 to 4 of the questionnaire, the different European Gender Equality Strategy objectives act as principles to provide boundaries to guide the scope of our assessment (see Table below). Part 1 aims to assess the extent which current farming and rural development policy and legal frameworks directly/indirectly support women-led innovations in farming and rural areas in the partner countries. This is a key part of our core goal in T1.4. In moving beyond this core goal our assessment in parts 2, 3 and 4 focus mostly on how the relevant policy and legal frameworks directly impact women-led innovations in farming and rural areas, however with some focus on indirect impacts. Part 5 of the questionnaire aims to identify initiatives that address gaps in current policy and law and could provide models for future policies and/or laws to better address the challenges facing improved women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. Part 5 also provides space to include information not covered in the other parts of the questionnaire.

European Gender Equality Strategy Principle	Questionnaire Focus
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Closing gender gaps in the labour market</li> <li>2. Achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy</li> </ol>	<p><b><u>Rural and farm economy</u></b> and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farming and Rural Development Policy and Law directly and indirectly impacting women-led innovation (part 1)</li> <li>• Wider policy and law impacting women-led innovation (part 2)</li> </ul>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Achieving gender balance in decision making and politics</li> <li>4. Ending gender based violence</li> <li>5. Challenging gender stereotypes</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies and laws impacting the <b><u>empowerment</u></b> of women and improved rural and farm women-led innovation (part 3)</li> </ul>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Addressing the gender pay and pension gap</li> <li>7. Closing the gender care gap</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies and laws impacting the personal sphere in areas of <b><u>pay, pension, work-life and family</u></b> issues (part 4)</li> </ul>





## ANNEX 2: NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

### CZECHIA

**Assessment by:** Antonín Vaishar, Mendel University in Brno

#### GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The Czech Republic is a unitary state with a three-tier government: state - regions - municipalities. At the central level, the Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, headed by the Prime Minister, was established.

### PART 1: POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN FARMING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

#### 1A: GENERAL CONTEXT

**Q. 1A.1: In your country, is there a commitment to gender mainstreaming, or other method of gender equality assessment (e.g. benchmarking) of all key rural and/or farm policies?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_X\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_X\_\_

The Strategy of the Government Council for Gender Equality for the years 2021-2030 contains a relatively detailed analysis of the representation of women on the labour market, in leadership positions, in education, in matters of health and care for pregnant women and mothers, from the point of view of crime prevention. Most of the data listed is based on statistical or similar materials, so it can be continuously updated. The material also deals with the perception of women's issues in society and in the media. The Council monitors the national fulfilment of the international obligations of the Czech Republic in the field of equality between women and men, in particular the obligations arising from the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and others; identifies current problems in society in the field of gender equality; discusses and recommends to the government of the Czech Republic the basic conceptual directions of the procedure of the government of the Czech Republic in promoting equality between women and men, especially through the elaboration of proposals concerning policies in individual areas of equality between women and men, proposals for partial measures and initiatives to improve equality between women and men, on its own initiative or within the framework of tasks imposed by the government on the Council or its chairman; takes positions on proposals for government, departmental and other measures related to equality between women and men; evaluates the effectiveness of fulfilling the principle of equality between women and men in the Czech Republic; monitors the implementation



and helps the implementation of strategic documents of the Czech government in the area of gender equality; coordinates the basic directions of departmental concepts in the field of equality between women and men and sets the range of priorities for departmental projects to support the realisation of equality between women and men, cooperates with non-governmental non-profit organisations focused on the field of gender equality and with local self-government bodies.

The Council has a number of committees and working groups:

- Committee for Institutional Security of Gender Equality
- Committee for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women
- Committee for balanced representation of women and men in politics and decision-making positions
- Committee for reconciliation of work, private and family life
- Working Group on Men and Gender Equality
- Obstetrics Working Group
- Working Group on Roma Women's Issues
- Working group on the subsidy program Support of public benefit activities in the field of equality between women and men

Any application to the issues of agriculture and rural areas is missing. In the Report on the State of Agriculture for 2022 (Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic), only the share of women among the unemployed in the agricultural sector is stated.

**Q. 1A.2: Do official datasets exist in your country showing women's participation in rural and farm innovation and/or the wider farm and rural economy? e.g. those collected regularly by national statistics agencies or other relevant state bodies**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

The data regarding the equality of women and men are (apparently under the guise of EU indicators) focused on passively, i.e. on the mechanical equalisation of differences - not on women's innovations and their support. No application to innovative women in agriculture and rural areas is known. According to EUROSTAT, 12% of agricultural enterprises were managed by women in Czechia. However, experience shows that these data can be misleading. Family farms, in particular, are often registered to men, but the woman is his equal partner and often independently engages in many specific activities, such as raising horses, and poultry, owning food production, selling it or ensuring the operation of farm-related guesthouses. They often also keep accounts and take care of economic issues.

In the statistics from the census, the Czech Statistical Office presents very basic data on the characteristics of the population divided into men and women (including data on individual sectors), as does the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs data on



unemployment by gender in monthly reports - both at the level of municipalities. According to the Czech Statistical Office, women make up 52.2% of all university-educated persons and 47.2% of all employed persons. In primary industries, 27.7% of all workers are women. Of these, 73.9% are employees, 0.9% are employers, 15.7% are self-employed (the rest are working pensioners, working students and women on maternity leave).

According to labour market analysis, unemployment in the Czech Republic rose to 4.0% in February 2024, with 56.3% of the unemployed being women. Nevertheless, the offer of vacancies exceeds the number of applicants. A total of 23% of agricultural companies state that the lack of labour is a serious obstacle to their business. In agriculture, there is an average shortage of 3 workers per holding. Agricultural enterprises employ 18% of foreigners from non-EU countries.

## **1B: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: EUROPEAN LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AT NATIONAL LEVELS**

### **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**

*CAP 2023-2027 Specific Objective 8 (SO8) references enhancing the position of women in farming and accelerating the social inclusion of rural women – “Promote employment, growth, gender equality, including the participation of women in farming, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including the circular bio-economy and sustainable forestry”.*

**Q. 1B.1: How is the gender equality, including the participation of women in the farming aspect, of Objective 8 reflected in the SWOT analysis, identification of needs and intervention logic of the CAP strategic plan in your country?**

In the Strategic plan for the support of the Common Agricultural Policy for the period 2021-2027 for the Czech Republic, exists the goal *Promote employment, growth, gender equality, including women's participation in agriculture, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including circular bioeconomy and sustainable forest management*. Among the weaknesses of the SWOT analysis, there is a general statement about the inequality of women in the labour market. Among the opportunities is the improvement of the position of women in the labour market (which is an obvious mistake, since the opportunities should be external factors). However, there is no mention of women in the draft measure.

**Q. 1B.2: Does your country's CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_



These words do not appear throughout the Strategic plan for the support of the Common Agricultural Policy for the period 2021-2027 for the Czech Republic.

**Q. 1B.3: Does your country's CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X\_\_\_

Perhaps such a measure could be considered the expansion of non-conventional forms of agriculture (as women generally do not gravitate towards conventional agriculture) and also the development of services that tend to be the domain of women in the rural environment. However, the strategy does not seem to have purposefully intended it this way.

**Q. 1B.4: Does your national LEADER Programme directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X\_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X\_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

This issue does not appear in any current national document on the LEADER or CLLD program. It is possible that they may appear in some strategy of a specific LAG, but in general it is clearly not a topic in Czechia.

**Q. 1B.5: Does your national LEADER Programme indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X\_\_\_

Experience so far shows that women find a place in rural development, especially in non-governmental organisations, associational activities with a cultural or social focus, supported by the LEADER activities or even in public administration. It follows that the support of the mentioned activities is also the support of women, even if it is not declared as such. Women do not even seem to be very interested in conventional farming. Indirect support can also be considered as support for family policy in rural areas, which also mainly affects women, even if it is not declared.



**1C: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: COUNTRY LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS**

**RURAL**

**Q. 1C.1: Does your country have a Rural Development Policy(s)?**

Yes  No  To some extent

The Rural Development Program existed as a separate document between 2014 and 2020 (under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture). It is currently part of the Common Agricultural Policy. However, the South Moravian Region has a Rural Development Program for 2024 without any relation to the support of women.

The Strategy of regional development under the responsibility of the Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic defines five types of regions; it is always about urban centres and their rural background. The relationship to the countryside can be identified in categories 3 (regional centres and their rural hinterland) and 5 (economically and socially threatened areas). There is no relation to the gender issue. The Regional Development Strategy is followed by the Rural Development Concept.

Approximately a quarter of the population of Czechia live in rural municipalities (up to 2,000 inhabitants). If we add small towns (2,000 to 20,000 inhabitants) to this, more than half of the population lives in the countryside. In the last 30 years, the number and share of the rural population in the Czech Republic has been slowly but steadily growing. The rural migration balance is also positive. Therefore, it is not possible to talk about the depopulation of the countryside in general. The share of entrepreneurial activities in agriculture in the Czech countryside is 5%.

**Q. 1C.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes  No  To some extent

The Strategy of regional development under the responsibility of the Ministry for Regional Development of the Czech Republic mentions the issue of gender in the analytical section on the problem of the difference in incomes and social inequalities. But there is a lack of direct connection with the countryside.

**Q. 1C.3: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes  No  To some extent

The Concept of Rural Development mentions the issues of women, gender and motherhood in the issues of insufficient service by public transport, support for gender equality in the armed forces and support for the development of kindergartens in the



countryside. These references are found in different parts of the material and do not form any comprehensive concept of gender politics.

**Q. 1C.4: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

The Ministry of Transport deals more with gender issues. Pregnant women are named among the persons for whom public transport and barrier-free access must be ensured. Women are assumed to be subjects using the principle of multimodality (the interconnectedness of individual modes of transport), as they use public transport more and make multiple trips over shorter distances during the day. This issue can affect rural areas. Another measure is to make technical schools more attractive for women.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has a Gender Equality Development Plan for the years 2021 to 2024. Three strategic goals have been identified: consideration of gender equality in the curriculum, in teacher training, and gender equality in the education process, i.e. in the elimination of gender stereotypes in teaching and assessment.

The Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic has already announced the 17th year of the Office on the Road to Equality competition, which has three categories, including individual (rural) municipalities.

The Ministry of Industry and Trade has the patronage of the Top Women of the Czech Republic competition/survey. This competition honours and highlights inspiring women who have achieved significant success in various fields, including entrepreneurship and innovation.

**Q. 1C.5: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Gender mainstreaming (Gender Impact Assessment) should be part of all decisions at the government level that could affect gender equality. However, it does not seem that this method is applied really consistently. Analyses of the application of the Gender Equality Impact Assessment Methodology for materials submitted to the government of the Czech Republic from December 2022 show that only a small percentage of the materials submitted to the government have a rigorously processed Gender Impact Assessment (of the 145 analysed materials relating to natural persons, only 8.27% had a more comprehensive assessment carried out). The majority of materials had a



purely formalistic assessment (68.2%), and there remain 23.4% of materials related to FO where Gender Impact Assessment was not performed at all.

Several individual policy measures that are channelled into soft policies can support women's initiatives.

## **FARMING**

**Q. 1C.6: Beyond the CAP Strategic Plan, does your country have a core Farming Development Policy (s)?** *e.g. agri-food sector policy (note: sub-sector policies can be dealt with in the last question included in this section below)*

Yes  No  To some extent

There is a Strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic with an outlook until the year 2030.

**Q. 1C.7: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes  No  To some extent

Issues of women or gender do not appear in the material. As far as innovations are concerned, the emphasis is placed on technological and product, possibly marketing or organisational innovations, but women do not appear in this context.

**Q. 1C.8: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes  No  To some extent

Innovations in the sphere of marketing or organisational support could indirectly affect women.

**Q. 1C.9: Do laws governing farm ownership include any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm ownership?**

Yes  No  To some extent

Land ownership issues, as well as family business issues, are dealt with by the Civil Code. Family members have essentially equal rights both in decision-making and in the distribution of benefits. However, there is no special provision that would address positive discrimination.



The **Agriculture Act** stipulates in the section on rural development the obligation to promote employment, growth, and gender equality, including women's participation in agriculture, social inclusion and local development in rural areas.

**Q. 1C.10: Do other policy(s) or law (s) exist in your country that facilitate improved gender equality in relation to running the farm business?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X.

The Association of Private Agriculture prepared a bill on family farms.

**Q. 1C.11: Do laws governing farm transfer and inheritance have any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm inheritance?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

The **Law on the Division of Estates with Agricultural Holdings** and on the Prevention of Fragmentation of Agricultural Land was repealed in 1964. General inheritance rules apply. In the first class, the husband or wife plus children inherit equally. If there are no children, the wife/husband inherit half of the property and the heirs in the second class a proportional share, etc.

**Q. 1C.12: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 1C.13: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming? e.g. organic farming, horticulture, agri-tourism, care/social farming**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Regulations regarding organic farming refer to EU standards. Agritourism is governed by general laws, such as the Trade Act, the Commercial Code, the Civil Code and the Labor Code. Social agriculture was supported by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs until 2023.





**PART 2: OTHER POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS SUPPORTING WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS**

**2A: INNOVATION**

**Q. 2A.1: Do specific, targeted policy (s) exist in your country related to women-led innovation?** *e.g. in areas such as enterprise, research and development*

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Support for women's innovation is most often implemented through non-governmental organisations of various types in individual sectors. So it is not about policies or laws but at most about support, education or bylaws. The representation of women in science and research is monitored, which results from the initiative of women in the academic sphere.

**Q. 2A.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included specifically related to farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Women in agriculture are mainly supported by the Association of Private Agriculture of the Czech Republic. Women in the countryside are supported by the Czech Women's Union. The support is directed mainly to the consultancy, monitoring of the position of women in the public space and political support.

**Q. 2A.3: Does innovation policy in your country focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?** *e.g. innovation policy could mean policies supporting business innovation, research and innovation and more specific areas such as ecological, technological and digital innovation*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

There is an **Innovation Strategy** of the Czech Republic for the years 2019 - 2030. The word woman or gender does not appear in this strategy, nor does the word agriculture or countryside. Innovation measures in agriculture and rural areas take place mainly in training and education. Non-governmental organisations and high schools and universities participate in it. However, no activity has been identified that specifically targets women's innovation.



**Q. 2A.4: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 2A.5: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas? e.g. perhaps those related to areas such as social enterprise, rural tourism, creative industries**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

It can be assumed that the measures aimed at social entrepreneurship, the development of rural tourism and the sphere of services in general indirectly support women in particular.

## **2B: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND NETWORKS**

**Q. 2B.1: Are there policy (s) in your country that directly support women in rural areas and/or farming to access further education and training?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Support for women's formal education is not necessary, because women in rural areas are already more educated than men. Rather, training in the practical application of gender policy is needed, as access to such information and examples of good practice is worse in rural areas than in cities. This is mainly done by non-governmental organisations.

**Q. 2B.2: Are there mentoring/peer-to-peer learning programmes in your country that focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Some non-governmental organisations have such programs, namely the Association of Private Agriculture of the Czech Republic or the Czech Women's Union. Sometimes it can also be the output of international programs.



**Q. 2B.3: Are there networking programmes in your country focused directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Such a network is the Czech Women's Lobby, which brings together 41 sub-organizations. None of them are directly focused on agriculture or rural issues. The lobby is a member of the European Women's Lobby.

**Q. 2B.4: Are there other education, training, mentoring and networking programmes, or other education-related supports, in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

The level of education in the countryside is significantly lower than in the cities. That is why various educational activities are more practically focused and not focused specifically on women but on training in general. Recently, there has been talk about the relationship to digitisation, which is apparently a problem of generations rather than gender.

### **PART 3: EMPOWERMENT**

**Q. 3.1: Do measures exist in your country that support women's representation and participation in local, regional, and/or national decision-making? e.g. at the political level, in rural and/or farming organisations, participation in policy monitoring and development.**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Measures to increase the representation of women are widely debated with mixed results. Some actors, including some women, see such measures as counterproductive. As far as monitoring is concerned, women make up two-thirds of the Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

The share of female mayors is highest in rural municipalities of up to 1,000 inhabitants, where it is 28% and is growing slowly. This is apparently not the result of political intentions, but a natural development. However, an inverse ratio applies: the larger the municipality, and therefore the financial budget, the less women are represented in decision-making bodies.



**Q. 3.2: Do measures exist in your country that work to protect against and/or combat harassment (online or otherwise) and violence against women in public life?**

Yes  No  To some extent

The Committee for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women of the Government of the Czech Republic adopted the Action Plan for the Prevention of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence for the years 2023-2026. Sexually conditioned violence is addressed in the Criminal Code in general and the Labor Code in matters of labour relations. In contrast, the Senate again did not approve the Istanbul Convention because (according to their meaning) the convention threatened the traditional family and introduced a gender ideology.

**Q. 3.3: Do measures exist in your country that aim to increase the visibility of women-led innovation in rural areas and/or farming?** *e.g. programmes that aim to improve recognition of rural and farm women-led innovation and challenge gender stereotypes such as around traditional gender roles.*

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

A targeted program in this direction does not seem to exist. However, individual articles, podcasts, videos and other materials are appearing more and more often. A significant occasion was the World Day of Rural Women, which was, however, partly presented on the example of women in developing countries.

#### **PART 4: PAY, PENSION, WORK-LIFE AND FAMILY**

**Q. 4.1: Do measures exist in your country that address the gender pay gap in relation to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Income differences as well as the risk of poverty between women and men are regularly (annually since 2008) monitored (including the gender pay gap indicator). However, there is no regular monitoring by sector or size of place of residence. The differences between the incomes of men and women in the Czech Republic are among the highest in Europe. The cause is the persistence of the patriarchal idea of men as breadwinners and women as caregivers. As a result, women spend 22 hours a week on (unpaid) household work, men only 6 hours (2017) and can therefore devote more time to paid work. However, these differences preserve the situation, because it is, for



example, more advantageous for the family when a woman goes on parental leave with a lower salary, but as a result she loses additional financial compensation compared to a man, which is reflected in, for example, the amount of the pension. The second reason is the lower representation of women in top positions with higher salaries.

**Q. 4.2: Do gender equality issues exist in relation to government pension schemes and rural and/or farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

The pension system is based on the number of years when pension insurance was paid for citizens and the amount of salaries (or business profits). This puts women, especially mothers, at a disadvantage, especially if they take full parental leave. Maternity leave is a minimum of 14, a maximum of 28 (in the case of multiple births, 37) weeks. It is followed by parental leave, which can be taken by either a man or a woman, until the child is three years old maximum (current pensioners had children at a time when parental leave was taken exclusively by women). During this time, the citizen is not entitled to a salary, but to sickness and social benefits. This puts women in particular at a disadvantage. Women in agriculture or rural areas are affected as well as women in other fields and in cities. About 79% of persons in agriculture in Czechia are employee. A certain problem could arise for self-employed people who so-called optimized taxes (underestimated benefits and overestimated expenses). As a result, they often paid only minimal social security and, as a result, have minimal pensions.

Employees in agriculture are entitled to a minimum of four weeks of holiday per year, with compensation paid at the hourly average of the last three months.

**Q. 4.3a: Are maternity leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 4.3b: Do the partners of rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs have entitlements to maternity leave benefits?**

Farming: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Since maternity and parental leave is paid from health and social insurance, which every citizen must have (the state pays for this insurance for citizens without income),



it does not depend on any other circumstances including agriculture. It concerns also foreigners who have permanent residence in the Czech Republic, are here employed or are granted asylum. Other foreigners could be insured commercially. Then it depends on whether and for what they are insured.

**Q. 4.4: Are parental leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

See above

**Q. 4.5: Is childcare availability and cost in rural areas an issue in your country?**

Yes  No  To some extent

In the 1990s, pre-schools were undervalued because the rising elite were dominated by paternalistic views and assumed that women should stay at home and take care of raising children. The recent situation was aggravated by the coming strong years of children. Therefore, the lack of preschool facilities is perceived as one of the significant problems for the emancipation of rural women. This problem is also mentioned in the Rural Development Strategy and there are subsidy titles for the construction, reconstruction or equipping of kindergartens.

**Q. 4.6: Do other supports exist in your country that can assist rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs achieve work-life balance? e.g. farm relief schemes, supports for businesses towards employment costs**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

These questions are also frequently discussed based on experiences with COVID-19. Solutions are sought in shorter working hours, shared working hours, work from home and the like. Unfortunately, most of these measures cannot be implemented in agriculture. The situation is different in non-agricultural activities in the countryside. A number of women who used to commute to work in the city started businesses in the countryside precisely in connection with motherhood, because they needed to work at home and organise their time according to the needs of the family. However, this is their own measure, not the result of policies. One possible topic that has not yet been sufficiently opened up would be the participation of rural women in digitisation.



## **PART 5: OTHER AND WIDER INITIATIVES**

**Q. 5.1: Access to finance (e.g. grants, business loans) is a key resource issue for women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. Beyond the finance support measures already discussed in the sections above, are there others important to supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

The key issue is not so much finance (as it affects both men and women) but rather a question of education and examples of good practice, which appears in a number of aspects. The problem is persistent paternalistic views, which appear more in the countryside and especially in agriculture. There seems to be a kind of division of labor where male activities are hardware work (such as mechanisation, construction work, energy; which are paid better), while women are accepted in soft approaches. The problem arises if a woman tries to penetrate the "male" sphere, where she is met with distrust.

**Q. 5.2: Do specific gender quality policies and/or laws exist in your country and have a focus on women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Policies, strategies and laws in the Czech Republic focus primarily on preventing gender-based discrimination and equalising conditions for women and men in terms of work, social and legal aspects. After all, monitoring by the EU also leads them to this. However, we did not see any measures that were proactive and focused on supporting women-led innovation.

**Q. 5.3: Are there other wider government-led initiatives and/or non-government initiatives in your country that show significant promise in addressing key challenges facing women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas that could provide models for future policy measures and/or laws?**

In addition to the governmental and non-governmental institutions and associations mentioned above, there are a number of informal activities that have moved more into the digital space during the time of COVID-19. Women seem to feel the need to get together to share experiences and innovative ideas. We have noticed informal and legally unregistered associations of female mayors, confectioners, entrepreneurs and the like often using social networks.

The non-governmental organisation Association for the Restoration of the Countryside of the Czech Republic has an initiative Society for the Restoration of the Family, which



includes the civic association ONŽ - help and advice for women and girls. The association operates a network of counselling centres and a telephone crisis line.

**Q. 5.4: This section provides space to add any other information on policy and law in your country that is important to include in our assessment and has not been covered already in this questionnaire (e.g. related to gender quality or specific areas such as finance, education, health, employment etc.)**

The main problem of exclusion and inequality in the Czech Republic is the Roma. The Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation (Roma Integration Strategy) 2021-2030 mentions the issue of Roma women, given that there are far stronger paternalistic views in the Roma population (especially among men) and due to the danger of poverty, which is among the Roma population higher. Roma women are more dependent on men. However, this strategy does not have a rural or innovative projection.





## FINLAND

**Assessment by:** Tuomas Kuhmonen and Belyta Tembo, University of Turku

### GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Finland is a unitary state. The Parliament of Finland is in charge of passing the laws and they are uniformly applied in all lower-level administrative regions (Regional State Administrative Agencies; Wellbeing Services Counties; Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment; municipalities). The basic services for local/regional people are produced by the municipalities and Wellbeing Service Counties based on the laws and norms passed by the central government.

### WIDER NATIONAL CONTEXT ISSUES

Finland has an Act on Equality between Women and Men that applies to all other legislation and administration.

## PART 1: POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN FARMING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### 1A: GENERAL CONTEXT

**Q. 1A.1: In your country, is there a commitment to gender mainstreaming, or other method of gender equality assessment (e.g. benchmarking) of all key rural and/or farm policies?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

The Act on Equality between Women and Men applies to all sectors and activities in terms of policies, laws and administrative practices. We have no special gender mainstreaming methods for these particular sectors.

**Q. 1A.2: Do official datasets exist in your country showing women's participation in rural and farm innovation and/or the wider farm and rural economy? e.g. those collected regularly by national statistics agency or other relevant state bodies**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

We have statistics on employment by gender in agriculture and also in various types of rural areas. No data on innovations.



**1B: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: EUROPEAN LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AT NATIONAL LEVELS**

**Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**

*CAP 2023-2027 Specific Objective 8 (SO8) references enhancing the position of women in farming and accelerating the social inclusion of rural women – “Promote employment, growth, gender equality, including the participation of women in farming, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including the circular bio-economy and sustainable forestry”.*

**Q. 1B.1: How is the gender equality, including the participation of women in farming aspect, of Objective 8 reflected in the SWOT analysis, identification of needs and intervention logic of the CAP strategic plan in your country?**

The status of equality is rather good (strength), but it could be improved (possibility).

**Q. 1B.2: Does your countries CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

All interventions are open for both genders without any differentiation (such would be illegal, ref. Act on Equality between Women and Men).

**Q. 1B.3: Does your countries CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Nothing (ref. Act on Equality between Women and Men).

**Q. 1B.4: Does your national LEADER Programme directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Nothing (ref. Act on Equality between Women and Men).

**Q. 1B.5: Does your national LEADER Programme indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**



Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

*Please expand on your answer below. As relevant, please include a short explanation of the key strengths and weaknesses. Promising examples at local levels could also be discussed here.*

Nothing (ref. Act on Act on Equality between Women and Men).

## 1C: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: COUNTRY LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

### RURAL

#### Q. 1C.1: Does your country have a Rural Development Policy(s)?

Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Maaseutupoliittinen kokonaisuohjelma 2021-2027 (The National Rural Policy Programme 2021-2027), which is governed by The Rural Policy Council (<https://www.ruralpolicy.fi/mita-teemme/neuvosto>).

#### Q. 1C.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Proposals for measures that should be implemented by various ministries of central government: 1) Promotion of possibilities for women to get education in traditional male sectors (primary industries). Also remote work in services provides opportunities for women. 2) The role of women in chairing municipality councils and boards should be promoted (now only 20-28% are women).

#### Q. 1C.3: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Proposals for measures that should be implemented by various ministries of central government: 1) Remote work should become more accepted as it promotes women's possibilities to participate in the labour market. Female entrepreneurship should be promoted. 2) Local childcare services should be available everywhere to provide women with the possibility to participate in the labour market.



**Q. 1C.4: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Nothing.

**Q. 1C.5: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Uudistuva ja osaava Suomi 2021-2027 (Innovation and skills in Finland 2021–2027: EU regional and structural policy programme) promotes following topics with gendered impacts: 1) Equality and involvement in all activities will have a positive impact. 2) Institutional frameworks are effected to remove stereotypes in education and employment. 3) Recruitment procedures will be developed and equality plans in organisations will be promoted to reach this end. 4) Promotion of possibilities for women to get education in traditional male sectors.

## **FARMING**

**Q. 1C.6: Beyond the CAP Strategic Plan, does your country have a core Farming Development Policy (s)? e.g. agri-food sector policy (note: sub-sector policies can be dealt with in the last question included in this section below)**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Only some nationally funded subsidies.

**Q. 1C.7: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Nothing.

**Q. 1C.8: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Nothing.



**Q. 1C.9: Do laws governing farm ownership include any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm ownership?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Nothing (ref. Act on Equality between Women and Men).

**Q. 1C.10: Do other policy(s) or law (s) exist in your country that facilitate improved gender equality in relation to running the farm business?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Nothing (ref. Act on Equality between Women and Men).

**Q. 1C.11: Do laws governing farm transfer and inheritance have any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm inheritance?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Nothing (ref. Act on Equality between Women and Men).

**Q. 1C.12: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Nothing (ref. Act on Equality between Women and Men).

**Q. 1C.13: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming? e.g. organic farming, horticulture, agri-tourism, care/social farming**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Nothing (ref. Act on equality between women and men).

## **PART 2: OTHER POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS SUPPORTING WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS**

### **2A: INNOVATION**

**Q. 2A.1: Do specific, targeted policy (s) exist in your country related to women-led innovation? e.g. in areas such as enterprise, research and development**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

*Please expand on your answer below. Please include a short description of any policy(s)*



Nothing (ref. Act on Equality between Women and Men).

**Q. 2A.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included specifically related to farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

*Please expand on your answer below. As relevant, please list measures here and include a short explanation of their key strengths and weaknesses.*

Nothing (ref. Act on Equality between Women and Men).

**Q. 2A.3: Does innovation policy in your country focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas? e.g. innovation policy could mean policies supporting business innovation, research and innovation and more specific areas such as ecological, technological and digital innovation**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

*Please expand on your answer below. As relevant, please list the policy (s) and associated measures here and include a short explanation of their key strengths and weaknesses.*

Nothing (ref. Act on Equality between Women and Men).

**Q. 2A.4: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

*Please expand on your answer below. As relevant, please list the policy (s) and associated measures here and include a short explanation of their key strengths and weaknesses.*

Nothing (ref. Act on Equality between Women and Men).

**Q. 2A.5: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas? e.g. perhaps those related to areas such as social enterprise, rural tourism, creative industries**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_



Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Nothing (ref. Act on Equality between Women and Men).

## 2B: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND NETWORKS

**Q. 2B.1: Are there policy (s) in your country that directly support women in rural areas and/or farming to access further education and training?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Government work plan (hallitusohjelma) 2023: More incentives on individual choices of education and career to reduce gender-based segregation by sectors (male and female jobs).

Basic Education Act: Morning and afternoon clubs at school (primary level) aim at proving equal opportunities for education and support parents in their educational efforts (the child can be at school longer).

**Q. 2B.2: Are there mentoring/peer to peer learning programmes in your country that focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

No programmes but many small separate projects that include these activities (funded by Structural Funds or Rural Fund).

**Q. 2B.3: Are there networking programmes in your country focused directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

No programmes but many small separate projects that include these activities (funded by Structural Funds or Rural Fund).



**Q. 2B.4: Are there other education, training, mentoring and networking programmes, or other education-related supports, in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

### **PART 3: EMPOWERMENT**

**Q. 3.1: Do measures exist in your country that support women's representation and participation in local, regional, and/or national decision-making?** *e.g. at the political level, in rural and/or farming organisations, participation in policy monitoring and development.*

Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Maaseutupoliittinen kokonaisuohjelma 2021-2027 (The National Rural Policy Programme 2021-2027) – Proposal for measures by the central government: The role of women in chairing municipality councils and boards should be promoted (now only 20-28% are women).

**Q. 3.2: Do measures exist in your country that work to protect against and/or combat harassment (online or otherwise) and violence against women in public life?**

Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Section 7 of the Act on Equality between Women and Men states: Sexual harassment, gender-based harassment and any order or instruction to engage in discrimination based on gender shall be deemed to constitute discrimination under this Act.

In this Act, sexual harassment means verbal, non-verbal or physical unwanted conduct of a sexual nature by which a person's psychological or physical integrity is violated intentionally or factually, in particular by creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive atmosphere.

In this Act, gender-based harassment means unwanted conduct that is not of a sexual nature but which is related to the gender of a person, their gender identity or gender expression, and by which the person's psychological or physical integrity is intentionally or factually violated and an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive atmosphere is created.





**Q. 3.3: Do measures exist in your country that aim to increase the visibility of women-led innovation in rural areas and/or farming?** *e.g. programmes that aim to improve recognition of rural and farm women-led innovation and challenge gender stereotypes such as around traditional gender roles.*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

**PART 4: PAY, PENSION, WORK-LIFE AND FAMILY**

**Q. 4.1: Do measures exist in your country that address the gender pay gap in relation to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Government work plan (hallitusohjelma) 2023: Analysis and measures to close 2020–2023 the gap; more open information on pay levels.

Sosiaali- ja terveystieteiden ministeriön Samapalkkaisuohjelma (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health programme on equal pay) 2020-2023.: Analysis and measures to close the gap.

Both of these are universal without sectors specific aspects.

**Q. 4.2: Do gender equality issues exist in relation to government pension schemes and rural and/or farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Nothing (ref. Act on Equality between Women and Men).

**Q. 4.3a: Are maternity leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 4.3b: Do the partners of rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs have entitlements to maternity leave benefits?**

Farming: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_



Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Laws specify various types of leaves due to pregnancy or childcare. Childcare leave is open for both parents. The laws are universal without sector specific aspects.

**Q. 4.4: Are parental leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Laws specify various types of leaves due to pregnancy or childcare. Childcare leave is open for both parents. The laws are universal without sector specific aspects.

**Q. 4.5: Is childcare availability and cost in rural areas an issue in your country?**

Yes  No  To some extent

All have the possibility for childcare but in some remote rural areas the distances may cause problems and costs.

**Q. 4.6: Do other supports exist in your country that can assist rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs achieve work-life balance? e.g. farm relief schemes, supports for businesses towards employment costs**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Law on work contracts: It is illegal to fire a pregnant employee without terminating the whole business. There is also mainly publicly funded farm relief scheme. A farmer with an animal farm large enough may have 26 holidays per year. There is also a possibility to get a partly subsidised aid for leave (cost of temporary worker) to take care of the child and during pregnancy.

## **PART 5: OTHER AND WIDER INITIATIVES**

**Q. 5.1: Access to finance (e.g. grants, business loans) is a key resource issue for women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. Beyond the finance support measures already discussed in the sections above, are there others important to supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas?**

Yes  No  To some extent



Nothing (ref. Act on Equality between Women and Men).

**Q. 5.2: Do specific gender equality policies and/or laws exist in your country and have a focus on women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Act on Equality between Women and Men Section 4 (232/2005)  
Duty of authorities to promote gender equality: In all their activities, authorities must promote equality between women and men purposefully and systematically, and must create and consolidate administrative and operating practices that ensure the advancement of equality between women and men in the preparatory work undertaken on different matters and in decision-making. In particular, circumstances which prevent the attainment of gender equality must be changed.

**Q. 5.3: Are there other wider government-led initiatives and/or non-government initiatives in your country that show significant promise in addressing key challenges facing women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas that could provide models for future policy measures and/or laws?**

No.

**Q. 5.4: This section provides space to add any other information on policy and law in your country that is important to include in our assessment and has not been covered already in this questionnaire (e.g. related to gender quality or specific areas such as finance, education, health, employment etc.)**

Government work plan (hallitusohjelma) 2023: One of the objectives is to cut down gender-based violence.



## GERMANY

**Assessment by:** Lutz Meyer-Ohlendorf, Hochschule für nachhaltige Entwicklung (HNEE)

### GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE & WIDER NATIONAL CONTEXT ISSUES

The analysis in Germany is unique due to the country's federal structure. Therefore, it was decided to examine a) the national level and b) two selected Federal States (Bundesländer) as examples.

The rationale for selecting these specific Federal States is based on three criteria. First, the distinct historical experiences of East and West Germany after World War II play a crucial role. East Germany was under socialist rule for over 40 years, fostering a more collectivist and state-focused mindset, while West Germany developed under a capitalist democracy, promoting individualism and economic liberalism.

Second, the availability of childcare and its impact on women's ability to work full time is a significant factor. The average childcare rate differs notably between Eastern States (54%) and Western States (32%).

Third, the analysis looked into legislation and funding programs to see how gender issues are specifically addressed. Baden-Württemberg (West) was the first and only Federal State with an explicit funding program for women in the Rural Development Plan. In the Eastern States, Saxony stands out with explicit funding programs for women, making it unique among all Eastern states (see Q. 2A.1).

### PART 1: POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN FARMING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

#### 1A: GENERAL CONTEXT

**Q. 1A.1: In your country, is there a commitment to gender mainstreaming, or other method of gender equality assessment (e.g. benchmarking) of all key rural and/or farm policies?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Obligations to implement an effective gender equality policy in the sense of gender mainstreaming and gender equality arise from both international law and national constitutional law. For the practical work of the Federal Government, the guiding principle of gender equality is agreed in the **Federal Government's Joint Rules of Procedure** (BMFSFJ 2021).



In 2020, the Federal Government adopted an **Interdepartmental Gender Equality Strategy** for the first time, which formulates gender equality policy goals for the entire Federal Government and identifies measures for their implementation. It should be updated after every change of government (BMFSFJ 2021).

In order to determine the current state of equality between women and men in Germany and to gain new impetus for gender equality policy, the Federal Government has commissioned a commission of experts to prepare an expert report for the **Federal Government's Gender Equality Report** every legislative period since 2008 (BMFSFJ 2021).

The German **CAP strategic plan** highlights gender equality (H.7: Equality of all genders and social groups) as an issue with “high” but not “very high” priority. It is addressed under the specific objective SO8: “Promoting jobs, growth, gender equality, including women's participation in agriculture, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including circular bioeconomy and sustainable forestry” (BMEL 2023a)

Moreover, in order to take informed decisions in building rural and farm policies, the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) has initiated a **study on the living and working situation of women in agriculture in Germany** (Padela et al. 2022).

**Q. 1A.2: Do official datasets exist in your country showing women’s participation in rural and farm innovation and/or the wider farm and rural economy? e.g. those collected regularly by national statistics agency or other relevant state bodies**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Study on the living and working situation of women in agriculture in Germany ([Padela et al. 2022](#))

Additionally, the **Gender Equality Atlas** documents regional differences (Lander & Municipalities) in the realisation of equality in Germany. Indicators are participation, education, career choice and scientific qualification, work and income, gainful employment and care work as well as environment (BMFSFJ 2020)

[bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/service/online-rechner/gleichstellungsatlas](https://bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/service/online-rechner/gleichstellungsatlas)



## 1B: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: EUROPEAN LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AT NATIONAL LEVELS

### Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

*CAP 2023-2027 Specific Objective 8 (SO8) references enhancing the position of women in farming and accelerating the social inclusion of rural women – “Promote employment, growth, gender equality, including the participation of women in farming, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including the circular bio-economy and sustainable forestry”.*

**Q. 1B.1: How is the gender equality, including the participation of women in farming aspect, of Objective 8 reflected in the SWOT analysis, identification of needs and intervention logic of the CAP strategic plan in your country?**

The **SWOT analysis** addresses the following gender related weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T):

#### **Weaknesses:**

Gender pay gap (W11).

Limited job opportunities for qualified women (W12).

#### **Opportunities:**

Women's organizations (O7).

Breaking role stereotypes in career choices (O8).

Increasing number of working women (O9).

Employment potential, especially in entrepreneurship (O10).

Willingness of rural women to diversify farm incomes (O11).

#### **Threats:**

Multiple burdens on women (T14).

Lack of recognition for women's contributions (T15).

Female unemployment and rural outmigration (T16).

This translates into an **identification of needs**, that specifically relates to gender as part of H.7 Equality of all genders and social groups – with “high”, but not “very high priority”.



The specific objective SO8 in the German CAP Strategic plan states that gender equality and the inclusion of all social groups (H.7) as a high priority issue serves as a cross-cutting task not only within the specific objective but across all objectives. The plan exemplifies this strategic gender mainstreaming within the LEADER approach (EL-0703). It highlights the inclusive nature of the Local Action Group (LAG) as described in the LEADER decision-making bodies (LEG). Additionally, the LEADER Development Strategies (LES) outline the LAG's measures to ensure a non-discriminatory and transparent selection process.

Moreover, the CAP strategic plan highlights only two more interventions that specifically target the identified need H.7, namely the "Promotion of investment in the development of non-agricultural enterprises (EL-0412)". This intervention is confined to only the federal states of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Baden-Württemberg. Moreover, the intervention explicitly targets women in Baden-Württemberg, explaining this with the specific lack of social infrastructures (e.g., childcare facilities) in many rural areas there and a still prevalent traditional understanding of gender roles in household management and childcare.

This is supported by knowledge transfer and information measures in Baden-Württemberg (EI-0802), which are intended to improve the professional, entrepreneurial and personal skills of female entrepreneurs in particular and thus to strengthen the impact of the individual interventions.

**Q. 1B.2: Does your countries CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

As delineated above, the CAP strategic plan underscores two interventions that support women-led innovation in rural areas, at least directly in the broadest sense. The intervention promotion of investment in the development of non-agricultural enterprises (EL-0412) and knowledge transfer and information measures (EI-0802) aims at supporting women-led innovation in rural areas in Baden-Württemberg.

**Q. 1B.3: Does your countries CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Yes, as delineated above, it addresses gender equality and the inclusion of all social groups (H.7) as cross-cutting task not only within the specific objective but across all objectives. It can be understood as gender mainstreaming both, with regard to



innovations in farming as well as in rural areas. In particular, the strategic plan underlines this as part of the LEADER approach (EL-0703) with regard to innovations in rural areas.

**Q. 1B.4: Does your national LEADER Programme directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

The Leader Programme in Germany is executed by the federal states. In examining the Land-specific aspects of this study, we concentrate on two representative regions: Baden-Württemberg and Saxony. Through our desktop study, we identified these two states as having the most gender-specific policies and legislation. For further insights into our region selection process, please consult our methodology chapter.

**Baden Württemberg:** As part of the LEADER strategy (ELER) Baden-Württemberg has initiated the program “Innovative Measures for Women (IMF)” in 1998. It was the first and only program that directly supports women-led innovations in Germany. It encompasses qualification and coaching measures for women in rural areas and invests in the development of women’s non-agricultural enterprises in rural areas.

Women entrepreneurs can receive a grant covering 40% (or up to 50% in LEADER areas) of eligible expenses, with a maximum of €160,000 per project. Expenses can include immovable property, machinery, equipment, including software, and various other associated expenses (MLR 2023a).

**Saxony:** In Saxony, the regional LEADER program does not directly support women-led innovations.

**Q. 1B.5: Does your national LEADER Programme indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

The LEADER approach in Germany, along with its translation into state-based programs, emphasizes the significance of gender equality and mainstreaming. Consequently, the LEADER program indirectly supports innovation led by women in rural areas.





**1C: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: COUNTRY LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS**

**RURAL**

**Q. 1C.1: Does your country have a Rural Development Policy(s)?**

Yes  No  To some extent

In addition to the **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** with its growing emphasis on rural development and the **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)** the **Federal/State Joint Task "Improvement of Agricultural Structure and Coastal Protection" (GAK)** serves as the primary instrument for national agricultural structural support. It forms the substantive and financial core of many state programs encompasses a wide range of agricultural structural and infrastructural measures, largely overlapping with the scope of the EAFRD (BMEL 2023b). It subsumes e.g. the program on "**Integrated Rural Development (ILE)**", "**Integrated Concepts for Rural Development (ILEK)**", GAK-ILE Measure "**Village Development**", Funding Program "**Village Moderation**", and "**Future Check Village**" (ZCD).

Another crucial component of national funding for rural development is the "**Federal Programme for Rural Development and Regional Value Creation (BULEplus)**," which aims to bolster rural areas, promote parity in living conditions between urban and rural areas, and secure the future sustainability of rural regions. In addition to serving as a hub for rural development strategies, the federal program encompasses competitions, support for model regions, and the dissemination of knowledge and research funding. (BMEL 2023d)

**Q. 1C.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes  No  To some extent

As part of the the Federal Programme for **Rural Development and Regional Value Creation (BULEplus)**, BMEL supports the civic engagement of women in rural areas during the COVID-19 pandemic with the special measure "**Digital.Networked – Strengthening Women in Volunteering**" (BLE 2021).

**Q. 1C.3: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes  No  To some extent



The **Federal/State Joint Task "Improvement of Agricultural Structure and Coastal Protection" (GAK)** sets out the importance of gender mainstreaming in the current GAK framework plan. It emphasizes the importance of considering the different life situations and interests of women and men, as well as the gender-specific impact of the administrative action.

**Q. 1C.4: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 1C.5: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

## **FARMING**

**Q. 1C.6: Beyond the CAP Strategic Plan, does your country have a core Farming Development Policy (s)?** *e.g. agri-food sector policy (note: sub-sector policies can be dealt with in the last question included in this section below)*

Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Yes, the **Programme for the Promotion of Innovation** of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture aims to strengthen the agricultural sector and the German food system in its competitiveness. The BMEL's innovation programme activates and bundles the potential of ideas from practitioners, business and science (BLE 2023).

The **Arable Farming Strategy (ABS)** is intended to demonstrate options and ways to achieve a more sustainable use of the farm land, i.e. a more ecologically compatible, more economical sustainable and socially oriented agriculture also with a view to strengthening the social acceptance (BMEL 2021).

Moreover, the **Federal Programme for Organic Farming (BÖL)** was initiated at the end of 2001 to improve the general conditions for organic farming in Germany. Since then, the federal programme has been continuously expanded and further developed and around 1080 research projects have been supported with a funding volume of around 215 million euros. Additionally, approx. 4660 knowledge transfer events have been held for practitioners to disseminate research results. With seminars, workshops, competitions, press and media work, etc., BÖL contributes to qualifying and sensitizing stakeholders along the entire organic value chain (BMEL 2023c).



**Q. 1C.7: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

No, there are no measures as part of the above mentioned programs that directly support women-led innovations in farming.

**Q. 1C.8: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

None of the above mentioned programs mention women explicitly. It can be said, however, that women-led innovations are indirectly supported by means of the general principle of gender mainstreaming.

**Q. 1C.9: Do laws governing farm ownership include any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm ownership?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

To my knowledge, farm ownership in Germany is governed exclusively by the following laws:

- Agriculture Act (LwG)
- Act on Measures to Improve the Agricultural Structure and to Safeguard Agricultural and Forestry Holdings (Land Transactions Act - GrdstVG)
- Act on the Notification and Complaint of Land lease agreements (Land Lease Traffic Act - LPachtVG)

The above mentioned laws do not include any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm ownership in Germany.

**Q. 1C.10: Do other policy(s) or law (s) exist in your country that facilitate improved gender equality in relation to running the farm business?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

To some extent, the German **Federal Government's Gender Equality Strategy** addresses this theme. The strategy sets out nine specific goals relevant to many areas of life. With the strategy, the federal government addresses these areas of life and documents the state of achievements in a brochure (BMFSFJ 2021b). However, there



is no specific goal setting that addresses gender equality in relation to running the farm business.

**Q. 1C.11: Do laws governing farm transfer and inheritance have any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm inheritance?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

See also question Q. 1C.9

**Q. 1C.12: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 1C.13: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming? e.g. organic farming, horticulture, agri-tourism, care/social farming**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Cf. question Q. 1C.8

## **PART 2: OTHER POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS SUPPORTING WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS**

### **2A: INNOVATION**

**Q. 2A.1: Do specific, targeted policy (s) exist in your country related to women-led innovation? e.g. in areas such as enterprise, research and development**

Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

There is a number of programs and initiatives that exclusively target women-led innovation in Germany on national scale:

The BMBF driven “**Professor Program 2030**” is the fourth program phase (2023-2030) with a total funding volume of 320 million euros. It aims at dynamically increasing the number of female scientists in top positions in the scientific sector towards parity. It supports female scientists on the path to full-time professorships and thus keep them in the academic system and to structurally anchor equality between women and men even more strongly at universities (BMBF 2022).



Another notable example is the "**Digital Female Leader Award**" initiated by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi). It recognises outstanding achievements of women in digital innovation and entrepreneurship, providing visibility and networking opportunities for female leaders in the field.

The program "**Innovative women in focus**" (project funding) and the **Meta-project "Innovative women in focus"** (networking of funded research and implementation projects) is another significant initiative on national level. It's a "strategy "for enforcing equal opportunities for women in education and research" and aims at "universities, non-university research institutions, small and medium-sized commercial enterprises, associations, foundations, providers of educational institutions and cultural sites as well as other legal entities under public and private law that have proven expertise in women's and/or gender-specific research and /or in the implementation of appropriate measures" (BMBF 2020).

The **EXIST-Start-Up Grant**, which is a general grant for university students, initiated an exclusive grant for women to support them in starting businesses. However, the **EXISTWomen Start-Up Grant** ended in September 2023.

There are other funding programs offered by organizations such as the German Research Foundation (DFG) and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), but those are not exclusively directed to support women.

**There are also significant programs on federal state level. We have focused our analysis on two states as explained above.**

In **Saxony** there are two interesting programs in Saxony. *First*, the "**ESF Plus Guideline on Gender Equality in Working Life**" (2021-2027) of the Saxon State Ministry of Justice and for Democracy, Europe and Gender Equality (since 2022). Until the end of 2027, a total of approx. EUR 27 million will be available for funding from the European Social Fund and the state.

The funding guidelines prioritize gender equality in workforce participation, supporting projects aimed at empowering women to maximize their potential in employment or entrepreneurship. Specifically targeting sectors with persistent gender-related underrepresentation or structural discrimination, the measures aim to address women's diverse life circumstances, such as career interruptions or caregiving responsibilities. The guideline does **not** focus on rural areas or farming. It encompasses:

A: Supporting women's entrepreneurship

B: Entrepreneurship incentive for women

C: Projects promoting women's participation in the labor market

D: Initiatives facilitating women's access to career advancement



E: Combating gender stereotypes in career and educational choices (REVOSax 2023)

There is another non-EU-funded program that explicitly promotes **Business Start-ups by Women in Rural Areas** with the aim of establishing self-employment that leads to the founder's main occupation in the long term (Landesdirektion Sachsen 2024).

In **Baden-Württemberg**, the program **Innovative Measures for Women in Rural Areas (IMF)** supports women in rural areas by funding and promotion of investments into an own company or start-up and it supports by qualification and coaching measures (MLR 2023a).

**Q. 2A.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included specifically related to farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Yes, the latter two programs in Saxony and Baden-Württemberg, "**Business Start-ups by Women in Rural Areas**" and "**Innovative Measures for Women in Rural Areas (IMF)**" are specifically related to women in rural areas, but not specifically to farming.

**Q. 2A.3: Does innovation policy in your country focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?** *e.g. innovation policy could mean policies supporting business innovation, research and innovation and more specific areas such as ecological, technological and digital innovation*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

While Germany has robust innovation policies in various sectors, including agriculture and rural development, specific initiatives directly targeting support for women-led innovation in farming and rural areas may not be explicitly highlighted within the innovation policy framework. However, it's essential to note that gender equality and women's empowerment are overarching goals in Germany's policies, including innovation and rural development.

In recent years, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of promoting women's participation and leadership in agriculture and rural innovation. Some initiatives and programs may indirectly support women-led innovation by providing opportunities for training, networking, funding, and capacity building in rural areas. These initiatives may not be exclusive to women but can benefit them by creating a more supportive environment for entrepreneurship and innovation.



Additionally, gender mainstreaming efforts in innovation policy aim to integrate gender perspectives into all stages of the innovation process, ensuring that women's specific needs, experiences, and contributions are considered and valued.

Moreover, it is a promising sign that the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL) has initiated a study on “**Women on Agricultural Holdings in Germany**” (Padel et al. 2022). The study highlights the importance of a differentiated action approach in order to achieve gender equality on agricultural holdings. Therefore, it is likely that new programs will be initiated in response to this study.

**Q. 2A.4: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 2A.5: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas? e.g. perhaps those related to areas such as social enterprise, rural tourism, creative industries**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

**2B: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND NETWORKS**

**Q. 2B.1: Are there policy (s) in your country that directly support women in rural areas and/or farming to access further education and training?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

There are no further education and training programs on national level, but the federal states have a few programs and initiatives, which were already mentioned above, see question Q2A.1: “**Business Start-ups by Women in Rural Areas**” and “**Innovative Measures for Women in Rural Areas (IMF)**”. Both programs also target women in rural areas directly by supporting further education and training.

**Q. 2B.2: Are there mentoring/peer to peer learning programmes in your country that focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_



Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

One program is significant in this regard in the federal state of **Saxony**. The **Landheldinnen program** is intended to “specifically promote the (political) participation of girls and young women in rural areas in Saxony. They are motivated and encouraged to take on responsibility in political committees and civil society organizations in order to be able to actively shape the community.” (Praxisportal für Kinder- und Jugendbeteiligung 2023).

The program aims to make rural areas more attractive for young women and “to

- sensitize local decision-makers to equality issues that act as a location factor for municipalities,
- to empower girls and young women based on their needs, to use their potential and to take an active part in participation processes and political and civil society bodies,
- tailor participation structures to the needs of girls and young women in order to promote their (voluntary) commitment and, in particular, experiences of self-efficacy, and
- to make strong role models such as politicians, entrepreneurs, etc. more visible in rural areas.” (Praxisportal für Kinder- und Jugendbeteiligung 2023)

**Q. 2B.3: Are there networking programmes in your country focused directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

On **national** level, the **Female Agri Fellows program** is worth to mention, initiated by the German Agricultural Society (Deutsche Landwirtschaftsgesellschaft, DLG). The program aims to bundle competence and expertise for women in the agricultural sector by means of a network to allow discussion and network individually with female leaders in the agricultural industry (DLG 2024).

To some extent, the **German LandFrauenverband e.V. (DLV e.V.)** and the initiative **Unternehmerfrauen im Handwerk (ufh)** are relevant networking organisations, but they are non-governmental organisations.

**Q. 2B.4: Are there other education, training, mentoring and networking programmes, or other education-related supports, in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent





The **Training and Further Education Act** regulates training and further education in Germany.

"**Nationwide**, there are further education and training programs, managed by organizations at the state level, which indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. For instance, the **Bildungsscheck** for employees and the **Bildungsgutschein** for unemployed individuals offer financial assistance for further education and training." The Bildungsscheck (in Baden-Württemberg "Bildungsprämie") is based on a co-funding by the federal state and the European Social Funds plus (ESF) and is available in Saxony as well as in Baden-Württemberg.

The **Bildungsgutschein** for unemployed individuals is carried out by the **Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit)** and based on **§ 81 Paragraph 4 SGB III** of the German Social Law.

Moreover, the Land Baden-Württemberg has initiated an **Education Time Act (BzG BW)**, that allows employees in Baden-Württemberg to take up to five days of leave per year from their employer for further training. The salary must continue to be paid during this time. In Saxony, the Education Time Act has not yet been brought forward, but an initiative by an NGO lobbys for this policy.

Another significant opportunity for women is the **Aufstiegs-Bafög** funded by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF). It supports for a training at a technical school to become master in industrial and craft professions, technicians, specialist clerks, state-certified educators or business economists. In total, over 700 qualifications are recognized that are equivalent to a university degree. The funding is independent of age and sometimes not dependent on income. Up to 50 percent of the course costs can be covered by the advancement grant. For the other half of the costs, those eligible for funding receive affordable loans from the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW). Anyone who successfully completes the training only has to repay half of the loan (BMBF 2023).

It is important to note that there is a **National Further Education Strategy** initiated by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the Federal Agency for Labour (BA). The strategy aims to reform further education and training in Germany and bundle competences and resources more efficiently (BMAS 2019).

### **PART 3: EMPOWERMENT**

**Q. 3.1: Do measures exist in your country that support women's representation and participation in local, regional, and/or national decision-making?** *e.g. at the political level, in rural and/or farming organisations, participation in policy monitoring and development.*



Yes  No  To some extent

Women in local politics: **Helene Weber Kolleg** and **Helene Weber Prize** for recognition of outstanding achievements in local politics in order to serve as role models nationwide for politically committed and interested women (BMFSFJ 2021b).

**Q. 3.2: Do measures exist in your country that work to protect against and/or combat harassment (online or otherwise) and violence against women in public life?**

Yes  No  To some extent

On February 1, 2018, the **Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence**, the so-called **Istanbul Convention**, came into force for Germany.

An **Independent Reporting Center (Berichterstattungsstelle zu geschlechtsspezifischer Gewalt)** was set up to improve protection and advice in the event of violence. It collects and analyzes data on gender-based violence and is funded by the Federal Ministry for Women's Affairs. It is based at the German Institute for Human Rights (DIMR).

The **Advisory Board of the Gender-Specific Violence Reporting Center of the German Institute for Human Rights** has started its work with its inaugural meeting at the Institute in Berlin on November 13, 2023. The advisory board will support the strategic direction of the independent reporting center in meetings held twice a year and provide expert advice on its work.

**Q. 3.3: Do measures exist in your country that aim to increase the visibility of women-led innovation in rural areas and/or farming?** *e.g. programmes that aim to improve recognition of rural and farm women-led innovation and challenge gender stereotypes such as around traditional gender roles.*

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

#### **PART 4: PAY, PENSION, WORK-LIFE AND FAMILY**

**Q. 4.1: Do measures exist in your country that address the gender pay gap in relation to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent



Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 4.2: Do gender equality issues exist in relation to government pension schemes and rural and/or farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Yes, a quite recent study that looks into the overall life situation of women in rural areas and in agriculture shows that a third of women who work in so-called green professions such as agriculture do not consider the level of their pension provision to be sufficient. A quarter of those surveyed cannot assess their own security in old age at all.

There is an Agricultural Retirement Fund (LAK) available for farmers, their spouses and those who work on the farms as tending family members. The LAK is one of the public-law mandatory systems and it represents a partial backup, i.e. insureds are obliged to take care of an additional forms of retirement provision (Padel et al. 2022).

**Q. 4.3a: Are maternity leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 4.3b: Do the partners of rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs have entitlements to maternity leave benefits?**

Farming: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Entrepreneurs and their partners are entitled to maternity leave benefits, but the process of organizing and managing leave presents challenges, as highlighted in the study by Padel et al. (2022). For example, findings from the online survey indicate that partners and business managers report an average of 10 vacation days per year, while employees and trainees report 20 vacation days. Achieving a satisfactory work-life balance involves more than just financial assistance.

Maternity leave can be applied through the scheme **Business and Household Assistance (BHH)** from the **Social Insurance for Agriculture, Forestry and Horticulture (SVLFG)**. It provides assistance in order to cushion emergencies in agricultural or horticultural companies. In addition to work accidents, illnesses and measures for prevention and rehabilitation, the reasons for benefits include, in particular, situations of need during pregnancy or during maternity leave.



The eligibility for entitlement depends on the company's size and its associated health insurance: "Agricultural entrepreneurs or working wives or registered life partners (according to the Civil Partnership Act) of agricultural entrepreneurs who are insured with the Agricultural Health Insurance Fund (LKK) are entitled to BHH during pregnancy or during maternity leave. If farming is carried out as a sideline, LAK insurance is required in any case. Depending on the insurance law responsibility, the SVLFG provides the BHH in the respective insurance branch." (SVLFG 2023)

**Q. 4.4: Are parental leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Yes, in Germany, parental allowance is a wage replacement benefit that allows to pause wage employment for childcare. The base amount is €300 and the maximum rate is 1,800 euros per month, depending on the height of the wages before leave, i.e. 65% of the average earnings.

However, for the self-employed – and thus also for farmers – applying for parental allowance is less intuitive than for those who are regular employed. Due to ignorance, farmers rarely submit an application for "parental allowance" (Land & Forst 2023).

**Q. 4.5: Is childcare availability and cost in rural areas an issue in your country?**

Yes  No  To some extent

It is a matter of availability indeed as there are quite some issues in getting sufficient childcare in order to find time for work, career, and to be innovative. The costs in public facilities are less of a problem.

**Q. 4.6: Do other supports exist in your country that can assist rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs achieve work-life balance? e.g. farm relief schemes, supports for businesses towards employment costs**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

**PART 5: OTHER AND WIDER INITIATIVES**

**Q. 5.1: Access to finance (e.g. grants, business loans) is a key resource issue for women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. Beyond the finance support measures already discussed in the sections above, are there others important to supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas?**



Yes  No  To some extent

For the general financial assistance for start-ups, there are various financing offers from the **Agricultural Pension Bank (Landwirtschaftliche Rentenbank, LR)** available. For example, there is an **Innovation Funding** based on the federal government's **Special Purpose Assets (Zweckvermögen des Bundes)** at the LR. Innovative projects and SMEs in the agriculture, agricultural and food industries are supported and subsidized.

The **Federal Office of Economics and Export Control (Bundesamt für Wirtschaft und Ausfuhrkontrolle)** also provides grants for venture capital for young companies via **INVEST**. This particularly covers strengthening the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises.

The LR's "**Living in the Country**" funding program supports companies and other applicants in order to maintain and improve the infrastructure as well as housing and living conditions in rural regions of Germany. Investments are to be made through low-interest loans in various areas of communities with up to 50,000 inhabitants.

**Q. 5.2: Do specific gender quality policies and/or laws exist in your country and have a focus on women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

**Q. 5.3: Are there other wider government-led initiatives and/or non-government initiatives in your country that show significant promise in addressing key challenges facing women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas that could provide models for future policy measures and/or laws?**

**Q. 5.4: This section provides space to add any other information on policy and law in your country that is important to include in our assessment and has not been covered already in this questionnaire (e.g. related to gender quality or specific areas such as finance, education, health, employment etc.)**

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## IRELAND

**Assessment by:** Aisling Murtagh, Maura Farrell, Louise Weir (University of Galway), Tara Farrell (Longford Women’s Link), Anne Kinsella (Teagasc)

### GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Ireland is a parliamentary representative democracy with legislative power held by the Oireachtas which consists of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann (Houses of the Oireachtas, no date). This represents national government however local and regional government also exists through local authorities and regional assemblies. The 31 local authorities role is focused on local services, including planning (Citizens Information, 2023). There are also three regional assemblies and their work is focused on decisions around strategic planning and manage certain EU funding programmes such as the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) (Citizens Information, 2021).

### WIDER NATIONAL CONTEXT ISSUES

Appointed by the Taoiseach, government ministers are responsible for running the current 18 government departments (Citizens Information, 2024b). A number link with agriculture and rural areas, particularly the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)

## PART 1: POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN FARMING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### 1A: GENERAL CONTEXT

**Q. 1A.1: In your country, is there a commitment to gender mainstreaming, or other method of gender equality assessment (e.g. benchmarking) of all key rural and/or farm policies?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_x\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_x\_\_

In general, women are considered in Ireland’s CSP, also in Ireland’s national rural development policy Our Rural Future and agri-food sector policy Food Wise 2030 where there are some actions included that focus on women (further information on the extent of this is provided elsewhere in this Questionnaire e.g. see questions 1B and 1C). There does not appear to be more systematic gender mainstreaming where a gender perspective comes into account in for example design, implementation, monitoring and assessment. While there is no current strategy, the 2017-2020 National Strategy for Women and Girls recognises the need to increase public sector capacity and expertise in gender mainstreaming and includes an action to build capacity in gender mainstreaming and budgeting. It also highlights that “Implementing



Cabinet procedures which require policy proposals put to Government for approval to clearly indicate the impact of the proposal for gender equality” (DJE, 2017, p.69).

Further to this, **Article 42(1) of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act** of 2014 sets out that gender equality must be addressed by all government departments in their policies (EIGE, 2021).

In addition, in the current Programme for Government the need for greater action on gender equality is recognised as a priority for the Irish government. It is also noted that “Member States are required to strengthen their capacity in gender mainstreaming and in the collection of sex disaggregated data. The department is in the process of implementing amendments to internal systems to capture gender data for analysis” (DAFM, 2022).

Again, not specific to rural areas but the National Strategy for Women and Girls (2017-2020) placed an obligation on all government departments to gender proof new policies and review current policies.

In a 2024 report from the UN Committee on Economic and Social Rights recommends that the state ensure effective gender mainstreaming and budgeting is in all policies and programmes (see Q5.4 below for more on this).

**Q. 1A.2: Do official datasets exist in your country showing women’s participation in rural and farm innovation and/or the wider farm and rural economy? e.g. those collected regularly by national statistics agency or other relevant state bodies**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_x\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_x\_\_

In relation to the Ireland’s CAP Strategic Plan, improving recording and reporting of gender data is included (DAFM, 2022). In Ireland’s CAP Strategic Plan it is stated that “On Obj8.N6, data collection for a number of the interventions contained in the CSP are split by gender. As such, patterns for the participation of women in other schemes can be used to inform the design of schemes in future programmes in such a way to increase their opportunities in agriculture” (DAFM, 2021b). For example, TAMS and young farmers setting up support are split by gender. In a submission on the 2023-2027 CSP to DAFM the National Women’s Council recommended that gender disaggregated data is collected for all interventions (National Women’s Council, 2021b).

The Oireachtas Joint Committee on Gender Equality notes the importance of reliable data in addressing gender equality issues and recommended “Department of Public Expenditure and Reform develops a cross Departmental strategy on the gathering and publication of data on key gender equality issues” (Joint Committee on Gender Equality, 2022, p.128). It also recommended “Government Introduces legislation



providing a statutory framework for the practice of gender equality budgeting” (Joint Committee on Gender Equality, 2022, p.131).

More broadly, DAFM issued a call for research focused on ““Women in Farming – Examining the visibility, equality and status of women in farming in Ireland” and resulted in commissioning of a 12-month study with results expected in 2024 (DAFM, 2022). In addition one action emerging from the recently published Action Plan arising from the National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture is “Undertake research on women in agriculture” (DAFM, 2024d, p.2).

The gender balance in business survey focuses on large enterprises with 250 or more persons and provides statistics on gender representation in Senior Executive teams and Boards of Directors. A sector breakdown is given based on wide categories (e.g. construction, industry, wholesale/retail trade) (CSO, 2023). Data by geography (rural, urban) does not appear to be available.

The Teagasc National Farm Survey (NFS) is operated as part of the Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN). It fulfils Ireland’s statutory obligation in the provision of data on farm output, costs and income to the European Commission. It is a random, nationally representative sample, representing circa 90,000 farms nationally. The latest year on which detailed data analysis on female participation in survey is for 2020 year. This includes data on total unpaid labour units (male versus female) and gender composition of farms by farming system.

Data on Registered Farm Partnerships by gender composition is also gathered by the DAFM Farm Partnership Unit (discussed further in Q1C.10 below).

The critical importance of data to understanding the impact of rural policy on gender equality is highlighted by the National Women’s Council. In a 2021 report it recommended: “Record and report gender and equality disaggregated data and a set of gender specific indicators in the monitoring and review of all rurally oriented strategies and programmes. This is critical to measuring impacts and outcomes for women to meet the obligations in the Istanbul Convention and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women” (NWC, 2021, p.1).

## **1B: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: EUROPEAN LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AT NATIONAL LEVELS**

### **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**

*CAP 2023-2027 Specific Objective 8 (SO8) references enhancing the position of women in farming and accelerating the social inclusion of rural women – “Promote employment, growth, gender equality, including the participation of women in farming, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including the circular bio-economy and sustainable forestry”.*



**Q. 1B.1: How is the gender equality, including the participation of women in farming aspect, of Objective 8 reflected in the SWOT analysis, identification of needs and intervention logic of the CAP strategic plan in your country?**

The identification of needs positions the need to “Increase opportunities for women in agriculture and business development” as the sixth highest priority (of six other priorities) as part of SO8 and this need is indicated to be addressed in the CAP Strategic Plan (DAFM, 2021b, p.35). Key aspects of the SWOT identified in Ireland’s CSP are low share of females in the sector (farming, forestry and fishing), a perception of farming as a male occupation and significant underrepresentation in management roles. Support at early and start-up stage of business development is noted as important to creating opportunities, as well as peer to peer learning.

In relation to Objective 8 the SWOT highlights the “low levels of female participation in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector, especially in leadership roles” as a weakness. This is linked also to the issue of succession and how women do not often inherit land. According to FAO data cited less than 12% of landowners are women and it is noted this is “presumably as a result of traditional cultural bias towards male successors” and this is all linked with reinforcing a perception that “farming is a male occupation” (DAFM, no dateb, p.226). Linked to this an opportunity is outlined to “Increase opportunities for women in agriculture, including leadership roles” (DAFM, no dateb, p.235). Peer to peer learning and agriculture focused discussion groups are cited as an opportunity, as well as piloting programmes building on the success of ACORNS (more in Q2.B2 below). More broadly the wider opportunity in greater female participation was highlighted during the consultation carried out for the SWOT “women are more likely to drive change and consider alternative options for their enterprise” (DAFM, no dateb, p.235). In relation to the CSP this appears to carry through in relation to improving peer to peer learning opportunities based on local needs (discussed Q1.B.2).

Beyond objective 8, in relation to Objective 7 (Attract and sustain young farmers and facilitate business development in rural areas) the published SWOT analysis highlights the small and falling proportion of young farm managers as a weakness, and this is extremely low for women (0.5% in 2016) (DAFM, no dateb, p.200). A threat in relation to Objective 7 is increasing levels of poverty and social isolation in rural Ireland and women are highlighted as a group most usually effected (DAFM, no dateb, p.200).

In relation to Objective 1 (Support viable farm income and resilience across the Union to enhance food security) in the SWOT analysis a weakness identified is the changing demographics and decline in young farmer numbers and in relation to this the issue of gender unequal land inheritance patterns are raised. It is noted: “It was also highlighted during stakeholder consultations, that a small percentage of land holders in Ireland are women and women rarely inherit land. This poses a further challenge as women are often cited as more likely to drive the change necessary to ensure the future viability of some farm enterprises” (DAFM, no dateb, p.38).



**Q. 1B.2: Does your countries CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

The direct interventions below derive and are set out to address the identified need to “Increase opportunities for women in agriculture and business development”. (DAFM, 2021b).

Depending on local needs, it is stated in Ireland’s CSP that **women-only knowledge transfer groups** can be set up (DAFM, 2021b, p. 326).

The **On-Farm Capital Investment Scheme** aims to support increased farm efficiency and competitiveness (e.g. investment in digital and wider new technologies) and provides financial support to farmers. Grants are provided based on a percentage of the cost of the investment. The standard rate is 40%, however female and young farmers can claim 60% of the costs (to an investment ceiling of €90,000 per farm holding or €160,000 for farm partnerships) once they meet the eligibility criteria (DAFM, 2021b).

Support is provided for **European Innovation Partnerships (EIP) Operational Group** projects that aim to address challenges related to environment, biodiversity and climate change. Gender balance is included as a theme within EIPs and under stream A: “Innovative approaches to support greater gender balance in farming in Ireland” (DAFM, 2021b, p.823). Ireland’s CSP further states support is provided for “‘bottom-up’ innovative projects in a range of areas including approaches to support gender balance in farming in Ireland and amounts to € 4.02m” (DAFM, 2021b, p.329). Ireland’s CSP also states “As there is potential for support to be provided for projects leading to circular and bioeconomy development as well as projects that focus on increasing the opportunities for women in agriculture or rural enterprises” (DAFM, 2021b, p.330).

Funded through the Rural Development Programme, the **Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS)** provides finance to support improvements in animal housing to increase animal welfare. The TAMS 3 Women Farmer Capital Investment Scheme is a direct support for women that provides 60% of the costs (to an investment ceiling of €90,000 per farm holding or €160,000 for farm partnerships) once they meet the eligibility criteria (DAFM, 2024a).

**Q. 1B.3: Does your countries CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent



According to DAFM (2022) “All CAP interventions will be developed with a gender-aware perspective to ensure there are no inherent barriers to women’s participation”. This means in theory all interventions could support women, however with the more specific question of indirect support for women-led innovation some specific measures appear more important than others. In relation to this measures that related to farm diversification are worth nothing. Measures linked to Objective No.1 and Need 4 are to “encourage farm diversification to improve the resilience of the agri-food sector” appear relevant. This is given 4<sup>th</sup> highest priority under objective 1 and deemed to be addressed in the CSP (DAFM, 2021b, p.56). The On Farm Capital Investment Scheme (discussed in Q1B.2 above) is linked directly to addressing this need (DAFM, 2021b, p.27). This need is also linked to Ireland’s specialisation in livestock (beef and dairy) and how diversification could mitigate against risks in this sector. However low interest in diversification among Irish farmers is noted and education measures are noted as needed (DAFM, 2021b, p.37). The Organic Farming Scheme (discussed below) and LEADER programme are linked to addressing this need (discussed Q1B.4 and Q1B.5). In addition so is the Coupled Income Support for Protein Aid that “aims to encourage farmers to produce protein crops and thus encourages diversification into this sector, the outcome being a reduced reliance on livestock production and therefore greater resilience within the agricultural sector overall” (DAFM, 2021b, p.58). The *Knowledge Transfer Programme* is noted also that it may potentially address this need (DAFM, 2021b, p.59). Another measure linked to this need is the **AECM Cooperation Measure** as it is noted it may encourage farm diversification (DAFM, 2021b, p.59). This is focused on farmers in specific high priority geographic areas and it is anticipated these projects will build on the success of EIPs in eight local cooperation projects. However it appears this measure is linked to EIPs delivered under the previous RDP 2014-2020 and therefore may not link to the projects funded under the current programme’s gender balance theme under stream A. Nevertheless it is worth noting in relation to indirect impacts on women-led innovation in farming because of its scale and geographic focus “associated actions and planning for approximately 20,000 farmers in the most sensitive and challenging lands in the country” (DAFM, 2021b, p.824).

The **European Innovation Partnerships (EIP)** are also important to highlight as an indirect support. EIP provides funding for Operational Groups which are innovative, multi-actor, locally-led projects that address challenges and issues in the agri-food sector. DAFM can directly recruit a project team to manage a project that it is determined a clear priority area, but also competitive calls. The scheme is structured around two streams. Stream A is focused on wider competitiveness, modernisation and animal health and welfare challenges in the sector, while stream B relates to environmental, biodiversity and climate change challenges. The gender balance theme mentioned above falls under stream A (DAFM, 2021b, p.823). Successful applicants are provided with €10,000 grant support to develop their projects, after that a decision is made on funding the project’s operation. Projects under stream A are expected to receive grants on average of €650,000 and stream B €1,050,000.



The **Organic Farming Scheme** supports farm diversification in terms of farmers converting from conventional to an organic farming approach. Support is provided for those converting to organics. Support is available for those continuing to farm organically to encourage the continuing of this farming method. Specific supports also exist depending on the farm type (dry stock, dairy, tillage or horticulture). The scheme is linked to SO8, but is specifically linked to the need to “Maximise the opportunities presented by the circular and bio-economy in rural areas” rather than the gender equality aspect of SO8 (DAFM, 2021b, p.726-736).

A strength identified in Ireland’s SWOT analysis is in relation to SO2 ‘Enhance market orientation and increase farm competitiveness, both in the short and long term, including greater focus on research, technology and digitalisation’ is the wide range of support provided for research and innovation in the agri-food sector”, however a weakness identified is “wide variation in levels of innovation and adoption of new technologies” (DAFM, 2021b, p.329). The **Knowledge Transfer Programme** is linked to ‘XCO cross-cutting objective of modernising the sector by fostering and sharing of knowledge, innovation and digitalisation in agriculture and rural areas, and encouraging their uptake’ and is a key part of the national Agriculture Knowledge & Innovation System. Knowledge transfer groups across the farming sector provide a key vehicle for implementation of the programme and are aligned with local needs. Groups have an average of 15 farmers and attendance at eight meetings is required annually. Topics can be determined by farmers themselves however four annually must focus on priority knowledge transfer topics and the AKIS coordination group is consulted on this list (DAFM, 2021b, p.862).

**Q. 1B.4: Does your national LEADER Programme directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_x\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_x\_\_

Our tentative assessment above is ‘to some extent’ but this is a very difficult to evaluate. Assessment of Local Development Strategies and indeed implementation and uptake of the programme itself would be important to fully answer this question. Given the current stage of the **LEADER Programme** only an indicative answer can be provided based on the CSP. Evidence does suggest LEADER has been a significant support to rural and farm women innovators. For example, in a National Rural Network case study on women in agriculture it emerges as an important support (McGuinness et al.2023). The 2023 to 2027 LEADER Programme Operating Rules note that under sub theme 1d Enterprise Development that increased focus should be placed on supporting female entrepreneurs (DRCD, 2024, p.12). In addition each Local Action Group (LAG) must run at least one targeted call per year under the current programme. While women-led innovation in rural areas and farming is not a specifically named area it could in theory be the focus of a targeted call. The operating



rules state “The targeted call should, in particular, focus on innovative funding areas, cross-cutting objectives and strategic areas that can inform best practice under LEADER and wider community development” (DRCD, 2024, p.32).

There is promise in the LEADER programme in relation to addressing gender equality, including the participation of women in farming, social inclusion and local development in rural areas aspect of SO8. Ireland’s CSP also states: “Each of the LEADER interventions in the draft CAP SP will respect the EU’s Charter of Fundamental Rights as referenced in Article 9 of the CAP SP Regulation. This includes the equal rights of women and men. This will be further outlined in the calls for proposals and LEADER Programme Operating Rules” (DAFM, 2021b, p.950).

**Q. 1B.5: Does your national LEADER Programme indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

LEADER is a clear indirect support for women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. For example, Ireland’s CSP states “It has proven to be an effective tool for supporting the economic and social development of rural communities, by providing the resources necessary for communities to support their own development” (DAFM, 2021b, p.839). Ireland’s SWOT analysis to inform the CSP for example points to the need to support rural enterprise development as a challenge for rural Ireland, but also alongside this to “embrace the diversity of rural communities by involving all members of society in the development process” (DAFM, 2021b, p.839). A series of indicative themes that are derived from the SWOT are suggested to provide a strong evidence base and can be used in Local Development Strategies. This further underlines LEADER’s importance in relation to women-led innovation in farming and rural areas and all themes potentially interlink and support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. In particular, the ‘Economic Development and Job Creation’ theme includes six sub themes (1. The Green Economy; 2. Agricultural Diversification; 2. Rural Tourism and Recreation; 3. Enterprise Development; 4. Rural Food Production; 5. Social, Community and Cooperative Enterprises) that are areas of potentially strong inter-linkage with women-led innovation.

A further aspect of note in relation to indirect support for women-led innovation is the requirement that: “There will also be a requirement for the Smart Villages concept, climate change mitigation and adaptation and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be over-arching elements of LEADER Local Development Strategies/Interventions” (DAFM, 2021b, p.841).

The LAGs have been established in order to deliver the LEADER programme and include a broad range of representation. LAGs must aim to ensure balanced gender representation ((DRCD, 2024, p.21).





**1C: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: COUNTRY LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS**

**RURAL**

**Q. 1C.1: Does your country have a Rural Development Policy(s)?**

Yes  No  To some extent

**Our Rural Future** is Ireland’s Rural Development Policy for the period 2021 to 2025. It sets out to respond to challenges and harness opportunities based on key issues impacting rural areas and takes a place-based approach. Those responsible for developing measures for delivery of **Our Rural Future** actions are a diverse range of government departments, institutions and wider stakeholders. Linkages with the UN Sustainable Development Goals are also mapped out in relation to its policy measures. Its core objectives have a strong relationship to creating a more supportive environment for women-led innovation, particularly in rural areas, but also in farming. For example thematic objectives include “Supporting improved quality employment and career opportunities in rural areas” and “Supporting the sustainability of Agriculture, the Marine and Forestry” (DRCD, 2021, p.9). Specific broad actions relate to investment in remote working, economic and social activities in rural towns and villages as well as empowering rural communities to create and implement responses addressing local need (DRCD, 2021).

**Q. 1C.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes  No  To some extent

Two actions in **Our Rural Future** directly relate to women in rural areas and farming. It is hard to say if these actions would very directly support women-led innovation, however are likely to support rural (and also farm women) more broadly which would then have impact.

- Action 88 is to “Undertake research to inform the particular needs of women, girls, LGBTI+, Travellers, Roma, migrants and those of migrant origin living in rural areas.” (DRCD, 2021, p.59).
- Action 131 is to “Support generational renewal, including young farmers and women in agriculture, through measures including the CAP, taxation measures and access to finance initiatives” (DRCD, 2021, p.86).

Progress reports monitor implementation. A number have been published and they also include sub-measures and additional measures under each action (DRCD, 2023b). In general, the focus directly on women in the emerging actions is not very strong but this is embedded in the wider action.



More broadly, it is worth noting in a paper on Women in Rural Communities the National Women's Council called for "Explicitly name and target women from minority ethnic backgrounds, Traveller and Roma women and disabled women in all rural development programmes and initiatives and ensure that their rights are protected" (National Women's Council, 2021a).

**Q. 1C.3: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_x\_\_

A wide range of actions in **Our Rural Future** can be classed as indirectly relating to supporting women-led innovation in rural areas because of their focus on encouraging rural innovation, rural economy development and diversification and enterprise development more broadly. As noted above, progress reports monitor implementation.

More specifically many of the actions relating to the objective of "supporting employment and careers in rural areas" should indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas. For example they include Action 21 to "Develop and implement a set of nine new Regional Enterprise Plans to support enterprise development and jobs growth in the regions" and Action 23 "Assist rural economies to diversify into new sectors and markets by taking advantage of high speed broadband and new technologies" (DRCD, 2021, p.101).

In relation to the objective of "Enhancing Participation, Leadership and Resilience in Rural Communities" action 80 is important which is to "Support the development of social innovation as a means of addressing pressing social challenges" (DRCD, 2021, p.59).

In relation to the objective "Supporting the Sustainability of Agriculture, the Marine & Forestry" a range of actions are important in relation to women-led innovation on farms and how they interact with the wider rural economy:

- Action 122 is to "Encourage and support Local Authorities to expand the number of farmers' markets, farm shops and food emporiums, and support the formation of community-owned markets in all towns, showcasing local food produce from local farmers, growers, and food producers" (DRCD, 2021, p.86).
- Action 123 is to "Support farm diversification, including through the provision of the Options programme managed by Teagasc" (DRCD, 2021, p.86).
- Action 124 is to "Support research and development in areas such as agri-food, biobased systems, smart agriculture and precision agriculture to promote and encourage innovation" (DRCD, 2021, p.86).
- Action 125 is to "Explore the potential application of Living Labs in an Irish context, establishing innovation networks to identify and pilot tailored place-



based initiatives for primary production, food and biobased systems ” (DRCD, 2021, p.86).

**Q. 1C.4: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_x\_

There is some focus at regional levels on measures and initiatives that provide direct support for women-led innovation in rural areas. These initiatives are not purely rural focused, but those described below are outside of Ireland’s major urban centres.

The **South-West Regional Enterprise plan** outlines that through Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) there is a focus on targeted initiatives to encourage female entrepreneurship: “Female entrepreneurship is actively encouraged and supported through targeted programmes and ongoing assistance to local chapters of Network Ireland and The Kerry Business-Women’s Network” (Government of Ireland, 2024b, p52).

The **North-West Regional Enterprise plan** outlines how driven by Covid an increase in demand for enterprise support programmes emerged and it is noted that an Investment Accelerator Programme was delivered and included a female pre-accelerator programme in 2020 (Government of Ireland, 2024b, p52).

The **West Regional Enterprise plan** includes a strategic objective to “Advance the development of the regional entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem” and action to “Continue to champion gender equality, inclusivity, and diversity in innovation and entrepreneurship” (Government of Ireland, 2024c, p8). This action is lead by the Atlantic Technological University iHub Mayo and has two key planned outcomes: “1. Common datasets and KPIs to measure, monitor and benchmark gender equality, inclusivity, and diversity as a ‘gender index’ of entrepreneurial initiatives developed, which will be used to inform and define interventions needed. 2. Identify gaps in provision and suggest new models of furthering female entrepreneurship (Government of Ireland, 2024c, p17). In the West region plan related to Enterprise Ireland objectives and new business development it is stated that “Enterprise Ireland will continue to work with the New Frontiers partners and other entrepreneurship programmes to ensure that a strong pipeline of new companies is developing across the region, with a particular emphasis on Women in Business” (Government of Ireland, 2024c, p40).

The **West Regional Enterprise plan** also notes that the **EMPOWER** female entrepreneurship programme is an important development. This programme is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Social Fund and is run by Atlantic Technological University iHubs targeting six counties (Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Sligo, Leitrim, and Donegal). EMPOWER aims to promote and fast-track female entrepreneurs and operates two key programmes “START is designed for those with



an idea who are seeking to validate their business concept while GROWTH is for established entrepreneurs wishing to scale and grow their business” (ATU iHubs, no date).

The **Midlands Regional Enterprise plan** includes a key objective “To see an improvement in labour force participation, especially amongst females, towards the national average” (Government of Ireland, 2024d, p6). However no specific targeted actions or measures are identified in the plan.

The **North East Regional Enterprise** plan notes that LEOs in the region support business networks, including Women in Business Networks. The targeted support programme **THRIVE** that is supported by LEOs is also noted. The **THRIVE** programme is a targeted support for female careers and business in STEM areas. The programme brings “participants through the NPD (new product development) process for new products and services within the pharma, tech, mechanical, electronic or food manufacturing sectors from idea to execution” (DkIT, 2021). The North East plan also includes an action to “Improve linkages between SMEs and multinational/large enterprise in the North-East while supporting the development of enterprise leadership, management, and entrepreneurial skills.” One of the outcomes of this action is “Women being actively attracted back into the workplace through promotion of the **Athena STEM Programme** (Female led Entrepreneurship and management capability development) while also promoting the work of the Regional Skills Forum and the National Apprenticeship programmes” (Government of Ireland, 2024d, p17).

The **Mid-West Regional Enterprise** plan notes that the **EXPLORE Engineering Alliance** aims to improve engineering talent in the region and is focused in particular on encouraging female students in this traditionally male sector (Government of Ireland, 2024f, p.37). One action is to build an ecosystem for start-ups and entrepreneurs and included in the outcomes is to further develop Enterprise Ireland’s Female Entrepreneurship Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2024f, p.39). In relation to LEOs promoting female entrepreneurship through its various networks, clusters and programmes is specifically mentioned (Government of Ireland, 2024f, p.54). In relation to innovation in education the ‘**Coding Careers for Women**’ pilot initiative involving local education agencies and industry aims to support a pathway for women into the tech industry and combines education and work placement (Government of Ireland, 2024f, p.20).

While not strictly rural policies, funds outlined in the **National Development Plan 2021-2030** are worth noting. One of the high level themes for Ireland’s **European Social Fund+** is “Increasing female labour market participation and enhancing access to affordable, quality childcare” (DPER, 2021, p.46). In addition, new **Regional Enterprise Development Funding** calls envisage that future funding would include: “Projects to stimulate and foster entrepreneurship and an entrepreneurship culture locally or regionally, including initiatives specially targeted at underrepresented groups (e.g., female entrepreneurship) and social enterprise” (DPER, 2021, p.95).



**Q. 1C.5: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent x\_\_\_

Local government in Ireland involves 31 Local Authorities that deliver a range of services. This includes LEOs that serve both urban and rural areas. LEOs are described as “the first-stop shop for anyone seeking information and support on starting or growing a business in Ireland” and provide a key link to help small and micro business to state supports (LEO, 2024). Many LEOs run women in business networks (as discussed above).

**Regional Enterprise Plans** exist for nine regions and are focused on supporting enterprise growth. They are intended to complement the work of different state actors that support enterprise development (e.g. LEOs, Enterprise Ireland) and drive collaborative initiatives and a number of funds exist to support this (Regional Enterprise Development Fund, Border Enterprise Development Fund, Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme). Some are focused on urban areas (e.g. Dublin), but many of the plans interact with rural contexts and the broader goals are to “complement and translate national enterprise policy in a regional context...facilitate collaboration regionally to address prioritised ecosystem...use collective insight and resources in each region (DETE, 2024).

The **West Regional Enterprise plan** links the **Bia Innovator Campus** as a facilitator to regional leadership in relation to a range of areas, including female entrepreneurship. This campus is said to “deliver unprecedented regional access to multi-strand food incubation, skills, scaling, and innovation assistance in one location, that can drive innovation from Farm to Fork and connect the various stakeholders seamlessly through regional and national partnerships” (Government of Ireland, 2024c, p28).

Supporting the goals of **Food Vision 2030**, the **DAFM Rural Innovation and Development Fund** includes an **agri-food tourism measure** and provides grants to part fund projects of up to €25,000 maximum for the “promotion and/or development of innovative agri-food tourism projects which can demonstrate that they will be self-sustainable in the longer term. These initiatives should be underpinned with the objective of energising the rural economy by encouraging innovative job creation and sustainable enterprise development and should align with goals and actions of the Food Vision 2030 Strategy” (DAFM. 2024b).

## **FARMING**



**Q. 1C.6: Beyond the CAP Strategic Plan, does your country have a core Farming Development Policy (s)?** *e.g. agri-food sector policy (note: sub-sector policies can be dealt with in the last question included in this section below)*

Yes  No  To some extent

**Food Vision 2030** is a ten-year strategy for the Irish agri-food sector. It takes into account primary agriculture, but also food and drink processing and manufacturing, fisheries, aquaculture and fish processing, forestry and forestry processing and the equine sector (DAFM, 2021).

**Q. 1C.7: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes  No  To some extent

**Food Vision 2030** includes actions to address gender balance at the primary production level and also more broadly across the agri-food sector, with particular focus on senior management and board level.

In relation to primary producers, improving social sustainability is a key goal of the policy and gender balance is one aspect highlighted within this. There are four actions linked to this: “1. Promote women’s participation in farming through KT Groups facilitated by a female advisor; 2. Hold a National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture; 3. Capture and publish gender data on policy implementation e.g. participation by women in schemes and measures; 4. Represent the agri-food sector in the development of the next National Women and Girl’s Strategy (with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth) due to be published in 2022” (DAFM, 2021).

The first **National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture** was held in 2023 and the outcomes were taken forward to a working group where recommendations based around a 12-point **Women in Agriculture Action Plan** were devised and published in January 2024. The Women in Agriculture Working Group includes representatives from across the sector and facilitates and guides implementation.

To attract and nurture diverse and inclusive talent is another goal of **Food Vision 2030** and one action is to “Promote and improve gender balance at all levels, but particularly at senior management and board level” (DAFM, 2021). Actions in relation to networking, mentoring and empowerment in relation to Food Vision 2030 are discussed in section 2 and 3 below.

**Q. 1C.8: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes  No  To some extent



The idea of innovation for sustainable food and agriculture underpins **Food Vision 2030** where it is claimed that by taking on an integrated food systems approach Ireland will become a global leader in this area. The vast actions operate in different parts of the food system, both with the primary and beyond the primary producer, focused on areas such as research centres for food innovation (e.g. National Food Innovation Hub) and increased application of digital innovations in the food and drinks industry. Assessing indirect linkages is beyond the scope of our assessment but some examples are noted in areas of sustainability innovation. Goal 6 overall aims to embed the agri-food sector in the circular, regenerative bioeconomy. For example, there are some actions of note in relation to harnessing opportunities in the bioeconomy and scaling enterprise and include: “Develop a plan for the scaling up of circular bioeconomy approaches”. It is noted “This should seek to scale up and deploy the bioeconomy locally, capitalising on and going beyond successful research and innovation investments in order to create growth and job opportunities at the local level” (DAFM, 2021c, p.26). More broadly deriving from Goal 4 (enhance the use of technology and data) the following action emerges: “Increase co-investment between the public and private sector for ag/food-tech and bio-economy accelerator programmes. In addition, foster an investment culture that supports the scaling of early stage ag/food-tech & bioeconomy companies” (DAFM, 2021c, p.73). **Ag Climatise** is also referenced in the policy and the need to immediately implement it (DAFM, 2021c, p.8).

**Q. 1C.9: Do laws governing farm ownership include any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm ownership?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

There are no special provisions. Farmland can be co-owned. The issue of poor levels of farmland ownership and older women involved in farming is highlighted in the Women in Agriculture National Dialogue report “Most women, especially older women, involved in farm enterprises have no ownership rights. The husband/partner is usually the owner of the farm. This leaves women in a vulnerable position. The farm can be sold or transferred without any consent or input into the decision-making process from the woman. The current legal position needs to be amended to address the legal standing of women on farms” (DAFM, 2024c, p.27).

Moving into joint ownership can be an area where farm families lack clarity on the pension and tax implications of this. O’Sullivan (2020) for example outlines pros and cons of farmland joint ownership from this perspective. The Women in Agriculture National Dialogue report highlights how Capital Acquisitions Tax rules generates liability and current rules have lower thresholds for spouses (€16,250) compared to children (€335,000). It is argued: “This inadvertently encourages the transfer of land to a child rather than into joint names of a spouse/civil partner, putting women at a disadvantage when it comes to ownership. There is a look-through approach in Young Trained Farmer Stamp Duty Relief where only one of the couple needs to pass the



conditions to avail of the relief. The same should be introduced for CAT and CGT Agri Reliefs” (DAFM, 2024c, p.27).

**Q. 1C.10: Do other policy(s) or law (s) exist in your country that facilitate improved gender equality in relation to running the farm business?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_x\_\_

**DAFM Registered Farm Partnerships** provide a formal arrangement where at least two farmers can work together in a formal business arrangement. This system, in theory, supports improved gender equality by providing a system where women who traditionally had an informal role on farms can be formally part of the farm business through a partnership arrangement. Data on farm partnerships is collected by gender and data from the DAFM Farm Partnership Unit database as of mid-December 2021 shows of the 3260 registered farm partnerships there are 1524 female members and 6132 male. 551 registered Farm Partnership have 50% or more female partners. The report from the National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture notes that farm partnerships present an opportunity where they can be a useful model to assist more women get into farm ownership. However a number of issues in relation to how the current rules apply and their restrictive nature is noted, as well as the need for a review of requirements: “A farmer must either be farming for two years or have an agricultural qualification. In many cases a woman farmer would find it difficult to tick either of these boxes. At present a woman farmer can go in as what’s called “another person” if they don’t have the requirements but this lacks fairness. There should be a review of these requirements to try to facilitate more women being included on RFPs and being able to benefit from holding that status” (DAFM, 2024c, p.27). One of the actions of the plan emerging from the national dialogue is to: “Establish a working group to review internal DAFM scheme eligibility and educational requirements to ensure maximum opportunities available to women farmers and to establish a process for the consideration of the issue in the design and implementation of all schemes, including improved recording and reporting of gender data” (DAFM, 2024d, p.2).

Under **CAP Pillar II, the Collaborative Farming Grant** supports costs related to setting up a farm partnership as well as farm succession and retirement advice. It is not targeted for women, but a more general support for farm succession and young farmers “The support offered under this scheme is provided in the form of financial assistance towards the professional costs, such as legal, taxation and advisory, associated with setting up registered farm partnerships as well as the professional costs associated with providing advice to older farmers on succession and retirement options. The aim is to assist old farmers transitioning to retirement in passing over their land to younger farmers.” (DAFM, 2021b, p.292)





**Q. 1C.11: Do laws governing farm transfer and inheritance have any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm inheritance?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Transfer of land on death can be determined in a will. If there is no will the **Succession Act** determines the new owner. This Act does not include measures to improve gender equality nor does it hinder gender equality. However, as noted in Q1B.1 a pattern of greater male inheritance of farmland exists in Ireland is still understood to exist in Ireland.

Farms can be gifted when the existing farmer retires. No particular laws govern this but tax reliefs exist if land is transferred to either sons or daughters if land transfer is for farming purposes.

**Q. 1C.12: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Most relevant policies are covered elsewhere in this questionnaire already.

**Q. 1C.13: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming? e.g. organic farming, horticulture, agri-tourism, care/social farming**

Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

The **Agriculture (Research, Training and Advice) Act, 1988** established Teagasc, the Agriculture and Food Development Authority. This is the national body providing integrated research, advisory and training services to the agriculture and food industry and rural communities. Teagasc, (the Irish Agriculture and Food development Authority), a public research and innovation organisation is recognised internationally as being unique in having, within the same organisation, the three critical components of research, advisory and education activities that are considered essential to ensuring that research knowledge supports practice. Teagasc has for some time advocated a holistic concept of sustainability. In its most recent Teagasc Statement of Strategy 2021-2024 (“Teagasc Together” Harnessing the Power of Research, Advisory and Education to Create a Sustainable Food System) it outlines a number of farm-level social and sectoral capacity challenges that are influenced in a significant way by an aging farm population. These challenges include the need for measures to improve farmer health and the safety and the quality of life on many farms but also actions to “enable improved female participation in farming and in support of earlier farm succession planning and management”. Teagasc Chairman Liam Herlihy in foreword refers to “holistic concept of sustainability that enshrines four dimensions: economic, social, environmental and innovation. Supporting farmers and food companies to



innovate and being innovative ourselves lie at the core of delivering on the ambitions for sustainability". Teagasc has responsibility for supporting the knowledge and technology needs of the entire food chain and the authority to integrate research, advice and education services to deliver the innovation support necessary to add significant value to Ireland's agri-food sector (Teagasc, 2021).

As outlined in Ireland's CSP Teagasc also offers a range of services to farmers and they link with improving farm-level innovation. For example the Farm Options programme "facilitates farm households exploring on- and off-farm opportunities to exploit the full potential of their farm resources and financial positions. The programme is implemented through a series of nationwide Farm Options workshops" (DAFM, 2021b, p.49) and "Teagasc also offers advisory services to farmers, whereby advisors provide advice on business and financial planning, assist with DAFM scheme applications, future planning options, enterprise development and general farm management advice. These services are available to any Teagasc member" (DAFM, 2021b, p.49).

Sustainability and ecological innovations is a key area of opportunity for women-led innovation in farming. **Ag Climatise** was developed by Ireland's Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine as a roadmap towards climate neutrality in the agri-food and forestry sectors. Its actions include action 12 "Promote the development of the circular bioeconomy within the agri-food sector" (DAFM, 2020, p.18) which links very closely to innovations and it is noted that strategic actions should support all types of innovations in this area. Action 13 is to "Explore all options in relation to land use diversification" (DAFM, 2020, p.18) and specifically relates to reviewing and analysing all land diversification options and alternative economic opportunities relating to a just transition, as well as supporting supply chain development in relation to new market opportunities. To implement many actions contained in Ag Climatise the role and need for a "functioning, adaptable and inclusive" Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) is noted.

The **Future Growth Loan Scheme** provides loans from €100,000 to €3 million to eligible businesses. Starting loans are €50,000 for farmers. The focus is on "eligible SME and Small Mid-Cap businesses, and the primary agriculture (farmers) and seafood sectors in Ireland to support strategic long-term investments" (Government of Ireland, no date).

The **National Organic Strategy 2020-2025** is currently under review and a new strategy is being developed to 2030. The Organic Farming Scheme under the CAP is also discussed within this strategy (see DAFM, 2023). There does not appear to be a direct focus on the role of women-led innovation in the organic food sector in Ireland.



**PART 2: OTHER POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS SUPPORTING WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS**

**2A: INNOVATION**

**Q. 2A.1: Do specific, targeted policy (s) exist in your country related to women-led innovation?** *e.g. in areas such as enterprise, research and development*

Yes  No  To some extent

The **Enterprise Ireland Action Plan for Women in Business** introduces 24 actions across four key objectives to increase the representation of women in enterprise. The four key objectives are:

1. Increasing the number of women-led established companies growing internationally
2. Increasing the number of women in middle and senior management and leadership roles in Irish companies
3. Increasing the number of women becoming entrepreneurs
4. Increasing the number of women-led start-ups with high growth potential

(Enterprise Ireland, 2020, p4).

**Q. 2A.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included specifically related to farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

There are no measures included that directly relate to rural areas and farming however indirectly the plan supports all women in business.

Initiatives such as for example **Going for Growth** provides a peer-led learning programme to support female entrepreneurs in all sectors (Going for Growth, 2024). This is part of a range of peer network initiatives that target female entrepreneurs at different stages of their business growth journey (Inspiring Women Entrepreneurs, 2024). The **Enterprise Ireland Competitive Start Fund** that offers a maximum investment of €50,000 for a 10% equity stake in the start-up has run women-specific calls (e.g. 2021, see LEO, 2021)

An OECD rapid policy assessment made a number of recommendations on the support landscape for women entrepreneurs in Ireland, including one specific recommendation relating to rural areas:



- “Provide additional support for women who seek to develop and grow their businesses, including helping them strengthen their networks, acquire management skills, learn to manage risk, identify researchers with innovative ideas and grow into international markets. Continue to offer support for female-run start-ups in rural areas given the success of the ACORNS program.
- Improve the treatment of the self-employed relative to employees with respect to Maternity Benefits and Unemployment Benefits.
- Improve access to childcare for women entrepreneurs, including through the use of tax incentives.
- Scale-up well-established women’s entrepreneurship support initiatives that have demonstrated to be successful, including Competitive Feasibility Fund, the Competitive Start Fund, Going for Growth and NDRC Female Founders.”

(OECD and European Commission 2017, p.6-7).

**Q. 2A.3: Does innovation policy in your country focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?** *e.g. innovation policy could mean policies supporting business innovation, research and innovation and more specific areas such as ecological, technological and digital innovation*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_x\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_x\_\_

**Impact 2030** is Ireland’s national research and innovation strategy. It has five areas or ‘pillars’ it states it will maximise impact:

1. Impact of research and innovation outcomes on the economy, society and the environment
  2. Impact of research and innovation structures on excellence and outcomes
  3. Impact of innovation on enterprise success
  4. Impact of talent at the heart of the research and innovation ecosystem
  5. Impact of research and innovation on all-island, EU and global connectivity
- (DFHERIS, 2022, p.4)

This is hard to assess, however there does not appear to be a clear, strong and direct focus on innovation in rural enterprise in this plan, agriculture is one sector specifically mentioned under pillar 1 with the objective (led by DAFM and aligned with Food Vision 2030): “Become an innovative, competitive and resilient agri-food sector and bioeconomy, driven by a dynamic knowledge exchange system, data, technology and talent” (DFHERIS, 2022, p.52). Ireland’s strength in agricultural science is noted. More broadly, it does focus on strengthening innovation capability in indigenous SMEs. Also some of the sectors where there are emerging areas of opportunity would have rural and farm based connections (e.g. carbon farming/sequestration, animal health and nutrition) (DFHERIS, 2022, p.33-4).



Under pillar 4 inclusion is considered and strengthening equality, diversity and inclusion in the research community. Better representation of women in STEM careers is included there as well as continuing to work on better gender equality in research careers (DFHERIS, 2022, p.42). The Higher Education Authority review gender equality in higher education and also under pillar 4 considering these recommendations is an action noted (DFHERIS, 2022, p.58). Under pillar 3 increasing female entrepreneurs and researchers is also an action, but referencing Enterprise Ireland’s Women in Business Action plan and targeted funding calls (DFHERIS, 2022, p.55). Also under pillar 3 innovation in enterprise to realise climate action goals specifically notes agriculture as one sector where solutions are to be developed. Also the agri-tech sector is noted as one that research and development centres should be at the forefront of advances in this area.

The high-level goals of the **National Smart Specialisation Strategy** link strongly with supporting regional innovation in areas of regional strength and opportunity and support innovative strategic actions such as clustering and scaling in areas of strength and opportunity. The regional development focus means the strategy is relevant to rural areas and its assessment does take account of rural contexts. It is said to link closely with Cohesion policy and is stated to support the ERDF goal of supporting the policy objective ‘a smarter Europe’ (DETE, 2022). It does not however appear to focus directly on women-led innovation in this context.

**Q. 2A.4: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No x To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No x To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 2A.5: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas? e.g. perhaps those related to areas such as social enterprise, rural tourism, creative industries**

Farming: Yes x No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes x No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

There are a wide range of policies and measures that should provide indirect support. **Enterprise Ireland** is the state agency responsible for enterprise development across different types of companies (start-ups, SMEs, multinationals). In relation to farming and rural areas **Enterprise Ireland’s Regional Technology Clustering Fund, the Circular Bioeconomy Cluster, Regional Economic Development Fund and the Bio-Connect Innovation Centre** are noted in Ireland’s CSP in relation to national supports that would help contribute to SO8 in relation to “Maximise the opportunities presented by the circular and bio-economy in rural areas” (DAFM, 2021b, p.52).



Under the **National Development Plan** a number of funds could support rural and farm women led innovation. The **Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund** provides funding for disruptive technologies with potential to for example alter markets or how businesses operate. Funding applications must apply for a minimum of €1.5 million over three years and have three partners, one of which must be an SME (DETE, no datea). Other funds of note from the National Development plan are the **Enterprise Green Transition Fund** (focused on foreign and indigenous enterprise) and the **Digital Transition Fund** (focused on SMEs). The **Rural Regeneration and Development Fund** is also part of the National Development Plan aiming to support strengthening of rural economies and communities and support revitalisation of rural towns and villages supporting facilities and infrastructure investment (DPER, 2021).

Ireland developed a **National Social Enterprise Policy** for the period 2019-2022 which aims to support the enabling environment for social enterprise (Government of Ireland, 2019). The policy did not target particular groups, such as female social entrepreneurs, however it is considered an area of enterprise women are particularly active. For example, a baseline data collection looking at the sector identified that 69% of the workforce is female (Amárach Research, 2023). A new policy is planned to be published in 2024 and a consultation is in progress by the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD, 2023a).

## 2B: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND NETWORKS

**Q. 2B.1: Are there policy (s) in your country that directly support women in rural areas and/or farming to access further education and training?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_x\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_x\_\_

There are indeed a range of further education and training options available, but no directly targeted supports that we identify for women in farming and rural areas. That said, Our Rural Future has a focus on improving capacities for remote learning in rural areas. The focus is on enabling young people, but would likely indirectly benefit women. For example, Our Rural Future includes an action “Increase the capacity for remote and blended learning to enable young people, in particular, in rural areas to access further and higher education courses through online learning while living in their local communities” (DRCD, 2021).

The increase in uptake of further education in farming by women has been noted, for example in the Green Cert (Teagasc, 2019). The relevance of introducing targeted measures can however still be identified. For example, the report from the National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture notes “Lack of education opportunities for older women farmers and the lack of a practical skillset for non-farmers has led to women



leaning towards more non-agri careers” (DAFM, 2024c, p.25) as well as “Education providers should implement better signposting for routes into farming for women, including education options, skills recognition, work experience etc.” DAFM, 2024c, p.26). Barriers to participation in education is also linked to for example childcare responsibilities (DAFM, 2024c, p.25; WASG, 2022, p.5) and the importance of considering of this by education providers is highlighted (e.g. timing or courses and time commitments needed to participate) (WASG, 2022, p.5).

Occupational segmentation and gender imbalances in women’s choice of education and careers is a wider issue that needs addressing, in farming and other areas such as STEM. In this context, two of the actions emerging from the National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture are important to note: “Increase promotion of agriculture as a viable career for women and young girls in primary and post-primary schools, to be progressed through with Agri Aware and the Department of Education” and “Liaise with Teagasc and third level education providers to ensure that there are options to ensure the highest possible female participation (e.g. for those who have caring responsibilities)” (DAFM, 2024d, p.1). In 2022, a series of recommendations were published by the **Department of Education on Gender Balance in STEM Education** (DoE, 2022). The issue of low female participation in apprenticeships is also noted in the existing National Strategy for pay gap (DJE, 2017), but increasing uptake is noted in recent years with actions such as the Facts, Faces, Futures campaign noted (McIntosh, 2024).

**Q. 2B.2: Are there mentoring/peer to peer learning programmes in your country that focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

**ACORNS** is a peer-led support network for rural female entrepreneurs and is focused on supporting nascent start-ups and aiming to accelerate their establishment and development. It is funded through the **DAFM Rural Innovation and Development Fund** and links to supporting the goals of **Food Vision 2030**, particularly Action 4: “Promote and improve gender balance at all levels, but particularly at senior management and board level” and sub action 4a to support mentoring programmes for rural female entrepreneurs (DAFM, 2021a, p.167). The programme runs over a six-month period and is based on “interactive round table sessions that are facilitated by female entrepreneurs, known as ‘Lead Entrepreneurs’, who have started and successfully grown businesses in rural Ireland” (ACORNS, 2024).

As highlighted in relation to the CAP above, the CSP SWOT highlighted the success of ACORNS and the opportunity to pilot other programmes building on its success (DAFM, no dateb, p.235).



**Q. 2B.3: Are there networking programmes in your country focused directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Through the CAP Strategic Plan, there is a focus on the promotion of **women-focused knowledge transfer groups** (see Part 1A above for more details).

Also under action 4 and 4a of **Food Vision 2030** is to promote and support women's networks in the agri-food sector. Entrepreneurs are specifically mentioned in relation to mentoring (as discussed above) but this appears a broader goal. However it should interlink with female entrepreneurs but also wider gender balance issues in the sector at senior management and board levels (DAFM, 2021a, p.167). The **CERES network** is given as an example of what type of networks should be promoted and supported. CERES is a women in agri-business leadership network was founded by women in the agri-business sector (CERES, no date).

There are also some wider groups that involve networks of women in rural and farm innovation, such as the Women in Agriculture Working Group that facilitates and guides implementation of the governments Women in Agriculture Action plan and voluntary groups such as those discussed in Q.5.3 below.

**LEOs facilitate Women in Business Networks** which host regular networking events (see Q1C.4 for some examples).

Specifically rural focused, the **Women's Rural Entrepreneurial Network (WREN)** is run by LAGs in Cork and Limerick (SECAD in partnership with Ballyhoura Development) and targets self-employed women, start-up, or established women entrepreneurs (SECAD, 2024).

**Q. 2B.4: Are there other education, training, mentoring and networking programmes, or other education-related supports, in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_





There are a range of potential programs, such as those run by Enterprise Ireland and Local Enterprise Offices. For example, Local Enterprise Offices run ‘Start your Own Business’ programs. They provide a range of core training programs for entrepreneurs and uptake by women is reported to be increasing (DETE, no date).

There are area-specific programs delivered by individual organisations which support early-stage female entrepreneurs e.g. Longford Women’s Link **WISE (Women Into Self Employment)**. However these are funding-dependent.

While not rurally focused, but it has 17 branches nationally, **Network Ireland** is a voluntary organisation (with corporate sponsors) supporting women’s professional and personal development for women start-up entrepreneurs, SME owners and women leaders in other organisations. Its services include mentoring and networking events (Network Ireland, no date).

### PART 3: EMPOWERMENT

**Q. 3.1: Do measures exist in your country that support women’s representation and participation in local, regional, and/or national decision-making?** *e.g. at the political level, in rural and/or farming organisations, participation in policy monitoring and development.*

Yes  No  To some extent

In relation to the governance and coordination system of Ireland’s CSP improving the gender balance is focused on in a number of ways:

- “To promote a fairer gender balance, the Monitoring Committee will aim to have increased representation by women in its membership. The Managing Authority will be responsible for ensuring that relevant bodies concerning women, youth and the interests of people in disadvantaged situations are represented on the Monitoring Committee (DAFM, 2021b, p. 902).
- In relation to LEADER and decision-making body of Local Action Groups (LAGs) includes a diversity of local actors and within this “Each LAG should aim to secure a balanced gender representation” (DAFM, 2021b, p. 840).

DAFM (2022) also note that the National CAP Network will be leveraged to improve women’s involvement in CAP implementation. Government also has a target to increase female participation in state boards (reach at least 40%). DAFM has 12 state boards and it is noted progress is being made but under-representation is still an issue (DAFM, 2022).

There are specific programmes which focus on the underrepresentation of Women in political life. The **SHE (See Her Elected) Programme**, delivered by Longford Women’s Link and supported by the Department of Housing, Local Government and



Heritage (via the Programme for Government) focuses specifically on supporting women in rural constituencies to engage in local democracy through the provision of training, mentoring and networking programmes. **Women for Election**, also supported by the Department provide training programmes (not necessarily rural-specific) for women wishing to engage in electoral politics.

The **Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012** sets quotas for national politics – it requires “political parties to select at least 30% of candidates of each gender for national elections or else lose 50% of their State funding for the parliamentary term” (DJE, 2017, p.13). In 1993 a target was set that at least 40% of state board members should be women and this increases to 45% (set out in 2014) when 40% is already reached (DJE, 2017, p.13-14). Under-representation of women is still an issue and it is particularly noted as an issue on corporate boards in the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-20 (DJE, 2017, p17-18). The programme for Government notes it will introduce measures to address gender equality in local government in 2024 (Department of the Taoiseach, 2020).

The Women in Agriculture Stakeholders Group (WASG) highlights how women’s representation at board level in farming organisations has historically been poor (DAFM, 2024c, p.42). In a submission by the WASG to the Joint Committee on Gender Equality it calls for “the WASG would like to see each farm organisation adopt a quota system where at least 30% of elected officials were women. We would also like to see this brought into beef and dairy processors and co-ops to ensure that women in rural communities working in the farming sector have their views adequately recognized” (WASG, 2022, p.4). Broadly speaking, attention to this issue is growing in farming organisations, such as what is seen in the Irish Farmer’s Association gender diversity strategy (IFA, 2019).

**Q. 3.2: Do measures exist in your country that work to protect against and/or combat harassment (online or otherwise) and violence against women in public life?**

Yes  No  To some extent

There are recent developments in Ireland in relation to violence against women – some specifically relate to **Domestic Violence such as the Domestic Violence Act 2018** but other pieces of legislation have a broader remit:

- In 2021, Ireland adopted the **Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act**, known as “Coco’s Law” which relates to intimate images.
- The **Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023** introduces new stand-alone offences of stalking and non-fatal strangulation.
- The **Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence** was published in 2022.



The issue of harassment and threats to women in public life, particularly politics is an increasingly discussed issue (e.g. National Women's Council, 2022). The need for greater protection is highlighted. For example in relation to leadership in politics, public life and the workplace the Citizen's Assembly report on gender equality calls for: "Strengthen legislation, reporting and monitoring of press and social media by: a) Holding technology and social media companies accountable for immediately removing online content that constitutes sexual harassment, bullying, stalking, sexually violent or abusive content that they have identified or about which they have been informed. b) Penalising and eliminating hateful and abusive language, including on the basis of gender, with regular reviews to ensure legislation keeps pace with technological advances." (Citizens Assembly, 2021, p.16).

A report from the National Women's Council makes a number of recommendations on violence against women in a rural context. It notes how distance from support services and meetings as well as in small communities where people are close-knit this can impact getting support meaning domestic violence can remain more hidden. Specifically in relation to farms it notes: "Additionally, for a woman living on a farm, accessing legal remedies such as a barring order may not be effective as the perpetrator will continue to work on the family farm around the home" (National Women's Council, 2021a, p.36).

**Q. 3.3: Do measures exist in your country that aim to increase the visibility of women-led innovation in rural areas and/or farming?** *e.g. programmes that aim to improve recognition of rural and farm women-led innovation and challenge gender stereotypes such as around traditional gender roles.*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

The **National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture** could be classed to impact increased visibility. More specifically the Action Plan arising from the National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture includes an action "DAFM to consider sponsoring a "Women in Agriculture Innovation and Excellence Award" within an existing award programme(s) to acknowledge and recognise those who are leading the way in the Agri-food sector" (DAFM, 2024d, p.2).

Also depending on how the National CAP Network works to improve women's involvement in CAP implementation, this could also have impact here. The National CAP Network for example highlighted women in farming and rural communities via social media on 2024 International Women's Day.

While not rural or farm focused it likely still has relevance, a national initiative of Local Enterprise Offices is **National Women's Enterprise Day** which aims to spotlight on female entrepreneurship (LEO, 2023). Also while not rural or farm focused, Women



Mean Business hold annual awards and a Gender Diversity Ambassador Initiative (WMB, no date).

**PART 4: PAY, PENSION, WORK-LIFE AND FAMILY**

**Q. 4.1: Do measures exist in your country that address the gender pay gap in relation to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Generally, reducing the gender pay gap is an issue highlighted nationally and measures to tackle this are outlined in the 2017-2020 National Strategy for Women and Girls (DJE, 2017) and the more recent report from the Joint Committee on Gender Equality (Joint Committee on Gender Equality, 2022). Women, rural or farm targeted measures are not identified.

While not specifically pay gap measures nor targeted at women farmers, two schemes that provide income supports for low-income farmers are worth mentioning. Administered by the **Department of Social Protection the Farm Assist scheme and Rural Social Scheme** target low-income farmers. Farm Assist is a social assistance scheme and is subject to a means test. Reflecting the lower levels of female farmers, more men are understood to access these schemes (e.g. highlighted by Carlow County Development Partnership, no date). A review by the Department of Social Protection shows that in 2021 of the 5184 recipients of the Farm Assist scheme 4735 were male and 449 female (DSP, 2021, p.6). The Rural Social Scheme provides further supplementary support to low-income farmers in receipt of social welfare payments, but also requires a work placement in community-based work. A child, sibling or spouse of the farmer can also qualify (Citizens Information, 2024c).

**Q. 4.2: Do gender equality issues exist in relation to government pension schemes and rural and/or farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Women farmers at retirement age who have farmed in partnership with their spouse can face challenges accessing the contributory state pension if their role on the farm has been informal i.e. not a formal employee or are in a formal farm partnership. Through the **Department of Social Protection a partnership can be claimed retrospectively**. However it has been argued criteria are too tight: “The criteria used by the Department of Social Protection and Revenue for determining whether a



partnership exists is very restrictive and consequently is not a viable option for many farming couples. This should be reviewed in the interest of fairness and equity for all.” (DAFM, 2024c, p.37).

The need to ensure carers are not effected by periods outside of the workforce and not paying enough PRSI contributions to qualify for access to the state contributory pension has been raised, such as in the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Gender Equality’s 2022 report. The report notes women are “far less likely to qualify for the full State pension than men” (Joint Committee on Gender Equality’s 2022, p.105). It recommends that the Government “Introduce care credits which ensure that periods of time spent caring are recognized not only in terms of pensions but when assessing other social protection entitlements or voluntary access to INTREO, Back to Education Allowance and other relevant Schemes” (Joint Committee on Gender Equality’s 2022, p.9).

**Q. 4.3a: Are maternity leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

**Q. 4.3b: Do the partners of rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs have entitlements to maternity leave benefits?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

When a baby is born, paternity leave of two weeks is available to the father or partner of the mother of the child. This is available to the employed and self-employed. Paternity benefit is paid once there are enough PRSI contributions (Citizens Information, 2022b). Employers can often top up the employee salary during this time-off.

**Maternity benefit** for a period of 26 weeks is available to women who take maternity leave from work and they have enough PRSI contributions. The weekly rate is €274. For employees, it can be requested to be paid to the employer who then top up the salary. Maternity benefit is available to self-employed (Citizens Information, 2024a).

Weaknesses have been highlighted for example for female entrepreneurs where it has been reported a discrepancy exists for qualifying if self-employed compared to employed. The German family policy model has been referenced as good practice that Ireland could potentially look towards (Caden, 2022).



**Q. 4.4: Are parental leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

**Parent's leave** entitles each parent to 7 weeks' leave during the first 2 years of a child's life. There is also a payment called **Parent's Benefit** during parent's leave. Parent's leave is available to both employees and people who are self-employed. Parent's Benefit is paid during the period of parent's leave from work if the parent has enough social insurance (PRSI) contributions.

**Q. 4.5: Is childcare availability and cost in rural areas an issue in your country?**

Yes  No  To some extent

Childcare is generally privately run in Ireland. Both cost and availability of childcare is an issue. Figures of an average monthly cost from €800 to €1350 are quoted (Coyle, 2023). One of the thematic areas of Ireland's national rural development policy **Our Rural Future** is Enhancing Public Services in Rural Areas. One of the areas listed that will achieve investment is early learning and childcare facilities. The Oireachtas Joint Committee on Gender Equality called for the reduction of childcare fees by at least two thirds (Joint Committee on Gender Equality, 2022). The Programme for Government commits to reducing the cost of childcare, but does not specify by what extent (Department of the Taoiseach, 2020).

The **National Childcare Scheme** includes two subsidy schemes that assist towards childcare costs and applies to children between ages of 24 weeks and 15 years. The universal subsidy supports costs based on the hours per week a child attends childcare. It provides €1.40 per hour and maximum 45 hours weekly. Alternatively, an income assessed support is also available and is "calculated based on your family's individual circumstances. Rates will vary depending on your level of family income, your child's age and educational stage, and the number of children in your family" (National Childcare Scheme, 2024). Research on the impact of the NCS has shown that it benefits families in the bottom third of income distribution the most (Doorley et al , 2023). There are knock-on impacts on accessing the labour market.

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme provides early childhood care and education for children of pre-school age. The scheme is offered in early years settings for 3 hours a day, 5 days a week, 38 weeks of the year. All children are entitled to 2 full academic years on the ECCE scheme.

The Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) programme helps disadvantaged parents and parents in training, education or low-paid employment to get childcare at reduced rates (Citizens Information, 2022a).



From a government investment perspective, Ireland is one of the lowest investors in Early Years Care and Education across the OECD. There has been an increase in investment in recent years. In addition, childcare costs to parents are some of the highest in the EU (Doorley et al, 2023).

**Q. 4.6: Do other supports exist in your country that can assist rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs achieve work-life balance? e.g. farm relief schemes, supports for businesses towards employment costs**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

These types of measures are generally targeted at employees e.g. remote working arrangements. Parents and carers hold a right to request flexible working (Citizens Information, 2024c)

A cooperative, Farm Relief Services, provides relief labour services to farmers (Farm Relief Services, no date).

## **PART 5: OTHER AND WIDER INITIATIVES**

**Q. 5.1: Access to finance (e.g. grants, business loans) is a key resource issue for women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. Beyond the finance support measures already discussed in the sections above, are there others important to supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 5.2: Do specific gender equality policies and/or laws exist in your country and have a focus on women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

The National Women's Council has called for a new national strategy for women and girls (National Women's Council, 2023). Under Food Wise 2030 there is an action to have "Representation of the agri-food sector in the development of the next National Women and Girl's Strategy" (DAFM, 2022). Development of a new National Strategy for Women and Girls is contained in Programme for Government (Department of the Taoiseach, 2020) but there is no progress as yet.



**Q. 5.3: Are there other wider government-led initiatives and/or non-government initiatives in your country that show significant promise in addressing key challenges facing women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas that could provide models for future policy measures and/or laws?**

A number of voluntary representative groups link to women in farming and rural areas.

In relation to supporting women's representation and participation in decision-making, the independent and voluntary **Women in Agriculture Stakeholders Group** is an important initiative. It brings together representatives from a range of national and local farming organisations and works represent female farmer interests relating to the CAP. These organization are Irish Farmers Association (IFA), Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association (ICMSA), Irish Cattle and Sheep Association (ICSA), Irish Natura and Hill Farmers Association (INHFA), Irish Organic Association (IOA), Macra na Feirme, South East Women in Farming and West Women in Farming (WASG, 2022).

**Dairy Women Ireland** is a voluntary organisation representing women in the dairy sector established in 2022 (Freiberg, 2022). It is aiming to have 2,000 members by 2025. The formation of the group is interesting to also note as two founding members were brought together though Macra Agricultural Skillnet courses (O'Brien, 2022). This shows the importance of spaces, such as through education, to allow such networks to form.

**Q. 5.4: This section provides space to add any other information on policy and law in your country that is important to include in our assessment and has not been covered already in this questionnaire (e.g. related to gender quality or specific areas such as finance, education, health, employment etc.)**

Eligibility criteria for supports through the CAP can exclude very small farms. For example to be eligible for the **TAMS 3 Women Farmers' Capital Investment Scheme** farmers must have a minimum of 5 hectares declared under the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) or Basic Income Support for Sustainability (BISS) (DAFM, 2024).

In relation to the equal rights of women and men the findings of the UN Committee on Economic and Social Rights makes number of broad findings for Ireland: "The Committee expresses concern over the persistence of gender role stereotypes and substantive inequality between women and men in the State party, as also noted by the Human Rights Committee, impeding the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, in particular by disadvantaged women. The Committee also expresses concern about the persistence of gender pay and pension gaps, due to vertical and horizontal gender segregation in the labour market, and the overrepresentation of women in part-time and low-paid work (art. 3)". It recommends the State: "(a) Take all measures necessary by, inter alia, ensuring effective gender mainstreaming and budgeting in all policies and programmes, to promote the full access of women, in particular migrant, Traveller and Roma women, women of African descent, women with disabilities and bisexual, lesbian, intersex and transgender women, to





employment opportunities, social security, adequate housing, health care and services and education on an equal footing with men; (b) Redouble its efforts to close the gender pay and pension gaps, including by addressing the gender-based segregation in the labour market, reviewing its social and tax policies and addressing the factors that discourage women from continuing their careers or taking up full-time employment; (c) Take into account the Committee's general comment No. 16 (2005) on the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the recommendations on gender equality of the Human Rights Committee" (UN Economic and Social Council, 2024, p.6)

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## ITALY

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### GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Italy is a Parliamentary Republic. The State and Regions have both exclusive and concurrent legislative powers in a number of areas, as established by the Constitution itself (Art. 117) and in compliance with the constraints arising from EU law and international obligations. Concurrent legislative power means that Regions have legislative powers except for the determination of fundamental principles, which must be established by state legislation. Each regional law is examined by the Government of the Republic for constitutional legitimacy. There are 20 Regions in Italy, five of which have a particularly high level of autonomy under special statutes. The latter are: Friuli Venezia-Giulia, Sardinia, Sicily, Valle d'Aosta, and Trentino Alto-Adige, which consists of the autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano that have the same powers as the regions. Cooperation between the activities of the central government and those of the regions is organized through a permanent body: the State-Regions Conference.

However, the Regions' financial autonomy is quite modest: they hold 20 percent of all taxes collected (the percentage is higher for Autonomous Regions), which are mostly used to finance regionally based health care systems. The tax system is centralized.

The Regions are divided into 86 provinces (UPI, 2019), which are administrative bodies with limited powers, with provincial presidents (executive power) and councilors (legislative power) elected by the mayors and councilors of the municipalities in the province (Law 56/2014). The basic unit of local government is the municipality, which can vary in size from a small village with fewer than 100 inhabitants to a large city such as Naples or Rome. Italy has about 8,100 municipalities, and only 8 percent have more than 15,000 inhabitants.

## PART 1: POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN FARMING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### 1A: GENERAL CONTEXT

**Q. 1A.1: In your country, is there a commitment to gender mainstreaming, or other method of gender equality assessment (e.g. benchmarking) of all key rural and/or farm policies?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_X\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_X\_\_



**Not specifically on rural and agricultural policies, but there is, at least theoretically, a commitment in the national legislative framework.**

Official data show that the gender gap is still a central issue in the country, particularly in rural areas and southern regions, so although rural and agricultural policies officially target all people regardless of their gender, it is often still made explicit when targeting women (and young people).

As pointed out, the gender gap is still high. Data published in 2023 by the World Economic Forum on the Global Gender Gap place Italy in 79th place. The Gender Equality Index (GEI) for 2023 of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) place Italy in 13th place, with 2 points less than the European average. Furthermore, the index shows that Gender inequality is very high in the Work domain, where the country consistently ranks last among all member states since 2010.

These data show the seriousness of the situation despite the legal framework and policies that are being activated, particularly in recent years and even if the Italian Constitution states in the art.3 that “all citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, personal and social conditions.”

The **Code on Equal Opportunities between Men and Women** (Legislative Decree No. 198/2006 as amended by Law 162/2021) introduced general principles related to gender equality and women's empowerment. The art. 1 establish that “the provisions (...) are concerned with measures aimed at eliminating all discrimination based on sex, which has the consequence or purpose of impairing or preventing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural and civil fields or in any other field”. In addition, the Code provides that:

- equal treatment and opportunities between women and men must be ensured in all fields, including employment, work and remuneration;
- the principle of equality does not preclude the maintenance or adoption of measures that provide specific advantages in favor of the underrepresented sex;
- the objective of equal treatment and opportunities between women and men must be kept in mind in the formulation and implementation, at all levels and by all actors, of laws, regulations, administrative acts, policies and activities.

The code consists of IV books: Book I on "Provisions for the Promotion of Equal Opportunity between Men and Women"; Book II on "Equal Opportunity between Men and Women in Ethical and Social Relations"; Book III on "Equal Opportunity between Men and Women in Economic Relations"; Book IV on "Equal Opportunity between Men and Women in Civil and Political Relations."



It should be noted that it is not specifically referred to rural and farming policies. The Code introduced the principle of gender mainstreaming, compelling the government to consider a gender perspective.

Many of the progress made by Italy in the field of equal opportunities are the result of specific actions adopted by the EU aimed at promoting and guaranteeing women's rights in the public and private sphere through plans, actions and interventions, with related financial allocations. For example, the **National Strategy for Gender Equality** has been one of the cross-cutting priorities established by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)<sup>2</sup>, funded by the Next Generation EU programme. The National Strategy was adopted in 2021 and covers the period 2021-2026. It focuses on the following areas: employment, income, skills, time, power and impact of COVID-19 on women's status. For each area are planned specific measures. In addition, there are some cross-cutting measures, among them there are: 1) gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting; 2) the introduction of gender impact assessment of all legislative initiatives. The aim of the Strategy is to earn 5 points in EIGE's Gender Equality Index ranking. The National Strategy for gender equality does not specifically refer to rural areas and farming.

**Q. 1A.2: Do official datasets exist in your country showing women's participation in rural and farm innovation and/or the wider farm and rural economy? e.g. those collected regularly by national statistics agency or other relevant state bodies**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

The Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) collects data on farming through specific surveys and through the Census; in addition, data are collected and specific analysis are carried out on women entrepreneurs (not specifically related to rural economy) (ISTAT 2024).

There is also the Statistical Archives of Active Enterprises (ASIA) that is a register of enterprises and local units updated annually by ISTAT through a process that integrates administrative and statistical sources. A specific section of this Archive

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<sup>2</sup> “The NRRP’s reforms and investments share cross priorities regarding equal opportunities between generations, genders and geographical areas. Projects are assessed based on how they will boost the potential of young people, women and local areas, as well as on the opportunities they provide for everyone, without discrimination (...) Given these inequalities, the Government intends to launch a national gender equality strategy for 2021-2026, by the end of June 2021 ” (<https://www.governo.it/en/approfondimento/nrrp-cross-priorities/20452> accessed 20 March 2024)



named “ASIA Agriculture”, includes only farms that sell products in the market, thus constituting a subset of the total number of farms.

FADN data are also collected by the Council For Agricultural Research and Analysis of Agricultural Economics (CREA). CREA also conducts specific research and collects data on the participation of women in agriculture. For example, in the context of the National Rural Network, it has planned a series of activities aimed at raising the profile of the role of women in farming and in rural areas (<https://www.reterurale.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/24029>).

Another dataset is managed by the Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Craft and Agriculture. In Italy, in order to carry out a business activity as an enterprise (sole proprietorship or company), it is mandatory to register to the “Register of Enterprises” (kept by the Chambers of Commerce) in the province where the enterprise is located. The Register of Enterprises contains all the data related to the registered company: legal information and master data of the company (see <https://italianbusinessregister.it/en/>). The dataset is not specific to rural areas or agricultural activities, but from the data collected it is possible to extrapolate information about women's businesses, and about the area and the sector in which they operate. For example, Unioncamere (the Italian Union of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture) releases a National Report on female entrepreneurship and female start-ups. The last report also includes data on investments on innovations in the context of female-led enterprises (e.g. investments on green and digital technologies) (Unioncamere 2022).

## **1B: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: EUROPEAN LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AT NATIONAL LEVELS**

### **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**

*CAP 2023-2027 Specific Objective 8 (SO8) references enhancing the position of women in farming and accelerating the social inclusion of rural women – “Promote employment, growth, gender equality, including the participation of women in farming, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including the circular bio-economy and sustainable forestry”.*

**Q. 1B.1: How is the gender equality, including the participation of women in farming aspect, of Objective 8 reflected in the SWOT analysis, identification of needs and intervention logic of the CAP strategic plan in your country?**

**Note:** The Strategic Plan of the Italian CAP includes the choices made by the 19 Regions and Autonomous Provinces (APs) of Trento and Bolzano in terms of the choice of implementation methods, amounts granted, and selection criteria of many interventions.



### Identification of needs – National Strategic Plan

The identification of **needs** remain quite general and does not explicitly mention gender equality. A long list of 50 needs are identified by the Plan. Only two of these needs mention women but always along with youths. Furthermore, the needs are not considered with a high priority:

- 1) **“E3.3- Create and support employment and social inclusion in rural areas”**, strengthening non-agricultural economies through the creation of new businesses and promoting diversification, multifunctionality and social agriculture, with particular attention to the role of young people and women. (p.81). The need<sup>3</sup> is considered “complementary need” in the plains and “qualifying need” in the hills and in the mountains. The need is linked to objective 8. (p.350)
- 2) **“EA.3 - Improve the information and training offer”** with the adoption of new and diversified methods and tools that are better able to respond to the needs of those who work in the agricultural and forestry sectors as well as in the context of rural development in general, with particular attention to newly settled young people and women. The need is considered “complementary “ in all the territories. The need is connected to XCO.

**The Italian strategic plan does not include specific provision that target women exclusively. In fact, women are almost always mentioned along with young people**, as shown by the SWOT analysis, identification of needs and intervention logic of Objective 8. In addition, support for women is also mentioned in Objective 7 and XCO.

#### **Objective 8**

With the exception of one point (underlined below) the **SWOT analysis of Objective 8 (S08)** does not mention gender equality specifically. The statements supposedly concern women as much as men but this is not explicitly mentioned or emphasized. Overall the SWOT analysis remains quite general and not very gender specific. The only point that mentions women explicitly is included in the “Weaknesses” and states “Structural weakness of the labor market in rural areas compared to urban areas. In particular, employment rates of young people and women are critical at the national level and more in some areas of the country” (p.195).

Among the 11 **needs** identified related to S08 only “E3.3- Create and support employment and social inclusion in rural areas” mentions women.

The **intervention logic** of S08 only explicitly mentions “women” in one point, again along with young people. The planned support is included in a general statement: “the

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<sup>3</sup> Needs were analysed according to the antimetrical zones: plain, hills and mountains and in relation to priority level: strategic, specific, qualifying, and complementary



interventions supported aim to 1) finance Initiatives aimed at increasing and diversifying employment opportunities in a logic of sustainability (e.g., sustainable tourism, bioeconomy, green jobs, social agriculture) by strengthening agricultural and forestry multifunctionality, enhancing rural landscapes of historical interest, promoting the creation of new entrepreneurial and employment opportunities, aimed in particular at young people and women (...)." (CAP National strategic Plan, p.200).

There is no specific intervention aimed at supporting only women and reducing the gender gap. It is simply indicated that "The pursuit of the principle of gender equality and the increase of employment and income opportunities for women, inherent in the characteristics of most of the planned interventions, will be encouraged through appropriate selection principles" (CAP National Strategic Plan, p.202). Nevertheless, looking at the selection principles (see Q. 1B.2) women are included again along with young people.

In addition, in relation to gender equality and, more generally, social inclusion, it is stated that during the implementation phase the National Strategic Plan will have to work in close connection with the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), as required by the Partnership Agreement 2021-2027.

**In summary, in relation to S08, the focus on women is residual.** The SWOT analysis, needs identification, and intervention logic always target young people and women together. Support is reduced to "encouraging" Regions to adopt preferential selection criteria for both groups (young people and women).

### **Objective 7**

In the context of Objective 7 (SO7) *"Attract and support young farmers and other new farmers and facilitate sustainable business development in rural areas"* it is mentioned that "the actions implemented in relation to SO7 will be activated in compliance with the transversal principle of gender equality foreseen by the CAP Strategic Plan". Furthermore, it is stated that interventions may include specific principles in the selection of beneficiaries, to encourage the participation of women. In any case, "all the interventions of the Italian CAP Strategic Plan aimed at improving working conditions in the agricultural sector and encouraging (directly or indirectly) employment in rural areas are aimed at improving gender equality"(p.192).

Nevertheless, looking at the **SWOT analysis related to Objective 7 (SO7)** women are never mentioned nor is gender equality.

The only **need** "Promoting entrepreneurship in rural areas" linked to SO7 does not specifically refer to women.

In the **intervention logic**, it is stated that the interventions will "support initiatives for the creation of new entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture (SRE01- young farmers and SR02 new farmers), especially for young people, for women and for unemployed



people, favoring the conditions for starting new entrepreneurial realities through granting”.

Moreover, in section 3 of the Italian CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027, which concerns the “*Coherence of the strategy and complementarity*” and particularly in the context of sub-section 3.2 “*Overview of the generational turnover strategy*” concerning SO7, it is explicitly mentioned (p.272) that the strategy aims at creating new entrepreneurial opportunities, especially for the younger generations and for women, favoring conditions of access to land and credit as well as an effective technical assistance network and transfer of practical-operational knowledge, using the most efficient and innovative agricultural businesses as benchmark and as places of training for potential new entrepreneurs.

**In summary, with regard to OB7**, while the text seems to focus on women and recalls the cross-cutting principle of gender equality, this focus is essentially resolved by providing for preferential criteria in the selection of beneficiaries, for women and young people.

**XCO:** In the context of XCO “*Cross-sectoral objective of modernizing the sector by promoting and sharing knowledge, innovations and digitization processes in agriculture and rural areas and encouraging their use*” the **SWOT analysis** do not mention women.

Among the 6 **needs** identified related to XCO only “**EA.3- Improve the information and training offer**” mentions women.

In the **intervention logic** women and gender equality is never mentioned.

**In summary**, although in the identification of needs women and young people are explicitly recognized as XCO targets, there is no specific reference to these groups in the intervention logic.

**Q. 1B.2: Does your countries CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_X\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_X\_\_

In theory, all interventions also support women, as they can apply to all of them.

However, **there are no interventions targeted exclusively at women**. In some cases, women are mentioned in the criteria for selecting beneficiaries, but again almost always along with young people. **This means that interventions could support young people and/or women indifferently (see Q1.B.3).**



**Q. 1B.3: Does your countries CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

In the National Strategic Plan (NSP) there are many interventions linked to S08, nevertheless, as underlined above, they do not target only women.

**Women are listed only by some Regions (see below) as priority beneficiaries along with young people.**

The interventions that may support women are the following:

**Intervention SRD03 - Investments in agricultural holdings for diversification into non-agricultural activities.** The Intervention is aimed at “encouraging investment in farm diversification activities that promote economic growth and sustainable development in rural areas, while also contributing to improving the territorial balance, both in economic and social terms” (NSP, p.2922). Among the beneficiary selection criteria, women's enterprises are included as a priority together with young people (NSP, p.2923).

**Intervention SRD14 - Non-agricultural productive investment in rural areas.** “The Intervention is aimed at encouraging the creation and development of non-agricultural activities in rural areas by supporting investments of entrepreneurial activities with productive purposes. At the same time, the Intervention aims to improve the quality of life in rural areas by supporting services, entrepreneurial activities, and more generally initiatives and investments that enhance local resources by contributing to the revitalization of the labor market particularly for young people and women.” The intervention is activated directly by 3 regions **Liguria, Umbria and Veneto**; the other regions/APs activate it exclusively under LEADER (see Q1.B5). All the 3 regions have explicitly mentioned young people and women in their criteria for selecting beneficiaries (NSP, p. 3225).

**Intervention SRE01 – “Establishment of young farmers.”** The intervention is also linked to SO7. The aim of the intervention is to provide support to young agricultural entrepreneurs who are setting up for the first time on a farm as head of the farm upon submission of a business plan for the development of an agricultural activity. The intervention is activated by all regions, but only two of them (**AP of Bolzano and Emilia Romagna Region**) have explicitly included women in the priority of their selection criteria (NSP, p. 3299)

**Intervention SRE02 - “setting up of new farmers”.** The intervention is also linked to SO7. The aim is to provide a support to new farmers. Among the five Region that have activated the intervention only **Tuscany** added “gender” in the selection criteria.





There are also interventions linked to S08 and S07 that do not target women, not even in the priority of the selection criteria.

For example the intervention “CIS-YF(30) - Complementary income support for young farmers” (NSP, p.505) even if it is linked to the need E3.3. does not mention women explicitly.

In addition, there are some interventions that, although not directly related to S08, S07 and XCO, include women and youth in the priority of the selection criteria, established by some Regions:

- **Intervention SRA18 - ACA18 - support to beekeeping.** It provides “for an annual payment expressed in €/year/beneficiary (a flat rate determined on the basis of the range in the number of hives committed) in favor of beneficiaries who practice beekeeping in areas that are particularly important from an environmental and naturalistic point of view”. The intervention is activated by Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Emilia Romagna, Liguria, Molise, Piedmont, Apulia, Sardinia, Sicily, Tuscany and Umbria. Only the **Emilia Romagna** region explicitly included “women and young beekeepers” as a priority in the selection criteria. (NSP, p.1561)
- **Intervention SRA29 - payment to adopt and maintain organic farming practices and methods.** It provides an annual payment per hectare of UAA to farmers or associations of farmers who voluntarily commit to converting and maintaining areas under organic farming. The intervention is activated by all 19 Italian regions and the two APs of Trento and Bolzano. In the selection criteria related to the characteristics of the beneficiaries youths and women are indicated by the following Regions: **Piedmont, Valle d’Aosta, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Apulia, Sicily and Sardinia.**(NSP, p.1997)
- **Intervention SRA30 - animal welfare.** The intervention "provides support per LU (Adult Livestock Unit) to farmers who voluntarily commit to a series of commitments, improving the breeding conditions of the species covered by the intervention, for the duration of 1 to 5 years, over and above the current mandatory standards. The intervention provides economic support to compensate for the lower revenues and/or higher costs involved in adhering to the commitments”. (NSP, p.2351). The intervention is activated by Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Emilia Romagna, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Lazio, Liguria, Marche, Piedmont, Apulia, Sardinia, Sicily, Tuscany, AP of Bolzano, Umbria and Valle d’Aosta. In the selection principles women (PB1) are indicated by the following Regions: **Calabria, Apulia , Sardinia, Sicily, Valle d’Aosta** (NSP, p.2099)

**Q. 1B.4: Does your national LEADER Programme directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_



The LEADER Programme is mainly linked to the need 3.6 “Raising the quality of life in rural areas”. It is mentioned that the LEADER’s local development strategies will contribute to the Objective 8 by focusing on “the following thematic areas, diversified depending on the different socio-economic contexts (...):

- local food systems, agricultural and agri-food supply chains;
- services, goods, collective and inclusive spaces;
- local socio-cultural and tourist-recreational supply systems;
- local artisan and manufacturing production systems.

Local development strategies proposed by LAGs should aim primarily at promoting the introduction of innovations into local contexts:

- “by increasing the provision and accessibility of goods and services, tangible and intangible, present in territories;
- by stimulating relations between public and private socio-economic actors and the participation of local inhabitants to strengthen social capital;
- by supporting the connection and integration between different sectors of the local economy to strengthen the territorial system;
- by fostering structural changes (...) for sustainable management and use of private and public resources;
- by activating networks of synergy and complementarity between local centers (...) with extra-local (e.g. urban) centers (...)”(NSP, p. 3466)

They can also support, projects for:

- “transnational and/or interterritorial cooperation;
- Smart Villages (...);
- start-up of non-agricultural rural enterprises (e.g. in the field of bioeconomy, tourism, cultural, recreational and social activities, etc.)
- investments in large-scale infrastructure consistent with other operations” (NSP, 3466) planned in the strategies.

There is no specific focus on women, although it is possible that some LAGs may have included specific actions in their development plans.

In a recent study it is shown that a few LAGs are trying to encourage female-led innovation through specific initiatives. For instance, LAG Valle d'Itria, in Apulia (south of Italy) organised a series of meetings on "Circular Economy: Perspectives and Opportunities for Female Entrepreneurship and Labor." Similarly, the LAG Sulcis Iglesiente (in Sardinia) linked local tenders for financial support to non-agricultural enterprises to the participation in training initiatives activated with the European Social Fund for which it was expected that at least 50% of the participants were women. “The result was the startup of 22 women's business projects out of a total of 28 submitted as a result of the LAG's call for investment support in non-agricultural activities”. The LAG Daunia Reale, in Apulia (south of Italy) has “fostered the creation of business networks such as the "DAUNE WOMEN: meeting of hands and land" network involving activities belonging to different production realities: agricultural, non-agricultural and services.” (Di Napoli, Reda, 2021 p.22-23).



**Q. 1B.5: Does your national LEADER Programme indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_X\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_X\_\_

The National strategic plan of the PAC foresees 2 interventions linked to the implementation of the LEADER Programme.

The intervention **SRG05 LEADER- preparatory support for the preparation of rural development strategies** supports operations for the animation, training and capacity building of local partnerships and the development of Local Development Strategies proposals to be implemented under the Intervention **SRG06 LEADER - Implementation of Local Development Strategies**.

Among the criteria that the Regions and APs must adopt to select LAGs is the "quality of the proposed Local Development Strategies (determined by looking at, among others, relevance to specific targets, vulnerable groups, gender equality, consistency of the strategy with local intervention needs, local spillovers, innovation, etc.)". **Gender equality is thus considered only one of the possible elements for judging the quality of proposals submitted by LAGs.** Therefore, by conducting an analysis of the Strategic Plan, it is not possible to assess what weight gender equality had throughout the LAGs selection phase. This information would require an analysis of all LAG selection calls that were activated at the regional level.

Theoretically LAGs should support innovations - also social innovations- in farming and rural areas. The implementation of the local development strategies will require specific calls that could be applied by women. It is likely that priority criteria for accessing funding will include women, along with young people.

**In addition, there are interventions in the National Strategic Plan that some Regions have activated only under LEADER which could support women.** However, this possibility may or may not be taken up by the LAGs, which have had the freedom to choose which interventions to include in their local development plans.

**Intervention SRD14 - Non-agricultural productive investment in rural areas.** "The Intervention is aimed at encouraging the creation and development of non-agricultural activities in rural areas by supporting investments of entrepreneurial activities with productive purposes. At the same time, the Intervention aims to improve the quality of life in rural areas by supporting services, entrepreneurial activities, and more generally initiatives and investments that enhance local resources by contributing to the revitalization of the labor market particularly for young people and women." **This intervention is activated under LEADER by all the Regions and APs except by Liguria, Umbria and Veneto.** Women are likely to be identified by the LAGs



implementing the intervention as priority beneficiaries. However, no definitive information on this is available at this stage.

**Intervention SRE04 - non-agricultural start-ups.** The intervention provides support for the start-up of new entrepreneurial activities in the non-agricultural sphere. The purpose is to revitalize rural economies, strengthening and diversifying the rural economy, through the creation of new non-agricultural activities, which have as their object the development, production and marketing of products or services within the rural economy. The intervention is linked to Ob.8 and Ob.7 and to the need E3.3. "Creating and sustaining employment and social inclusion in rural areas" and E3.1. "Promoting entrepreneurship in rural areas". The intervention could be activated by **the LAGs of the following regions: Basilicata, Campania, Emilia Romagna, Lazio, Liguria, Lombardy, Molise, AP of Bolzano, AP of Trento, Apulia, Sardinia, Tuscany, Calabria, Piedmont and Umbria.** All Regions and APs have indicated that the "quality of the applicant (e.g., women, younger beneficiaries, underemployment/unemployment status, training or skills, etc.)" (NSP, p. 3366) should be included in the priority criteria for choosing beneficiaries. However, there is currently no information on which LAGs have chosen to include women among their priority beneficiaries and which LAGs have activated the intervention.

Finally, LAGs should implement actions to increase services for local communities, including in synergy with the SNAI (National Strategy for Inner Areas- see Q1C.1), which could be useful to indirectly supporting women's innovations.

## **1C: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: COUNTRY LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **RURAL**

#### **Q. 1C.1: Does your country have a Rural Development Policy(s)?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_X\_

**The National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI)** is not a rural development policy in the strict sense, but it is a policy applied to a part of Italy's rural areas. It aims to promote the local development of the areas in which it intervenes, improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in "inner" areas and reversing, in the long run, the current trend of depopulation

Inner areas are defined as areas substantially far from "centres" offering essential services (education, healthy and mobility). Italian municipalities have been divided into five categories: centers, peri-urbans, intermediate, peripheral and ultra-peripheral. This division is based on an accessibility indicator, measured in minutes needed to reach the closest center. Inner areas are the municipalities that are considered



peripheral or ultra-peripheral, which means that it takes 40.9 to 66.9 minutes to reach a “center” by car. These areas cover about 60% of the national territory and include about 50% of Italian municipalities and 22% of national population.

SNAI is a place-based policy with a multi-level (national, regional, local) governance that is implemented in supra-municipal areas selected by the regions. Actually, SNAI addresses 72 “Inner Areas” – overall, 1,077 municipalities and about 2 million of inhabitants.

Local development strategies, designed at local level and approved by the national level, include actions related to 1) education, mobility, social/healthcare services 2) local development.

The SNAI is supported by European funds (ERDF, ESF, and EAFRD), for the co-financing of local development projects, and by national resources.

**Q. 1C.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

In the SNAI there is no specific focus on women.

**Q. 1C.3: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X\_\_\_

Within the SNAI, the 72 approved local development strategies include actions to support local activities, especially in relation to tourism and agriculture. Women can apply for grants.

In addition, actions related to the improvement of services, particularly healthcare/social services and educational services, may indirectly foster the improvement of gender equality.

**Q. 1C.4: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X\_\_\_

Specific fund linked to a national policy providing grants for women in rural mountains areas is:



- **Imprese femminili innovative montane – IFIM** (Innovative mountain women's enterprises – IFIM): finances investment projects with a high technological and innovative content supported by women's enterprises located in mountain municipalities. The business project must be: “aimed at the development of products, services or solutions characterised by significant technological and innovative content, and/or aimed at the economic exploitation of the results of the research system”. The overall budget of this Fund is EUR 3.9 million. The incentive is a non-repayable grant for an amount not exceeding 70% of eligible expenses and a maximum of EUR 70,000 (accessed 30 November 2023: <https://www.invitalia.it/cosa-facciamo/rafforziamo-le-imprese/imprese-innovative-femminili-montane-ifim>). The incentive is connected to the "Fund for the development of Italian mountains" established by the Budget Law 2022 (Law No. 234 of December 30, 2021)

**Q. 1C.5: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

## **FARMING**

**Q. 1C.6: Beyond the CAP Strategic Plan, does your country have a core Farming Development Policy (s)?** *e.g. agri-food sector policy (note: sub-sector policies can be dealt with in the last question included in this section below)*

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_

There is not a core farming development policy but there are several laws regulating individual aspects of agriculture. For example, the law on agritourism, tax expenditures, the law on social agriculture, on organic farming, etc.

**Q. 1C.7: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_ n/a

**Q. 1C.8: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_ n/a

**Q. 1C.9: Do laws governing farm ownership include any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm ownership?**



Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 1C.10: Do other policy(s) or law (s) exist in your country that facilitate improved gender equality in relation to running the farm business?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Within the National Strategy for gender equality the following measure is also related to social farming:

**Introduction of a national certification system for gender equality, based on the size/turnover of companies. (...)** The certification system may also be **extended to companies operating in social agriculture** as regards the introduction of new female jobs, also with a view to enhancing the quality of women's work in agriculture.” (National Strategy for gender equality, 2021, p.21)

**Q. 1C.11: Do laws governing farm transfer and inheritance have any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm inheritance?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 1C.12: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

As Bruno (2023) points out, the current regulatory framework lacks systematicity, and often consists of temporary exceptional measures. ISMEA manages the national incentives to support start up and agricultural enterprises. Some measures are suspended when funds are exhausted but they can be re-activated as new funds become available. On the ISMEA web site are listed all the measures: <https://www.ismea.it/>

The following measure is designed to support specifically women and young people:

- **Più Impresa - Imprenditoria giovanile e femminile in agricoltura (More Enterprise - Youth and women entrepreneurship in agriculture)** is dedicated to young people and women who intend to take over the running of a farm or who have already been active in agriculture for at least two years and intend to expand their business, improving its competitiveness with an investment plan of up to EUR 1.5 million. The incentives include a non-repayable grant and interest-free financing. However, it is not possible to apply at this time because all funding has already been allocated (accessed 19 March 2024: <https://www.ismea.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/9406>.). The measure is regulated by the Decree of the Ministry of Agricultural Food and Forestry Policies 20 July 2022.

Another measure that can be accessed by men and woman is:



- **Fondo Innovazione** (Innovation Fund). It finances investments aimed at supporting the implementation and development of innovation projects aimed at increasing productivity in the agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture sectors through the dissemination of the best available technologies for digital business management, the use of machinery, robotic solutions, sensor technology, and 4.0 platforms and infrastructure, water saving and reduced use of chemicals, and the use of by-products. Provides a non-repayable grant as a percentage of total eligible costs. The beneficiaries are: agricultural, fishing and agro-mechanical SMEs that have been operating for at least two years.

(<https://www.ismea.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/12541>)

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) (see Q. 2A.1 for more information) financed the following measure:

1) **Incentivi imprese turistiche** (IFIT) (incentives tourism enterprises): Among the beneficiaries are agritourism (In Italy, the law established that agritourism should be managed by a farmer). Two forms of incentives are provided: 1) Tax credit up to 80% of eligible expenses. 2) Non-repayable grant of up to 50% of eligible expenses, for a maximum amount of 40,000 euros, which can be increased up to an additional 30,000 euros if at least 15% of the expenses are for digitization and innovation of facilities in terms of technology and energy; up to an additional 20,000 euros for women's enterprises, cooperatives and partnerships made up of at least 60 percent by young people up to 35 years of age; for corporations with at least two-thirds shares owned by young people and with management bodies made up of at least two-thirds by young people; and for sole proprietorships run by young people, operating in the tourism sector; up to an additional 10,000 euros for companies with operational headquarters in southern Italian regions: Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Puglia, Sardinia and Sicily. (<https://www.invitalia.it/cosa-facciamo/rafforziamo-le-imprese/incentivi-imprese-turistiche-ifit/le-agevolazioni>)

**Q. 1C.13: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming? e.g. organic farming, horticulture, agri-tourism, care/social farming**

Yes  No  To some extent

The following laws do not mention women, but may indirectly support women-led innovation because they regulate aspects of agriculture in which women are particularly involved.

- **Law on social agriculture** (Law No. 141 of 18.08.2015). It promotes social agriculture "as an aspect of the multifunctionality of agricultural enterprises aimed at the development of social, social-health, educational, and social-work integration interventions and services, in order to facilitate adequate and uniform access to essential services to be guaranteed to individuals, families,





and local communities throughout the country and particularly in rural or disadvantaged areas". Following the national law, the Regions have adopted regional laws on social agriculture, providing definitions and/or establishing specific support measures to encourage its activation and development.

- **Law on agritourism** (Law No. 96 of 20.02.2006) which defines the aspects, types, and purposes of agritourism for the enhancement of the country's rural heritage and territory, delegating to the regions and autonomous provinces the task of defining and characterizing local agritourism activities through the issuance of appropriate legislative measures. Implementing the national law, in 2013 Italy created the "agriturismo italia" sector brand (Ministerial Decree Feb. 13, 2013) for businesses regularly operating under current regulations. Italian agritourism is an original form of tourism in the countryside that can only be conducted on farms and by farmers..
- **Decree of the Ministry of Agriculture 20.11.2007** has regulated the establishment of **farmer markets supporting short food chains**. They are defined as "public or private areas dedicated to the direct sale of agricultural products by farmers only".
- **Law on organic farming** (Law no. 23 of 9.03.2022 - Provisions for the protection, development and competitiveness of organic agricultural, agribusiness and aquaculture production). It states the adoption of the National Organic Seed Plan and the National Action Plan for Organic Production and Organic Products; establishes the Italian Organic Brand for organic products made from Italian raw material and the Fund for the Development of Organic Production, to be used for the implementation of the brand, the financing of the National Organic Seed Plan and the financing of research and innovation programs; it also regulates organic districts, which are distinguished not only by the cultivation, breeding, processing and food preparation of organic products, but also by integration with other economic activities.

The national Plan for organic production 2024-2026 (foreseen by the law) was adopted in December 2023 (Decree of the Ministry of agriculture, food sovereignty and forest n. 696735/2023).

## 2A: INNOVATION

**Q. 2A.1: Do specific, targeted policy (s) exist in your country related to women-led innovation?** *e.g. in areas such as enterprise, research and development*

Yes  No  To some extent

The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) has as a cross-cutting theme "policies for women". Within this framework, specifically in Mission 5-Cohesion and Inclusion, there is a specific investment to support women's entrepreneurship (p. 39) (see interventions listed below).

All national incentives that support the creation of new enterprises and innovative startups are managed by Invitalia (the National Development Agency, owned by the



Ministry of Economy). These are incentives linked to specific European (such as those foreseen by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan - NRRP) or national funding (e.g., through the Budget law). Therefore, some measures are suspended when funds are exhausted but they can be re-activated as new funds became available. On the Invitalia web site are listed all the measures: <https://www.invitalia.it>.

The measures that directly support women -led innovation are presented below.

Specific funds providing grants for women (not only operating in rural areas) are:

- **Fondo impresa femminile** (Women's Enterprise Fund): is the national incentive that supports the establishment and consolidation of enterprises led by women. It was established by 2021 Budget law ( Law No. 178 of December 30, 2020, Art.1 paragraphs 97 to 103) and it is also financed by NRRP.

Investment programs for the start-up or development of women's businesses to be implemented in 24 months are financed in industry, handicrafts, agricultural product processing, services, trade and tourism sector.

The maximum grant is €250,000 if it is a new enterprise (or established for less than 12 months), covering 50% to 80% of expenses. The contribution is non-repayable.

The maximum grant is €320,000 if it concerns an enterprise that has already been active for more than 12 months, covering max 80% of expenses. The contribution is partly non-repayable and partly zero-interest to be repaid in 8 years.

It is also possible to apply for technical and management assistance, which includes:

- a mentoring - during the project implementation phase - through online or in-person meetings that will be planned together with the tutor
- a voucher of 2,000 euros to be used to cover 50 percent of the cost incurred by enterprises for the purchase of marketing or strategic communication services with a minimum value of 4,000 euros.

However, the resources available for this fund are currently exhausted and therefore it is currently not possible to access these grants (accessed 19 March 2024: <https://www.invitalia.it/cosa-facciamo/creiamo-nuove-aziende/fondo-impresa-femminile/presenta-la-domanda>). The Women's Enterprise Fund was established with the 2021 budget law (law 30 December 2020, n. 178, article 1, paragraphs 97-103) and has been funded by NRRP.

- **On - oltre nuove imprese a tasso zero** (On-over new enterprises at zero-interest) this is an incentive reserved for young people and women to set up new initiatives or to expand, diversify or transform existing activities in the manufacturing, services, trade and tourism sectors. The incentives provide a mix of zero-interest financing and a non-repayable grant for business projects with expenses up to € 3 million. The incentive can cover up to 90% of the total



eligible expenses to be reimbursed over 10 years. (accessed 19 march 2024: <https://www.invitalia.it/cosa-facciamo/creiamo-nuove-aziende/nuove-imprese-a-tasso-zero>). The intervention was established by the Legislative Decree n.185/2000 that foresees the national system of employment incentives, including those related to self-entrepreneurship and self-employment of incentives. Subsequent laws have provided the financial resources (such as the 2020 budget law n. 160/2019). It is now funded by the NRRP.

- **Smart&Start Italia** is the incentive that supports the creation and development of innovative start-ups. It finances projects between €100,000 and €1.5 million with interest-free, guaranteed financing that covers 80 percent of eligible expenses. This percentage can rise to 90 percent if the startup is made up entirely of women and/or young people under 36 years of age, or if the partners include at least one expert who has held a Ph.D. degree. (<https://www.invitalia.it/cosa-facciamo/creiamo-nuove-aziende/smartstart-italia>). The intervention is regulated by the Economic Development Ministry decree 24 September 2014 and subsequent amendments and additions and according to the Legislative Decree n.179/2012. It is now funded by NRRP.
- In addition, in the framework of NRRP, the programme “**Imprenditoria femminile**” (Female entrepreneurship) aims to spread entrepreneurial culture among women and increase their presence in the business sector, especially in scientific and technological fields. The program involves the entire country, with a special focus on southern regions. The initiatives, launched in October 2023, are scheduled to run until the end of 2026. - In addition to funds allocated to the Women's Enterprise Fund, communication and training activities are planned to strengthen women's abilities to do business and produce innovation, helping to create a cultural climate conducive to the development of women's entrepreneurship (<https://www.invitalia.it/cosa-facciamo/invitalia-per-il-pnrr/impreditoria-femminile>).

Finally, within the existing **Fondo di garanzia per le PMI** (Guarantee Fund for SMEs), **is established a special section for female enterprises**. The aim is to facilitate access to bank credit by means of a state guarantee on a given credit amount, limited in time and up to a maximum unit value for each investment. (<https://www.fondidigaranzia.it/le-sezioni-del-fondo/impresefemminili/>). The Guarantee Fund for SMEs is an instrument established by Law no. 662/96 (art. 2, paragraph 100, letter a) and operational since 2000. The Special Section for "female enterprises" was issued in 2015.

Other national measures, not specifically referred to rural areas, that may support women-led innovation is:

- **Microcredito di libertà** (Microcredit of freedom). It foresees: interest-free loan up to a maximum amount of 50,000 euros to start up or develop entrepreneurial initiatives; Free assistance and free training courses on financial education and self-entrepreneurship. It is designed specifically for women assisted by Anti-



Violence Centers or guests of Shelter Houses who would not have easy access to traditional bank credit. ([https://microcredito.gov.it/progetti/137-progetti/1921-microcredito-di-libert.html?agrave;="](https://microcredito.gov.it/progetti/137-progetti/1921-microcredito-di-libert.html?agrave;=))

A specific measure to support business creation mostly in southern Italian regions aimed at those (men and woman) over the age of 56 is:

- **Resto al Sud** (Remaining in the South). Supports the establishment and development of new entrepreneurial and freelance activities in Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Puglia, Sardinia, Sicily. The eligible sectors are: productive activities in industry, handicrafts, processing of agricultural products, fishing and aquaculture, provision of services to businesses and people tourism, trade, freelance activities (both individual and corporate). Agricultural activities are excluded. Resto al Sud covers up to 100 percent of expenses, with a maximum financing of 50,000 euros per applicant, which can go up to 200,000 euros in the case of companies consisting of four partners. For sole proprietorships with only one applicant, the maximum financing is 60,000 euros. Grants consist of the following: 50% non-repayable grant; 50% bank financing guaranteed by the SME Guarantee Fund. The interest is fully covered by Invitalia. In addition, to support working capital needs, an additional grant is provided: 15,000 euros for sole proprietorships and professional activities carried out in individual form; up to a maximum of 40,000 euros for companies. (<https://www.invitalia.it/cosa-facciamo/creiamo-nuove-aziende/resto-al-sud>). The intervention is regulated by the Decree-Law No. 91 of June 20, 2017 as amended.
- **Resto qui** (I remain here). It is the extension of Resto al Sud in the following territories: the earthquake crater areas of central Italy (Lazio, Marche Umbria) affected by the 2016 and 2017 earthquakes and the smaller marine, lagoon and lake islands of central and northern Italy. (<https://www.invitalia.it/cosa-facciamo/creiamo-nuove-aziende/resto-al-sud/resto-qui>)

**Q. 2A.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included specifically related to farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

The measures are not specifically related to rural areas or farming.

**Q. 2A.3: Does innovation policy in your country focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?** *e.g. innovation policy could mean policies supporting business innovation, research and innovation and more specific areas such as ecological, technological and digital innovation*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_



Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 2A.4: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_X\_

See Q. 1C.12 and Q. 1C.4.

**Q. 2A.5: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas? e.g. perhaps those related to areas such as social enterprise, rural tourism, creative industries**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_X\_\_

The **National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2026, even if not specifically focusing on rural areas, foresees also** the following measures related to the employment area that may indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas and farming.

- **“Reform of support for female entrepreneurs who are mothers.** Introducing protection measures, during and for the first months after pregnancy or adoption, for workers with a sole source of income from self-employment (e.g. VAT holders, entrepreneurs, researchers, scholarship holders, etc.) up to a maximum monthly amount and with a predefined duration, starting from a given month in pregnancy; this will be granted if a similar benefit is not provided by other bodies (e.g. social security funds, insurance).
- **Additional flexibility of remote working for parents with dependent children according to age requirements.** Guaranteeing by law the right to voluntary remote working - for tasks that allow it and taking into account the technical, organisational and production needs of the company – for a predetermined number of additional remote-working days for parents with children up to a maximum age limit, to be organised in agreement with the employer so as to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of work while balancing parental duties (this measure could also be extended to care givers). In this context, greater investment in digital technologies and in the development of managerial skills needed to reorganise work should also be supported.
- **Governance and monitoring of diversity and gender parity in the business sector and in public administration.** For listed companies, responsibility for monitoring gender parity is assigned to a diversity manager,



through a dedicated position or to an acting officer (e.g. Human Resources Director) reporting to top management. In all Public Administration bodies, this task may be carried out by a person who reports to or is a member of the Single Guarantee Committee for Equal Opportunities (i.e. CUG).

- **Introduction of a national certification system for gender equality, based on the size/turnover of companies.** Possibility of certifying companies that are particularly virtuous with regard to gender equality issues, supporting them with incentive mechanisms so that they adopt adequate company policies to reduce the gender gap in all the most "critical" areas: growth opportunities in the company, equal pay for equal tasks, policies for managing gender differences, maternity protection. Corporate policies adopting specific measures (including positive discrimination) that go beyond specific regulatory provisions can also be promoted.” (National Strategy for gender equality, 2021, p.20-21). The implementation of the National Gender Equality Certification System is led by the Department for equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of ministers with the support of Accredia, the Italian accreditation body, that has certified 21 evaluation assessment bodies, which in turn have certified 203 companies (October 2023). Is funded through the NRRP and regulated by the Code on equal opportunities between men and woman (Legislative Decree 198/2006 as amended by Law 162/2021. The certification is requested from enterprises on a voluntary basis and incentive mechanisms are planned for companies that successfully conclude the certification process. (<https://certificazione.pariopportunita.gov.it/public/info>). The certification process is based on the gender equality practice UNI/PdR 125:2022 which establish a set of performance indicators (KPIs) inherent to gender equality policies on organizations. To ensure a comprehensive measurement of the performance level, six strategic assessment areas are identified for different variables featuring an inclusive and gender-equal organisation: culture and strategy; governance; human resources (HR) management processes; opportunities for growth and inclusion of women in business; gender pay equity and parental protection and work-life balance.

## 2B: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND NETWORKS

**Q. 2B.1: Are there policy (s) in your country that directly support women in rural areas and/or farming to access further education and training?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_X\_



Even if not specifically related to women in rural areas and /or farming the National strategy for gender equality foreseen among others the following measures related to the “Skills” area (p. 24-25):

**Granting of public scholarships for female STEM students.** Granting of public scholarships (in addition to any private or public-private scholarships)

**Strengthening individual educational guidance services to promote access to STEM studies.** Enhancing psychological support programmes (i.e. school psychologists or provincial guidance offices) in middle and high schools, aimed at providing aptitude guidance and overcoming gender stereotypes and focusing on how girls consider STEM disciplines and the influence of cultural and family background on academic and career choices. This may include 'shadowing/mentoring' programmes (e.g. having female university students speak in schools or offer one-to-one interviews), and encouraging business representatives to speak in schools or online for outreach purposes.

**Promotion and guidance for vocational qualifications in traditionally male-dominated jobs and vice versa,** with the aim of encouraging female entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector.

**Having places reserved for female students in STEM disciplines by means of entry tests, especially in universities with a very low female presence.** Having a minimum number of places reserved for female students in public or private university faculties requiring entry tests and which have recorded a lower percentage of female students in previous academic years, subject to a minimum score in the tests.

**Support for female student-mothers at university.** Exemption from the payment of tuition fees and suspending calculation of course years for female students who are mothers from the time they get pregnant until the early months or years of their child, while still guaranteeing them the opportunity to attend classes and take exams.

**Tax deductions or incentives for private companies to provide after-school digital and ICT literacy courses for female target groups.** Allocation of grants to private companies for the organisation of digital literacy courses on ICT skills (basic or advanced) for their female employees (regardless of whether these skills are required in their daily activities). This measure can also be extended to self-employed women and entrepreneurs/professionals.

**Organisation by local authorities of free after-school digital and computer literacy courses.** Organisation by local authorities (e.g. municipalities, regional authorities, job centres) of digital, computer and financial literacy courses and activities (e.g. basic use of software, social media, basics of personal finance) within existing public facilities (e.g. computer labs in public schools); evaluation of possible rewarding



mechanisms to promote participation of target groups (unemployed women, women on maternity leave, women willing to advance their career).”

In addition, even if not specifically related to women there is in the CAP National Strategic Plan the intervention SRH03 “training of agricultural entrepreneurs and employees of operating companies in the sectors of agriculture, livestock, food industries, and other private entities e public bodies functional to the development of rural areas”

**Q. 2B.2: Are there mentoring/peer to peer learning programmes in your country that focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Educational programmes, workshops and trainings are organized by the women sections of the three main agricultural organizations of Italy: Confagricoltura Donna, CIA (Donne in Campo), Coldiretti (Coldiretti donne impresa) – mostly organized by the regional women subsections of the organization.

In addition, CREA (Council for Agricultural Research and Analysis of Agricultural Economics), as part of the National Rural Network activities, in collaboration with the association Riabitare l'Italia, has promoted the project "The School of Young Shepherds" in 2022. The aim is to support those who want to stay or move to the inland and mountain areas of Italy by starting a path as shepherds. Among the participants in the first edition of the school, the majority were women. Next edition will start in May 2024. Students will be offered both practical and theoretical training on grazing and animal husbandry in mountainous areas, cheesemaking and raw material processing (<https://www.reterurale.it/giovanipastori>).

In addition, the EWA (Empowering Women in Agrifood) programme, promoted by EIT Food and co-funded by EU, is also implemented in Italy (<https://www.eitfood.eu/projects/ewa-empowering-women-in-agrifood>). It aims to provide support to women in their early-stage entrepreneurial path so that they can successfully set up and develop a sustainable business in the agrifood industry. In Italy the programme is supported by the Future Food Institute (<https://futurefoodinstitute.org>).





**Q. 2B.3: Are there networking programmes in your country focused directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Networking programmes are organized by the women sections of the three main agricultural organizations of Italy: Confagricoltura Donna, CIA (Donne in Campo), Coldiretti (Coldiretti donne impresa) – mostly organized by the regional women subsections of the organization.

**Q. 2B.4: Are there other education, training, mentoring and networking programmes, or other education-related supports, in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

To acquire the status of "professional agricultural entrepreneur- (IAP)", it is possible to take courses that are organized at the regional level. Training courses are also organized mainly by the agricultural organisations and by the Regional Agencies for the development of agriculture.

### **PART 3: EMPOWERMENT**

**Q. 3.1: Do measures exist in your country that support women's representation and participation in local, regional, and/or national decision-making? e.g. at the political level, in rural and/or farming organisations, participation in policy monitoring and development.**

Yes  No  To some extent

The protection of equal opportunities finds a foundation at a constitutional level in the principle of equality expressed in Article 3, both from a formal point of view, as equality before the law, and from a substantial point of view, as the duty of the Republic to remove the obstacles which prevent effective equality.

Article 51, first paragraph, also provides that all citizens can access public offices and elective positions under conditions of equality. Following the amendment approved in 2003 (Const. Law no. 1/2003), it is also envisaged that the Republic will promote equal opportunities between women and men with specific provisions. This marked a transition from the static dimension of equal treatment between men and women to



the dynamic perspective of equal opportunities, with a view to achieving substantial equality, as already recognized by art.3.

Further provisions can be found in Article 37 of the Constitution, which provides that working women have the same rights of working men. It also establishes that working conditions must be such as to allow the woman to fulfill family functions and ensure special and adequate protection for the mother and child.

Article 117, seventh paragraph, of the Constitution, as amended by constitutional law n. 3 of 2001, also provides that regional laws remove any obstacle that prevents full equality of men and women in social, cultural and economic life and promote equal access between women and men to elective positions.

In addition to the constitutional provisions, policies for equal opportunities have been enriched over time with various provisions aimed at combating discrimination and promoting full implementation of the principle of equality, especially in accordance with European regulations.

The law of 23 november 2012, n. 215 includes provisions aimed at promoting the rebalancing of gender representation in the councils and boards of local authorities and in regional councils. The most significant innovation is the modification of the law for the election of municipal councils with the introduction of measures aimed at strengthening the presence of women, but of considerable importance are also the interventions aimed at consolidating gender equality in the councils and, more in general, in all non-elective collegiate bodies of municipalities and provinces.

Moreover, the Law n. 120 of 2011 on Women's Quotas, initially set the quota at 20%, raised to 30% in 2015, while an amendment to the 2020 budget law raised the gender quota to 2/5 for the Board of Directors and the boards of auditors of listed companies.

In light of article 6 of law no. 162 of 2021, the same provision regarding gender balance also applies to Italian companies (not listed), controlled by public companies administrations.

**Q. 3.2: Do measures exist in your country that work to protect against and/or combat harassment (online or otherwise) and violence against women in public life?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X\_\_\_

Over the last decade, Italian legislation on violence against women has undergone a radical transformation, aimed at making it more compliant with the principles and instruments identified in the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence in against women and domestic violence, made in Istanbul on 11 May 2011 (ratified in Italy with law 77/2013), which represents the first legally binding international instrument for the protection of women against any form of violence,



defining an organic strategy to combat violence. This strategy is based on an integrated approach to the topic of violence against women. Alongside measures of a criminal and procedural nature, with the introduction of crimes that were not contemplated in the Italian legal system, it also includes instruments of a preventive nature and support actions, such as the establishment of subsidized routes for women who want to escape domestic violence and the recognition of specific compensation.

The first intervention in this sense was made by legislative decree no. 93 of 2013, adopted a few months after the ratification of the Convention, which brought about significant changes in the criminal and procedural fields and provided for the periodic adoption of action plans against gender violence. Subsequently, law no. 69 of 2019 has carried out even more incisive interventions, ranging from the introduction of new crimes, to the tightening of penalties for already existing crimes, which typically see women as victims, to the creation of a preferential path to allow, on the one hand, a more rapid implementation of criminal action and, on the other, the timely adoption of protection measures for victims.

In implementation of the art. 5 of legislative decree no. 93 of 2013, the Government adopts extraordinary measures to combat violence against women. The discipline of the Plan was recently partially modified by the art. 1, paragraph 149, of the law of budget 2022 (law no. 234/2021), which first of all changed its name from Extraordinary action plan against sexual and gender violence to National Strategic Plan on male violence against women 2021-2023.

The structure of the Plan is divided into 4 thematic axes (prevention, protection and support, prosecute and punish, assistance and promotion) according to the lines indicated by Istanbul Convention, each of which is linked to specific priorities.

The Code on equal opportunities between men and woman (Legislative Decree 198/2006 as amended by Law 162/2021) also contains provisions on violence in family relationships and sexual harassment and harassment.

**Q. 3.3: Do measures exist in your country that aim to increase the visibility of women-led innovation in rural areas and/or farming?** *e.g. programmes that aim to improve recognition of rural and farm women-led innovation and challenge gender stereotypes such as around traditional gender roles.*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X\_\_\_

In the programming period 2014-2020, CREA (Council For Agricultural Research and Analysis of Agricultural Economics), within the activity of National Rural Network, has planned a series of actions aimed at raising the role of women in rural areas and in



farming

(<https://www.reterurale.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/24029>).

Actions (such as awards/workshops/meetings) are organized to increase the visibility of women-led innovations by the women's sections of Italy's three main agricultural organizations-CIA (Women in the Field), Coldiretti (Coldiretti Women Business), and Confagricoltura Donna.

#### **PART 4: PAY, PENSION, WORK-LIFE AND FAMILY**

**Q. 4.1: Do measures exist in your country that address the gender pay gap in relation to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_X\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_X\_\_

Legislative Decree No. 198/2006 "Code on Equal opportunities between men and women", as amended by the Law 162/2021, organically regulated the legislation on this issue. Book III "On Equal Opportunities for Men and Women in Economic Relations," in Articles 46 and 46a, establishes tools to reduce the gender pay gap. Nevertheless, the gender pay gap still exists. The statistical data show that Italy is still far from real equality in participation and pay between men and women. The normative tools are there, but what remains to be done is to give them concrete form by implementing them.

Art 37 of the Italian Constitution states that "Working women are entitled to equal rights and, for comparable jobs, equal pay as men."

The laws are not specifically related to rural areas or farming.

**Q. 4.2: Do gender equality issues exist in relation to government pension schemes and rural and/or farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_X\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_X\_\_

Not specifically related to farming/rural areas. The pension schemes are the same all over the country.

The gender salary gap in Italy clearly has a direct impact on remuneration and an indirect impact on the pension income through a lower contribution amount. In addition to this, it is noted that the pension system reforms have had a different impact between



genders as they have aligned the requirements for access to retirement for men with the requirements for women, which previously were less stringent. The analysis of the data revealed that out of approximately 16.1 million pensioners in 2022, 52% are female; however, these received only 44% of pension income, or €141 billion, with an average monthly amount of €1,416, 36% lower than that of men. Over the last 20 years, in nominal terms, the gender gap has grown continuously over time and has gone from €3,900 in 2001 to €6,200 in 2022 (INPS, 2023).

The old-age pension is recognized if the following conditions occur simultaneously: reaching retirement age; achievement of certain contribution requirements; termination of the employment relationship. It is due at the age of 67 for both men and women (the age limit for women is equal to that of men since 2018).

It is also possible to obtain the contributory old-age pension at the age of 71 for both women and men, with at least 5 years of actual contributions and upon termination of employment.

Like in previous years, the 2024 budget law recognizes the right to an early pension upon reaching, in 2024, a chronological age of at least 62 years and a minimum contribution period of 41 years.

The early retirement pension scheme reserved to women is called “**Opzione Donna**” - Women's Option. It is a retirement benefit that is available upon request to female employees and self-employed women who meet the legal requirements. The legal requirements are changing over the years. It was established by Law 243 "Pension Regulations" (Article 1, Paragraph 9). The Budget Law 2024 (Law no. 213/2023, Art. 1 paragraph. 138 of), established the new requirements as follows: a contribution period of 35 years or more and an age of 59-61 years old (depending if with or without children); in addition, at least one of the following requirements is also needed:

- have been supporting, at the time of the request and for at least six months, the spouse or a cohabiting first-degree relative with a serious disability, or a cohabiting relative or second-degree relative (the latter under particular conditions);
- have a reduction in working capacity equal to or greater than 74% (Civil invalids);
- Being a workers made redundant or employed by companies facing a crisis.

This means that few women, finding themselves in specific unprivileged conditions, have access to this women's option.

**Q. 4.3a: Are maternity leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent



**Q. 4.3b: Do the partners of rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs have entitlements to maternity leave benefits?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Actually, mandatory maternity leave is granted to female employees and a maternity allowance for self-employed workers, including agricultural entrepreneurs, is foreseen.. (see Q4.4 for details)

The **National Strategy for gender equality 2021-2026** foreseen the following measures:

- **“Measures to encourage the sharing of parental responsibilities.** Extension of compulsory parental leave for fathers, even if they are self-employed, and under the same conditions as for maternity, following European best practices. In addition to compulsory leave, we may consider the introduction of incentives for parents to share responsibility for the additional months of voluntary parental leave, even if not on a continuous basis (but still covering the early years of the baby) (e.g. extension of or access to optional leave for the mother, linked to or conditional on the father taking his mandatory leave).
- **Adoption of ad hoc measures to promote paternity leave.** One-off payment in addition to the so-called Baby Bonus or Child Benefit for fathers who extend their paternity leave for a few more months beyond the minimum legal threshold; the latter could be increased if the mother goes back to work for a certain number of months during the same period. In addition, in order to encourage their actual use, these measures could be combined with promotional campaigns (also to prevent possible discrimination against fathers), as well as with incentives for businesses”. (p.26)

The **Family act** (Law 32/2022 “Delegations to the government for the support and enhancement of the family) commits the Government to reform maternity and paternity parental leave, extending it until the child reaches the age of 14 (as opposed to 12 previously). Flexible rules on the management of parental leave, with a privileged pathway for single-parent families should be developed. Absences from work due to children’s illnesses should not have a heavy impact on wages. Maternity replacements will be compensated by company subsidies, as will the return of women to work after pregnancy and their training. Paid leave of at least 5 hours will be provided for school-family meetings and leave to accompany pregnant partners/wives to maternity visits. At least two months of non-transferable parental leave may be granted for each child, with allowances for equal distribution between parents. There will be a review of parental leave, with the harmonisation of work and childcare time for both parents. A "significantly" longer period of mandatory leave for working fathers should be foreseen, "a minimum period, not less than two months, of parental leave not transferable to the



other parent for each child" as well as to extend the leave to the self-employed and freelancers categories. Until now Italy remains below the European average that guarantees 2.2 weeks to new fathers.

**Q. 4.4: Are parental leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes   No  To some extent

Actually, mandatory maternity leave is granted to female employees. It last 5-month, women can choose whether to take 2 months before the birth and three months after, or one month before and four months after. Self-employed women (as agricultural entrepreneurs) are not required to take compulsory abstention from work, but they are still paid an allowance for the two months before and three months after childbirth, calculated on 80 percent of the conventional wage.

Parental leave (governed by Articles 32 et seq. of Legislative Decree 151/2001, as amended by subsequent regulatory interventions) provides an optional abstention from work. In particular, once the period of the compulsory maternity leave has ended, each parent, has the right to abstain from work during the first 12 years of the child's life, with a maximum overall limit of 10 months (the same term also applies in the case of adoption and foster care).

For paternity leave Italian law (Legislative Decree 105/2022) guarantees 10 mandatory and one optional day only for employed fathers, both public and private, paid at 100 percent, usable between the two months before and five months after childbirth.

There is a Maternity/paternity allowance for self-employed workers, including agricultural entrepreneurs. The female worker and self-employed person are entitled to an economic allowance during periods of maternity/paternity protection. It does not entail an obligation to abstain from work. The allowance is granted for the two months before the birth and the three months after the birth. The allowance is payable to fathers who are self-employed only upon the occurrence of one of these events:

- death or serious infirmity of the mother;
- abandonment of the child or non-recognition of the infant by the mother;
- exclusive custody of the child to the father.

**Q. 4.5: Is childcare availability and cost in rural areas an issue in your country?**

Yes  No  To some extent

Yes it is an issue.



Recent data (Openopolis 2023) suggest that there is a clear divide in terms of nurseries availability between the centre-north and the south of the country, and between the city and inner areas. In the “centers” - where services are available (see Q1C.1 for the definition of centers, peri-urbans, intermediate, peripheral and ultra-peripheral areas) - there are on average over 34 childcare places for every 100 children. The offer drops to 25% in the surrounding municipalities (peri-urbans municipalities). The percentage drops around 20% in peripheral municipalities - more than 40 minutes away from the nearest center- and to 15-16% in the ultra-peripheral areas (over an hour from the centers).

As part of the NRRP, a line of investment has been planned to increase the educational services in the 0-6 age group throughout the country, through the construction of new kindergartens and new preschools or the securing of existing ones, so as to improve the quality of the service, facilitate families and thus female employment, and increase the birth rate. The goal is to reach the European target of 33 percent for early childhood services, closing the gap that exists today for both the 0-3 and 3-6 age groups.

**Q. 4.6: Do other supports exist in your country that can assist rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs achieve work-life balance?** *e.g. farm relief schemes, supports for businesses towards employment costs*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_X

The Family Act (Law 32/2022 “Delegations to the government for the support and enhancement of the family”) is an organic reform of family policies designed in application of EU Directive 2019/1158. The Government should adopt all the measures designed by May 2024. The Family Act is one of the accompanying reforms to the implementation of NRRP. A series of interventions to support parenting and youth address also the provisions of the NRRP and have already been implemented through legislative Decree.

The aim of the Family Act is to promote parenthood, combat childlessness and facilitate the reconciliation of family life and work, particularly for women. Farm female innovators and entrepreneurs are not mentioned specifically but can benefit at least from some of the provisions of the act.

The Legislative decree 230/2021 established the “Assegno unico e universale per i figli a carico” (Single and universal allowance for dependent children). The allowance consists of a monthly economic benefit payable during one year to households on the basis of their economic condition for child up to the age of 21 (under certain conditions); without age limit for disabled children.





#### **PART 5: OTHER AND WIDER INITIATIVES**

**Q. 5.1: Access to finance (e.g. grants, business loans) is a key resource issue for women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. Beyond the finance support measures already discussed in the sections above, are there others important to supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

*Please expand on your answer below. As relevant, please list the policy (s)/law(s) and*

**Q. 5.2: Do specific gender quality policies and/or laws exist in your country and have a focus on women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 5.3: Are there other wider government-led initiatives and/or non-government initiatives in your country that show significant promise in addressing key challenges facing women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas that could provide models for future policy measures and/or laws?**

**Q. 5.4: This section provides space to add any other information on policy and law in your country that is important to include in our assessment and has not been covered already in this questionnaire (e.g. related to gender quality or specific areas such as finance, education, health, employment etc.)**

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## THE NETHERLANDS

**Assessment by:** Willem Korthals Altes, Vitnarae Kang, TU Delft

### GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The Netherlands is a decentralized unitary state with three layers of government. Many tasks regarding planning and policies for rural areas have been decentralized to provinces. Other important tasks have been decentralized to municipalities. There is a minister for emancipation who has a coordinating role.

## PART 1: POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN FARMING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### 1A: GENERAL CONTEXT

**Q. 1A.1: In your country, is there a commitment to gender mainstreaming, or other method of gender equality assessment (e.g. benchmarking) of all key rural and/or farm policies?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Basically, the answer is no. There is a minister responsible for writing a policy report on gender with measures. This minister is for the ministry of Education, Culture and Science, whose portfolios includes emancipation policy. **The emancipation report ('Emancipatienota 2022-2025')** does not directly address gender issues in farming and rural areas, which is contrary to 'diversity in science' or 'safe cities', themes that are addressed in depth in the report.

**Q. 1A.2: Do official datasets exist in your country showing women's participation in rural and farm innovation and/or the wider farm and rural economy? e.g. those collected regularly by national statistics agency or other relevant state bodies**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

There are data on gender breakdown in farming.

Table: Share of females in farming in 2020, based on share in number of holdings, utilised agricultural area and standard output



	holdings	hectares	output
European Union - 27	31.6%	17.4%	14.9%
Netherlands	5.6%	3.4%	2.7%
Groningen	5.6%	3.5%	3.0%
Friesland (NL)	4.5%	2.4%	1.8%
Drenthe	5.4%	3.4%	2.8%
Overijssel	5.6%	3.3%	2.6%
Gelderland	5.9%	3.6%	2.4%
Flevoland	3.6%	2.9%	3.0%
Utrecht	4.2%	2.6%	1.8%
Noord-Holland	4.4%	2.3%	1.8%
Zuid-Holland	4.7%	2.7%	3.1%
Zeeland	6.9%	5.0%	3.6%
Noord-Brabant	6.5%	4.0%	3.1%
Limburg (NL)	6.8%	4.1%	2.4%

Source: Eurostat Farm indicators by age and sex of the manager, economic size of the farm, utilised agricultural area and NUTS2 region (ef\_m\_farmang)

The share of females might be a little larger as in the case of a couple farming together, the oldest in age is registered as the farmer. Many female farmers who are younger than their male partners are thereby underrepresented in the data. However, this will not explain to total gender gap.

There is no data separately on innovation, but some data may serve as a proxy to that.

## **1B: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: EUROPEAN LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AT NATIONAL LEVELS**

### **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**

*CAP 2023-2027 Specific Objective 8 (SO8) references enhancing the position of women in farming and accelerating the social inclusion of rural women – “Promote employment, growth, gender equality, including the participation of women in farming, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including the circular bio-economy and sustainable forestry”.*

**Q. 1B.1: How is the gender equality, including the participation of women in farming aspect, of Objective 8 reflected in the SWOT analysis, identification of needs and intervention logic of the CAP strategic plan in your country?**



Gender is not mentioned in the summary of the SO8 SWOT analysis. The European Commission has issued a recommendation to support younger people and especially women to work in agriculture. The response was as follows:

“Appreciation Netherlands

It states that the proportion of female business successors lags significantly behind the European average. It is indeed true that there are more male than female heads of farms in the agricultural sector, but a nuance is in order here. In the Netherlands, many women in the agricultural sector in a husband-wife partnership. This creates a distorted picture because often the (older) man is administered as farm manager. It does not alter the fact that the Netherlands benefits from the deployment of all strengths and talents in the agricultural sectors, from both men and women. In late 2020, research by LTO that in the agricultural sector there are increasing numbers of female farm managers in the Netherlands. It also revealed that the number of female students at agricultural colleges is increasing. This trend will be monitored and, if necessary, supported with appropriate measures to encourage women to choose a job in the agricultural sector.

#### **CAP NSP** commitment to gender equality

The NSP promotes gender equality and the position of women in the rural area with the following NSP measures:

- At networks (AKIS) focus on networks aims at (prospective) female farmers and issues specifically facing this target group;
- At LEADER for broad rural development by including in the LDS (Local Development Strategies) pay attention to gender and participation of women;
- At knowledge and information it is possible to apply for subsidies in practical networks around strengthening female agricultural entrepreneurship.”

This does not look as a groundbreaking strategy because no actions are taken to encourage women particularly to apply for subsidies. It is possible for women to apply for subsidies on diverse matters but subsidy proposals for strengthening female agricultural entrepreneurship or for female-networking are not actively promoted. As long as right policy interventions are absent to activate women and instigate their motivations, it is very unlikely for subsidy proposals targeting on female-led innovation and entrepreneurship to increase.

#### **Q. 1B.2: Does your countries CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_



As mentioned earlier, no direct support is identifiable.

**Q. 1B.3: Does your countries CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

There is a contribution for young farmers that in the result indicators demands to provide gender information (Result indicator R.36 of the CAP reads as follows: 'Generational renewal. Number of young farmers benefitting from setting up with support from the CAP, including a gender breakdown'), providing support to women is so an aim of this indicator, but it is part of a young farmers programme and has no separate standing. This is predefined by the EC.

**Q. 1B.4: Does your national LEADER Programme directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

The Leader grants are managed by the provinces. So, there is no national LEADER programme. Currently only provincial LEADER management costs can be applied for to the national government. Supporting female initiatives is no formal aim of the NSP; so it is not of the LEADER as well. The NSP is the framework. Provinces usually have no guidelines but only a grant regulation indicating what information has to be provided and that a committee will make an advice.

**Q. 1B.5: Does your national LEADER Programme indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

It is put on the agenda (see answer Q.1B.1) that LEADER should pay attention to gender and participation of women.



**1C: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: COUNTRY LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS**

**RURAL**

**Q. 1C.1: Does your country have a Rural Development Policy(s)?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent x \_\_\_

Rural development **policy is typically devolved to provinces and local authorities**. Generally they had policies to support rural development or to provide services in small villages etc. However, in the last decades as part of a 'province new style'<sup>4</sup> the primary focus on livability of the countryside has been set at the municipalities, involving that the province is mostly responsible for physical aspects, including biodiversity, quality of landscapes.

In many provinces a new, a farmer oriented political party, called BBB (BoerBurgerBeweging; Farmer-Citizen Movement) is now in the executive and promoting rural development is their key raison d'être. Farmer-oriented parties are conservative in many ways. However, the national BBB leader is female. And for the electoral campaign of the parliament, they presented their candidate for a prime minister, who was also female. So, they are themselves experiencing the success of female-led initiatives.

**Q. 1C.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No x \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 1C.3: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No x \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Local authorities in rural areas, are the result of a merger of many smaller municipalities and so can have **practices on providing services to their villages**. In many of these rural municipalities there are now 20 villages or so and they have policies to support village halls and multifunctional areas for village associations and meetings. Associations of rural women have meetings and activities in these halls.

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<sup>4</sup> Randstedelijke Rekenkamer, 2011, Vitaal platteland: Leefbaarheid en sociaal-economische vitalisering van het platteland in de Randstad, Provincie Zuid-Holland Nota van bevindingen, <https://www.randstedelijke-rekenkamer.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/NvB-Vitaal-Platteland-Zuid-Holland-eindconcept-bestuurlijk-wederhoor-28-1-2011-AvdS.pdf>



Such a regulation may be that per village one organization can be supported with € 1,000 per year and that this organisation must work on livability, community and relationships. There is also a national association of these village organisations.

In the Netherlands many matters are not organised by the state but by civil society. The idea is that the functioning of social society is the backbone of rural areas.

**Q. 1C.4: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No x To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 1C.5: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent x

**Policies and laws for freelancers** and some precarious labour are relevant to indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas. In the Netherlands, the number of self-employed persons and freelancers has been growing steadily. This is a matter for concern as these people have less social security benefits. As an independent entrepreneurs they should organize many kinds of social securities by themselves, which they often do not do as it is expensive. Currently there are about 1.6 million of the self-employed professionals, and about 600,000 of them are female. This gender gap is closing as the growth rate of female freelancers is higher and steeper than of males (<https://www.kvk.nl/pers/aantal-zzpers-afgelopen-tien-jaar-met-85-gestegen/>)

According to the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce (March 7, 2024) This gender gap is strongest closing (but still very large) in agriculture: between 2014 and 2024 the share of females in this category rose from 8% to 17%, from 2,113 in 2014 to 5,601 in 2024. The question is whether this is a policy effect. Whether this might be the result of absence of direct support measures for stable employment of rural women is also a research question. When employees are in the social service system, they are entitled to get a lot of benefits (against illness, unemployment, parental leave, retirement and more). Self-employed people are entrepreneurs who should organize these services by themselves. Often they find it too expensive. The law does not enforce them to organize their social security mandatorily, which has a negative impact in general. Due to irregular incomes and the nature of work of freelancers, they often find it difficult to arrange their home mortgage loans as well, which has a consequence on housing career of rural self-employed women.





## FARMING

**Q. 1C.6: Beyond the CAP Strategic Plan, does your country have a core Farming Development Policy (s)?** *e.g. agri-food sector policy (note: sub-sector policies can be dealt with in the last question included in this section below)*

Yes  No  To some extent

There is **large infrastructure supporting research and innovation relating to farming**. This is not based on supporting social goals but more due to economic rationales. It aims to reinforce the achievement that the Netherlands is the second exporter (after USA but before Brazil and France) of agricultural products in the World (and that with only 1.6 million hectare of farmland).

**Q. 1C.7: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes  No  To some extent

**Q. 1C.8: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes  No  To some extent

Measures that support all farmers support females in farming as well based on an equal treatment. However, more support goes to male farmers in general, not only in total but also per farm because female farmers have a smaller farm area on average and thereby claim a less amount of direct grant which is based on a surface-area(hectare).

**Q. 1C.9: Do laws governing farm ownership include any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm ownership?**

Yes  No  To some extent

**Q. 1C.10: Do other policy(s) or law (s) exist in your country that facilitate improved gender equality in relation to running the farm business?**

Yes  No  To some extent

All laws aim to promote gender equality but there are no special provisions.

**Q. 1C.11: Do laws governing farm transfer and inheritance have any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm inheritance?**

Yes  No  To some extent



Inheritance is to children and spouses (Burgelijk wetboek, boek 4 *Civil code*). Relevant is that next to the inheritance there are provision on usufruct involving that longest living partner has this right and that this will only transfer to the children after the demise of this partner. These provisions on usufruct can be put aside by a will. In a will it is possible to change the equal rights of children but all children are at least entitled to half of their legal part. So, the law does not stand in the way to give one child a little more of the farm than another and there are no provisions that this must be in a gender equal way. The general idea behind the current regulation is that the longest living partner is protected by this right of usufruct, but that it remains possible to deviate from this. A will is only valid as a deed under seal made at a notary.

**Q. 1C.12: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No x To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 1C.13: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming? e.g. organic farming, horticulture, agri-tourism, care/social farming**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent x

**Local land use plans** may allow or not allow other functions at a certain site. Provincial byelaws can provide regulations that must be followed by local authorities. There are differences between local authorities on what is allowed. Often it is allowed to have a small camping site, to sell farm products on site, to have a small care centre. To combat sprawl of greenhouses, more restrictions are applicable on building greenhouses and horticulture as these have a massive impact on the landscape. They are industrial on a large scale, tall and have full lights at night, and small scales of horticultural buildings are not allowed as well. It depends very much on the local authority whether keeping recreational horses is allowed. In many local authorities horses may only fit to an agricultural land use if the farm is breeding horses as main activity. Note that in most local land use plans agricultural buildings must be placed on a plot on the map and buildings on the rest of the land are not allowed.

Health and safety regulations (such as the Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the hygiene of foodstuffs) may make it more difficult to produce food at farms compared to the old days. In Dutch dairy farms, cheese production has been traditionally done by females. Through enlarging the scale, this activity has been lost in many cases. Women's engaging in downstream activities may fit into traditional role-patterns but can be constrained by these regulations. These activities may become more important in future views of food production through short chains and by having closer connections between farms and cities. The fact that it may be a little disappointing to see opportunities for female-led innovations in traditional roles, it does not rule out that these opportunities appear to exist.



Policies for care often facilitate small enterprises entering the field; so farms can have multifunctional uses in care and get financed through government compensation for providing care services on farm to the handicapped and the elderly.

## **PART 2: OTHER POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS SUPPORTING WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS**

### **2A: INNOVATION**

**Q. 2A.1: Do specific, targeted policy (s) exist in your country related to women-led innovation? e.g. in areas such as enterprise, research and development**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent x\_\_\_

There are **policies to promote females in research**. There have been programmes to support female professorships, etc.

The success rate of personal grants of females must be at least equal to that of males based on their submissions at NWO (Netherlands Science Foundation).

There are policies regarding female leadership in big companies. Based on this also the cooperative FrieslandCampina (owned by farmers) have a policy to have a certain percentage of female leadership. This is based on endorsing the UN Women's Empowerment Principles.

**Q. 2A.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included specifically related to farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No x\_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No x\_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 2A.3: Does innovation policy in your country focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas? e.g. innovation policy could mean policies supporting business innovation, research and innovation and more specific areas such as ecological, technological and digital innovation**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No x\_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No x\_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 2A.4: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No x\_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No x\_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_



**Q. 2A.5: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas? e.g. perhaps those related to areas such as social enterprise, rural tourism, creative industries**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_x\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_x\_\_

Policies that support everyone indirectly support females. In some areas equal-opportunity policies prescribe that the success rate of females may not fall below that of males. So, it is often a little higher (but this does not repair issues relating to low submission rates).

## **2B: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND NETWORKS**

**Q. 2B.1: Are there policy (s) in your country that directly support women in rural areas and/or farming to access further education and training?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_x\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_x\_\_

There have been communication campaigns to support young females to start studying more technical studies.

**Q. 2B.2: Are there mentoring/peer to peer learning programmes in your country that focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_x\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_x\_\_

There are mentoring programmes. I do not know their success. There is even a commercial company, Future Female Leaders B.V. that offers these programmes to companies. This is usually a rather urban undertaking.

Within farmers organisations there are suborganisations that are active in mentoring, like Woman and Enterprise (Vrouw en Bedrijf) in LTO.

These are private initiatives.



**Q. 2B.3: Are there networking programmes in your country focused directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No x To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No x To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 2B.4: Are there other education, training, mentoring and networking programmes, or other education-related supports, in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent x

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent x

The direct programmes have also indirect results beyond their main aims.

**PART 3: EMPOWERMENT**

**Q. 3.1: Do measures exist in your country that support women's representation and participation in local, regional, and/or national decision-making?** *e.g. at the political level, in rural and/or farming organisations, participation in policy monitoring and development.*

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent x

Many political parties have some rules in this respect. It is often about rules of organisations rather than about formal laws. Here, female participation in rural areas is often smaller than in urban areas. In some rural areas a very conservative protestant party which has been founded as response to female voting rights more than a century ago has a very traditional view on the role of females (no role in politics at all is more or less their basic idea but which they cannot uphold in principle based on court cases – females can become party members - but in practice courts do not decide who is on an election list) is the largest party.

**Q. 3.2: Do measures exist in your country that work to protect against and/or combat harassment (online or otherwise) and violence against women in public life?**

Yes x No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Next to the **Safe cities programme**, there is an action plan against gender related violence.  
  
A government commissioner has been appointed. Her role is twofold:



1. Provide solicited and unsolicited advice on addressing sexual transgressive behaviour and sexual violence.
2. Being a figurehead of the social conversation that should lead to culture change

Advises and activities include student life, universities, the cultural sector, female prisons, the care sector, the work floor and within companies.

The commissioner has also published an advice on the action plan itself.

The action plan (Januari 2023) (<https://www.tweedekamer.nl/downloads/document?id=2023D00603>) includes the following 'action lines' and aims:

"Action line 1: There are shared societal values and norms about how we want to treat each other in society

Aim 1: There is an open and inclusive social conversation about how we want to treat each other want to get along in society. Without sexism, gender stereotypes, prejudice and forms of discrimination.

Aim 2: In every education, care and welfare organisation, staff know how to make gender so that everyone recognises each other's wishes and boundaries.

Aim 3: Young people recognise each other's boundaries and desires and are able to express and monitor them.

Action point 2: Laws and regulations reflect (changing) societal norms

Aim 1: The working conditions legislation and regulations contain clear standards for preventing and dealing with sexually transgressive behaviour.

Aim 2: The Sexual Offences Act and the norms behind it are widely known.

Aim 3: Sports disciplinary law is reviewed and improved to address behaviours that threaten a safe sports environment.

Aim 4: The central government is normative in relation to procuring and if possible funding of other organisations.

Action Line 3: Organisations have processes for prevention, signalling and follow-up in place

Aim 1: Employers and workers are supported to draw up and implement policies within the organisation. and be able to implement them.

Aim 2: Central government fulfils an exemplary role as an employer with regard to sexual transgressive behaviour, focusing on awareness and research.



Aim 3: Organisations have actions against sexually transgressive behaviour and sexual violence that suit the sector.

Action Line 4: Everyone recognises and can respond to sexually transgressive behaviour and sexual violence

Aim 1: Bystanders recognise sexually transgressive behaviour and sexual violence and know when and how to intervene or respond.

Aim 2: Bystanders feel safe to intervene.

Action point 5: There is good assistance that is easy to find

Aim 1: Help is easy to find and access is low-threshold.

Aim 2: Formulate principles for good assistance.

Aim 3: Getting the basis for good assistance in place.

Aim 4: We are committed to good assistance.”

Note that the sexual offenses act has lowered the threshold for sexual offenses and has consequently lowered the criteria for the burden of proof.

The general response of the commissioner is that it is good that the programme is there, that it is work in progress and that a lot more have to be done.

**Q. 3.3: Do measures exist in your country that aim to increase the visibility of women-led innovation in rural areas and/or farming?** *e.g. programmes that aim to improve recognition of rural and farm women-led innovation and challenge gender stereotypes such as around traditional gender roles.*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

#### **PART 4: PAY, PENSION, WORK-LIFE AND FAMILY**

**Q. 4.1: Do measures exist in your country that address the gender pay gap in relation to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

There are some **general policies to address the gender gap**. These policies are not specific to rural areas. Government indicated to be supporter of the EU directive of



transparency regarding payment and they have presented a route map that employers may use to come to fair payment. After all, it is currently prohibited to make a distinction and the practice is different. So, prohibiting it again does not make a difference but it is about transforming norms into facts, for which some steps are taken. These steps are rather light (transparency, information, offering tools) and not specific to farming or rural areas.

**Q. 4.2: Do gender equality issues exist in relation to government pension schemes and rural and/or farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Dutch pension schemes have two major sources. First is the government system (AOW) which is a social security right for everyone who lived in the Netherlands between the age of 15 and 65 (for every year you achieve so 2% of this total). This is a minimum pension that is related to minimum wage. Here there is no difference between males and females. There is a difference between people living alone and people living together. The per capita AOW of people who share a household is lower than of people living alone.

Second is a private one. If you are an employee, your employer should organize this for you. Part of the income and an employer contribution must go to such a pension scheme. Pension schemes invest these funds and are very wealthy institutions (for example, the pension fund for government personal and teachers (including university professors) owns € 474 billion, and the one for people working in the care sector € 221 billion). The pension is based on your past record at your employer. This includes maternity leaves or parenting leaves, but if women (as it is often the case in the Netherlands) earn less and work less they build less rights. However, within a partnership, partners have a claim on pension rights of their partners. So at a divorce, pension rights build up during their relationship (and if marriage has been based on default conditions it is all rights; so including those before marriage) is distributed equally over both partners. Originally, this has been based on case law by the Supreme Court of the Netherlands (27/11/1981; ECLI:NL:HR:1981:AG4271). This case law overrides pre-notes and other measures people may use to exclude women from pension rights. Later in 1995 legislation has codified these principles, which are upheld in a new system of legislation which has been enacted in 2023 and will come into force in the next years.

Self-employed people, like farmers and entrepreneurs must organize this second part themselves. For self-employed people there is a regulation that you can opt-in which is comparable to what employed people get. Most self-employed people do not do so, because they consider it as too expensive. There are tax opportunities as well. For farmers, the property value of the farm is the retirement scheme, for other entrepreneurs buying social rights is an issue and many of these (both males and





females) are under secured regarding all kinds of social benefits including retirement schemes, but also issues of unemployment or illness. Currently there about 1.6 million self-employed people in the Netherlands of which about 600,000 females. Some of these are only part-time self-employed.

So, mayor concern is that not all people are in the system (second source, all people get AOW) and typically entrepreneurs are outside the system and people who get a monthly salary are in. The new pension system has some fiscal measures to promote a larger reach of the pension system.

There is also a lobby of small entrepreneurs to stay out of social security benefits, as they should also pay the costs if they are in and they are optimistic about the opportunities they have to continue earning money themselves.

**Q. 4.3a: Are maternity leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

**Q. 4.3b: Do the partners of rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs have entitlements to maternity leave benefits?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Maternity leave benefits are there for people that are employed. Your employer should organise this.

For maternity of self-employed people there is a “Zelfstandige en Zwanger-regeling (ZEZ)” providing at least (if birth comes later than expected, it can be a little longer) 16 weeks pregnancy leave. This regulation is also open to co-working partners of self-employed people. The amount of money involves is not higher than minimum wage providing you have worked over 1225 hours in the preceding year (if you work less it is less).

It is less than what an employed mother would get (as a start because it is not based on minimum wage but on the actual wage, which is usually higher).

**Q. 4.4: Are parental leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent



These rules only exist for people that are employed not for entrepreneurs who employ themselves.

**Q. 4.5: Is childcare availability and cost in rural areas an issue in your country?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent  \_\_\_

There is a **regulation**, which is currently based on a split of these costs between different stakeholders involved (employer, employee, government). If your income is low there is more government compensation. There is a standing debate and proposals to make childcare free. There are many concerns, including the practical one on the growth of capacity needed to get this organized.

Organizing childcare is also a business opportunity for some farmers that offer childcare at their farms. In 2023 this happened at 153 farms (source: CBS). This can be financed based on the support system that exists (with a government contribution).

The childcare system has also been topic of a massive scandal. Families making a small mistake in forms were force to pay back all they got (over the full lifetime of their children) and many got in real trouble based on that. Families losing their homes, or even their children after matters got wrong (stress, no home, etc). This was related to government compensation for families with a relatively low income. So, if income was a little different than there could be an issue, especially as government definitions of income are not always easy to grasp. There has been a parliamentary inquiry with a report

[https://www.tweedekamer.nl/sites/default/files/atoms/files/20201217\\_eindverslag\\_parlementaire\\_ondervragingscommissie\\_kinderopvangtoeslag.pdf](https://www.tweedekamer.nl/sites/default/files/atoms/files/20201217_eindverslag_parlementaire_ondervragingscommissie_kinderopvangtoeslag.pdf).

This is not mainly a rural issue but has impact on debate on how to organize childcare.

**Q. 4.6: Do other supports exist in your country that can assist rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs achieve work-life balance? e.g. farm relief schemes, supports for businesses towards employment costs**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent  \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent  \_\_\_

There are some **tax measures to support starting entrepreneurs**. There relate to investments etc. You are only an entrepreneur for the task authorities if you spend at least 1225 hours a year for the new enterprise. So an entrepreneur overburdened with care tasks may not come to these 1225 hours. Not worked-hours during 16 weeks of a pregnancy break of entrepreneurial activities are considered to be part of these 1225 hours, but there is no compensation for other care tasks.

There is also a private infrastructure of banks that can finance investments.



**PART 5: OTHER AND WIDER INITIATIVES**

**Q. 5.1: Access to finance (e.g. grants, business loans) is a key resource issue for women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. Beyond the finance support measures already discussed in the sections above, are there others important to supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No x \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

The massive growth of self-employed people (85% growth between 2014 and 2024 <https://www.kvk.nl/pers/aantal-zzpers-afgelopen-tien-jaar-met-85-gestegen/>; the growth in females has been 101% of males 'only' 77%) has prompted government not to support this, but to develop policies to raise the threshold for starting this. There are plans for minimum tariffs that should be used, obligations for insurances discussed, etc. After all, the social security system is based to protect people that are employed, it is not mend to protect entrepreneurs. Government aims to prioritize initiatives that are financially robust and stop the marginalization of labour in self-employment based on an entrepreneurial logic, but what in fact are people that earn not enough to make a living. So, there is currently not much support. The statistics show a massive increase without it. So, the question is more how to incorporate this within the social security system.

**Q. 5.2: Do specific gender quality policies and/or laws exist in your country and have a focus on women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No x \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No x \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Policies are general and have so no focus on farming or rural areas.

**Q. 5.3: Are there other wider government-led initiatives and/or non-government initiatives in your country that show significant promise in addressing key challenges facing women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas that could provide models for future policy measures and/or laws?**

Rural and farming seems to be in the blind spot of policies supporting females in the Netherlands. It is all very much based on urban contexts.

**Q. 5.4: This section provides space to add any other information on policy and law in your country that is important to include in our assessment and has not been covered already in this questionnaire (e.g. related to gender quality or specific areas such as finance, education, health, employment etc.)**



## ROMANIA

**Assessment by: Anastasia Oprea (ECOLISE) and Laura Incze (ELARD)**

### **GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

Romania operates under a multi-party democratic system (since 1989), where the separation of powers between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches forms the foundation of governance. Romania is a semi-presidential representative democratic republic. This means that the President is the head of state, while the Prime Minister is the head of government. The government is structured into three branches: Executive, Legislative and Judicial. The President of Romania is elected by popular (simple majority) vote for a maximum of two 5-year terms. The President has some significant executive powers, including appointing the Prime Minister, and in terms of foreign policy - representing the country abroad, as well as acting as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. The Prime Minister is appointed by the President and leads the executive branch. The Prime Minister (usually the leader of the majority party or majority coalition in the Parliament) appoints the Council of Ministers. The Parliament of Romania is bicameral and consists of: the Senate (upper house) and the Chamber of Deputies (lower house). Members of both chambers are elected by proportional representation for 4-year terms through simple plurality direct, secret voting. The Parliament is responsible for making laws and overseeing the government's activities. The judiciary in Romania is independent and is responsible for interpreting and applying the law. The highest judicial authority in Romania is the High Court of Cassation and Justice. The Constitutional Court (Curtea Constituțională) holds the responsibility of assessing the alignment of laws and other governmental regulations with the Constitution (1991/2003), which serves as the bedrock legal document of the nation and can only be modified through a public referendum.

Additionally, Romania comprises 41 counties (județe) along with the municipality of Bucharest. Each county is governed by a county council, which oversees local matters, and a prefect, appointed by the central government, responsible for national affairs at the county level. Prefects are mandated to be politically impartial. Moreover, counties are further divided into cities and communes, each with its own mayor and local council.

Romania became a full member of the EU on the 1st of January 2007. The NUTS-3 (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) level divisions of the European Union reflect Romania's administrative-territorial structure and correspond to the 41 counties plus Bucharest. The cities and communes correspond to the NUTS-5 level divisions, but there are no current NUTS-4 level divisions. The NUTS-1 (four macro regions) and NUTS-2 (eight development regions) divisions exist but have no administrative capacity and are used instead for coordinating regional development projects and statistical purposes.



## WIDER NATIONAL CONTEXT ISSUES

Romania was rated in 2023 as a “flawed democracy”, ranking 61st in the (out of 167 countries) [1]. Romania ranks significantly low in political culture and only slightly higher than the regional average for Eastern Europe in terms of political participation. Romania’s democratic index score has hardly improved in the last few years. According to Freedom House [2], “Romania’s multiparty system has ensured regular rotations of power through competitive elections. Civil liberties are generally respected but have come under growing pressure as entrenched political interests push back against civic and institutional efforts to combat systemic corruption. Discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities and other vulnerable groups is a long-standing problem, as is control of key media outlets by business people with political interests.”

The Social Progress Index from 2024 places Romania in the 44th position (out of 170 countries) as the worst performing of the EU countries, with an overall tendency of decline since 2011 [3]. The most problematic chapters which require immediate intervention in terms of public policies are: lack of basic sanitation (sewerage, running water), lack of equal access to basic health services, lack of access to contraception, child malnutrition, reduced rates of primary school enrolment, lack equal access to quality education, pollution and lack of de facto recycling, lack of equal access to basic health services, reduced freedom of assembly, and low acceptance of diverse sexual orientations.

## PART 1: POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN FARMING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### 1A: GENERAL CONTEXT

**Q. 1A.1: In your country, is there a commitment to gender mainstreaming, or other method of gender equality assessment (e.g. benchmarking) of all key rural and/or farm policies?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 1A.2: Do official datasets exist in your country showing women’s participation in rural and farm innovation and/or the wider farm and rural economy? e.g. those collected regularly by national statistics agency or other relevant state bodies**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X



In Romania, there is a legal obligation for the National Institute of Statistics to collect and disaggregate data by sex. Law No. 202 of 19 April 2002 on equal treatment and equality of opportunities between women and men, Article 27(2) states, 'The National Institute of Statistics introduces sex disaggregation in all documents and works on economic, social, political and cultural life and periodically publish[es] statistical data, disaggregated by sex, on the condition of women and men living in Romania.'

Moreover, Government Decision No. 177 from 2016 includes an obligation on the National Agency for Equal Opportunities (NAEO) to analyze such data under Article 4(d) which calls for 'reports, studies, analyses and forecasts regarding the application of the principle of equal opportunities and treatment between women and men, in all fields of activity.'

The National Institute of Statistics does not have a specific section of its website dedicated to gender statistics. However, it disseminates sex-disaggregated data at the national level in its annual Statistical Yearbook (Anuarul Statistic) on the population, labour market participation by economic sector and occupation, earnings, levels of education and enrolment in education. More specifically, it publishes a comprehensive publication entitled 'Women and Men in Romania,' both in Romanian and English, every second year. This publication is available on its website. The NAEO also publishes sex-disaggregated data in its Annual Monitoring Reports and other reports on different topics.

The results of the General Agricultural Census from 2020 have not yet been made public by the National Institute of Statistics. While statistical data is being collected by the Ministry of Agriculture and APJA: Agency for Payments and Intervention in Agriculture about women in agriculture, the latest publicly available data is from 2020 [4], newer information being only available on request. Eurostat also collects such data about women in agriculture in Romania [5].

The Ministry of Agriculture, through the European funds for agriculture and rural development, managed at the AFIR level, namely the National Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020, has obtained funding for 11,531 women implementing agricultural businesses and non-agricultural investments in rural areas.

At the same time, out of the total number of women beneficiaries of European funds, 7,223 are young farmers - under 40. The value of the projects developed is 354.8 million euro, 4,308 women are in the over 40 category and the value of the funding contracts concluded with AFIR is 106.6 million euro.

Despite the objectives of the NSP, APJA data show a reduction in the number of women applying for payments over the last three years. Thus, in 2022 there were 283,262 women registered with payment claims, compared to 290,197 in 2021 and 292,952 in 2020.

In 2020, the total number of females running farms registered by APJA was almost 850,000. Eurostat data show a significant percentage of young female heads of holdings 21.68%.



According to the 2014-2020 NRDP monitoring there was a significant percentage of young women accessing measure 6.1 - Support for setting up of young farmers, i.e. 38% of all young farmers set up.

## 1B: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: EUROPEAN LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AT NATIONAL LEVELS

### Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

*CAP 2023-2027 Specific Objective 8 (SO8) references enhancing the position of women in farming and accelerating the social inclusion of rural women – “Promote employment, growth, gender equality, including the participation of women in farming, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including the circular bio-economy and sustainable forestry”.*

**Q. 1B.1: How is gender equality, including the participation of women in farming aspect, of Objective 8 reflected in the SWOT analysis, identification of needs and intervention logic of the CAP strategic plan in your country?**

The Romanian National Strategic Plan (NSP) for 2023 - 2027 - part of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) [6] identifies the need **to support gender equality by promoting involving the female population in entrepreneurship (N24)** as a moderate need which is only partly addressed. This need is reflected as the strategic objectives “Promoting employment, economic growth, equal opportunities and including women's participation in agriculture, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including the circular bio-economy and sustainable forestry” (**SO8**). Besides highlighting the need against the socio-economic background of rural areas in Romania (same as described in the national context analysis for Romanian in T3.1), the justification for this need also includes the significantly lower activity rate of women than the activity rate of the working age at national level and low employment rate of rural women, which includes also unpaid family workers out of which 60% are women (NSP). The SWOT analysis only mentions women in regards to two identified weaknesses: 11 - “**Activity rate of women significantly lower** than the activity rate of the population aged working age population at national level and **low employment rate of the rural female population**” and 13 - “**High unemployment rate in rural areas** compared to urban areas, most vulnerable groups young people and **rural women**”.

The Plan highlights that the data on the gender equality context within the workforce, particularly in agriculture and forestry sectors, indicates a significant imbalance favouring men in managerial positions by over four times compared to women. This is explained given the reluctance of women to run businesses, especially in the and in the agricultural sector, which could explain this imbalance reflected in the statistics” (p. 60).

**Addressing patriarchal mindsets in Romania** is named as a crucial approach. NSP also acknowledges that ensuring tailored facilities for women can boost their



involvement in business management, notably in rural and agricultural sectors, potentially addressing existing gender disparities. Previous successful initiatives which NSP builds on are young farmer support and rural tourism, which underscore the need to further engage the available female workforce. Additionally, to increase women's representation, the Plan aims for sustained financial backing for agricultural and forestry sectors is crucial, expected to revitalize farming, diversify activities, and create new pathways for women in the job market.

**Q. 1B.2: Does your country's CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

SO8 (as well as all other Specific Objectives) does not include measures or interventions catering directly to women in agriculture or rural women. The Plan justifies addressing only partially the need to support gender equality by promoting women's involvement in entrepreneurship (N24) being only partially addressed by stating that “although **there are no specific interventions targeted at women**, they can benefit from sector-specific interventions’. Promoting yet again a static gendered view of the rural areas and agriculture, NSP considers that the measures aimed at the vegetable or flower sectors are sufficient, since the activities are more often practiced by the female population. The situation is similar for agri-tourism, a sector supported by the NSP, is being mainly practiced by women (NSP, N24).

However, according to the NSP, there is a significant percentage of young female heads of holdings 21.68%. Also, out of those who have accessed the measure supporting young farmers, 38% were young women farmers, according to monitoring data from the 2014-2020 Rural Development Plan. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), this indicates increased **natural interest of women** in entrepreneurship in the agri-food sector, **without the need for prioritization**. It can be noticed that the policies developed by this Ministry take an essentialist approach to gender and resist including gender equality measures/mainstreaming in the National Strategic Plan. The justification for this was added to the document only after receiving the recommendation of the European Commission regarding the first version of NSP submitted. The Commission clearly recommended that “**there must also be careful consideration of the specific needs of women in agriculture and rural areas in order to deliver on gender equality and close the gender gaps in employment, pay, pensions, care and decision-making. At the same time, ensuring the protection of agricultural workers, especially the precarious, seasonal and undeclared ones, will play a major role in delivering on the respect of rights enshrined in legislation which is an essential element of the fair EU food system**” (European Commission, 2020).





**Q. 1B.3: Does your country's CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Associated with SO8 - Total allocation of €1,326.2 million :  
INVEST(73-74) - Investments, including investment in irrigation  
DR-22 - Investments in conditioning, storage and processing of agricultural and fruit products

DR-23 - Investments for processing and marketing of agricultural products for the production of food and processed products other than provided for in Annex 1 to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

DR-27 - Creation/modernisation of access infrastructure agricultural

DR-28 - Creation/modernisation of road infrastructure by in rural areas

**DR-29 - Investment in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities**

Support is granted for investment in tangible and intangible (e.g. software, patents etc. ) assets necessary for business development

non-agricultural development in rural areas, covering the following areas:

→ production,

→ services,

→ tourism.

The maximum amount of public support/project is 200.000 Euro.

The intensity of non-reimbursable public support in relation to eligible costs per project will be 65%.

The aim of support through this intervention is to promote resilient economic development,

and digital development in rural areas by increasing the number of non-agricultural activities and the development of existing non-agricultural activities, leading to the creation of new jobs in rural areas, increasing rural incomes and reducing rural-urban disparities.

The intervention will prioritise projects that help to encourage diversification of activity to non-agricultural production activities, the development of digitisation activities, the protection of environment, bio-economy and circular economy in order to make the proposed activities more efficient. From priority will also be given to agricultural/artisan-themed tourism activities and to and catering establishments.

**INSTAL(75) [Pillar II] - Setting up of young and new farmers and establishment of rural enterprises; DR-30 - Support for setting up of young farmers**

Form and rate of support - grant, lump sums. The maximum non-reimbursable public support is 70.000 Euro.

Specific PAC objectives it addresses:

SO7 Attracting and supporting young and other new farmers and facilitating sustainable enterprise development in rural areas



SO8 Promoting employment, economic growth, gender equality, including women's participation in agriculture, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including circular bio-economy and forestry sustainable forestry

XCO Cross-cutting objective of modernising the sector by stimulating and sharing knowledge, promoting innovation and and digitisation in agriculture and rural areas and encouraging the uptake of these measures

Needs being targeted: (N23) Rejuvenating generations of farmers, (N25) Increasing young people's access to agricultural land, (N26) Supporting sustainable development of mountain areas in Romania, (N40) The need to increase training of farmers

Description OUTCOME INDICATORS:

R.36 Number of young farmers benefiting from CAP support, including a gender breakdown

R.37 New jobs supported under CAP projects

Aim: Support for young farmers to set up as farm managers will improve the age structure of farmers, contribute to the replacement of generations of farmers, promote environmental protection issues, organic farming, partnership and contribute to strengthening the socio-economic structure of rural areas.

**Q. 1B.4: Does your national LEADER Programme directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

The direct support offered by the Romanian LEADER program for farming and rural innovations led by women is included in the strategic development guidelines for the period 2023-2027. These guidelines specifically include measures to increase the participation and empowerment of women in rural economic development:

Quality of local development strategies: The LEADER program encourages the involvement of projects that directly benefit women, potentially providing additional funding to LAGs that include in their local development strategies such interventions. This strategic focus specifically on women as the primary beneficiaries of economic projects directly supports women-led initiatives by providing them with financial resources and visibility in community planning efforts.

Composition of the partnership: By requiring that local action groups include at least one form of association representing the interests of women, the program ensures that women's voices are an integral part of the decision-making and strategy-making processes. This measure directly promotes women-led innovations by bringing their interests to the table from the project initiation stage.



These direct support mechanisms are designed to foster an inclusive environment that not only encourages women's participation in rural economic activities, but also prioritizes funding and support for their projects, directly contributing to the growth and sustainability of women-led agricultural and rural development initiatives.

**Q. 1B.5: Does your national LEADER Programme indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_.

Indirect support for innovation led by women in farming and/or rural areas is manifested in the framework of the LEADER program in Romania through the objectives and broader operating frameworks, which, although not exclusively aimed at women, create a favourable environment for their empowerment and participation in innovation:

- Encouraging diverse representation: By encouraging partnerships to include multiple forms of association representing the interests of women, youth and children, the program fosters a diverse ecosystem within LAGs. This diversity indirectly supports women-led innovation by fostering a culture of inclusion and intersectionality where innovative ideas that benefit different segments of the community can flourish.
- Representation quota: The criterion that at least 30% of the representatives within the partnership must be young or female indirectly supports initiatives led by women. This quota ensures that a significant proportion of leadership and decision-making roles within LAGs are held by women, increasing the likelihood of initiatives that understand and address the unique needs and challenges of women in rural areas.

The LEADER Program's emphasis on community-led rural development strategies inherently supports women-led innovations by empowering local actors, including women, to identify and pursue projects that meet the specific needs of their communities. This bottom-up approach indirectly supports women's innovative capacities by exploiting and capitalizing on their local knowledge and expertise.

By promoting an inclusive, diverse and community-based approach to rural development, these indirect support mechanisms create fertile ground for women-led innovations to emerge and flourish. They recognize the importance of creating supportive ecosystems that, while not exclusively targeting women, provide the necessary conditions for their successful participation in innovation and entrepreneurship in agriculture and rural areas.



According to the Selection Report on Local Action Groups from the previous period (2014-2020) 83 out of 239 LAGs included in their partnership at least one organization representing women's interests.

In the new period (2021-2027), it is mandatory for all Local Action Groups to include organizations representing women's interests. Additionally, based on the Ministry's communication LAGs have included women in their partnerships. Consequently, there are 2,984 women involved across the 246 partnerships. For the period 2014-2020, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development does not have information regarding the women involved in LAG/Leader program as this indicator has not been monitored. For the same period, the Ministry authorized through Local Development Strategies 9950 projects, which created 4891 new jobs out of which 1299 are occupied by women.

## **1C: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: COUNTRY LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **RURAL**

#### **Q. 1C.1: Does your country have a Rural Development Policy(s)?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

The National Rural Development Program 2021 - 2027 is being replaced by the National Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027 (part of the CAP). See above about the National Strategic Plan.

#### **Q. 1C.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

#### **Q. 1C.3: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Depending on the creativity of the Agency administering the funds and that of the beneficiaries, a number of interventions/funds can be related to SO8 of the CAP. We managed to identify one such call: DR 27, aimed at the creation or upgrading of agricultural access infrastructure, was launched at the national level with a budget of 100 million EUR, allocated for both agricultural and infrastructure development. The beneficiaries were Territorial Administrative Units (UAT) or their associations, as per the prevailing national legislation. The scheme offered a non-reimbursable public support rate of 100% for all eligible expenses, capped at €1,000,000 per beneficiary.



The application window opened on November 2, 2023 and closed on January 11, 2024. The projects submitted had to finance investments in the construction, extension and/or upgrading of agricultural access roads to farms (off-farm access roads). It only indirectly benefited women in agriculture and rural area (who were then not explicitly referred to, nor gender equality was included in the project evaluation sheet).

**Q. 1C.4: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 1C.5: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

While some Rural Development Funds, Microfinance Programs, Rural Credit Programs, Supportive Policies for Agricultural Lending and Capacity Building Programs are put in place by the Romanian Government, often in collaboration with the EU or CSOs (civil society organizations), targeting rural entrepreneurs, women are rather included in the category rather than a specific target category.

## **FARMING**

**Q. 1C.6: Beyond the CAP Strategic Plan, does your country have a core Farming Development Policy (s)?** *e.g. agri-food sector policy (note: sub-sector policies can be dealt with in the last question included in this section below)*

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 1C.7: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_ n/a

**Q. 1C.8: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_ n/a

**Q. 1C.9: Do laws governing farm ownership include any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm ownership?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_



This in Romania refers to either (1) agricultural/arable land or (2) homesteads with adjacent land (for gardening or other bigger plots). Laws governing farm and arable land ownership do not typically include special provisions specifically aimed at improving gender equality in farm ownership (however, ownership and inheritance rights are equal between men and women in Romania). The main policy tool which regulates agricultural land sale is the Land Law (Law no. 17/2014). The objectives of the law are threefold: ensuring food security, protecting national interests, and exploiting natural resources in accordance with the national interest; establishing measures to regulate the sale of agricultural land located outside the countryside; and the consolidation of agricultural land with a view to increasing the size of agricultural holdings and establishing economically viable holdings.

The Land Law stipulates 7 categories of pre-emptors and their priorities. The first tier are co-owners or relatives, then the leaseholder, followed by owners or lessees of neighbouring land, **the fourth tier being young farmers**, as defined by EU regulation. On the last tiers are agricultural research institutions, other natural persons who reside in the same or neighbouring administrative-territorial units where the land is located, and finally the Romanian state. In the case of young farmers, there is an extra-provision indicating that priority for the purchase of the land subject to sale is given to young farmers engaged in animal husbandry, on the condition of having established residence on the national territory for a period of at least one year prior to the registration of the offer for sale of agricultural land. Young farmers also have pre-emption rights if there are two offers from neighbouring landowners whose vicinity side with the land being sold are equal in size.

**Q. 1C.10: Do other policy(s) or law (s) exist in your country that facilitate improved gender equality in relation to running the farm business?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

See above **Q. 1C.9**

**Q. 1C.11: Do laws governing farm transfer and inheritance have any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm inheritance?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

See above **Q. 1C.9**

**Q. 1C.12: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_



**Q. 1C.13: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming? e.g. organic farming, horticulture, agri-tourism, care/social farming**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

## **PART 2: OTHER POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS SUPPORTING WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS**

### **2A: INNOVATION**

**Q. 2A.1: Do specific, targeted policy(s) exist in your country related to women-led innovation? e.g. in areas such as enterprise, research and development**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

The Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism / Agencies for Small and Medium Enterprises finances a program called "Woman entrepreneur", applicable to the fields of research, development, innovation and digitalisation [7][8][9]. The estimated budget for the period 2022-2027 is 1,000,000,000 lei, which is aimed to support at least 5000 women. The program aims at stimulating and supporting the start-up and development of private economic structures set up by women, promoting a system of information and training to facilitate women's mobility in the labour market and the development of their entrepreneurial skills with a view to their involvement in private economic structures, in the context of the problems of maintaining a balance between family and professional obligations and existing local prejudices. Improving the economic performance of SMEs by achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

**Q. 2A.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included specifically related to farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 2A.3: Does innovation policy in your country focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas? e.g. innovation policy could mean policies supporting business innovation, research and innovation and more specific areas such as ecological, technological and digital innovation**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 2A.4: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_



Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 2A.5: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas? e.g. perhaps those related to areas such as social enterprise, rural tourism, creative industries**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

## **2B: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND NETWORKS**

**Q. 2B.1: Are there policy (s) in your country that directly support women in rural areas and/or farming to access further education and training?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 2B.2: Are there mentoring/peer to peer learning programmes in your country that focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 2B.3: Are there networking programmes in your country focused directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 2B.4: Are there other education, training, mentoring and networking programmes, or other education-related supports, in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_





### PART 3: EMPOWERMENT

**Q. 3.1: Do measures exist in your country that support women's representation and participation in local, regional, and/or national decision-making?** *e.g. at the political level, in rural and/or farming organisations, participation in policy monitoring and development.*

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Romania has implemented gender quotas for electoral lists in national and European Parliament elections. Political parties are required to ensure a minimum representation of 20% women on their candidate lists for parliamentary elections, which has helped increase women's participation in elected offices. This quota applies to both the national and European Parliament elections. The law that implemented gender quotas in Romania for electoral lists in national and European Parliament elections is Law No. 208/2015 on the Election of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies, as well as for the Organization and Functioning of the Permanent Electoral Authority.

The Gender Equality Law (Law no. 202/2002) is part of Romania's legislation promoting gender equality, which includes provisions aimed at increasing women's representation in decision-making bodies. These provisions encourage gender-balanced representation on public boards, councils, and committees at local, regional, and national levels. Law No. 202/2002 encourages gender-balanced representation on public boards, councils, and committees at local, regional, and national levels. The law specifies that public authorities and institutions must take measures to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in decision-making processes. This includes promoting the participation of women in leadership positions and decision-making bodies, as well as implementing affirmative action measures, such as quotas or targets, to achieve gender balance. Additionally, the law prohibits discrimination based on gender in access to and participation in decision-making processes. It requires public institutions to adopt policies and strategies aimed at eliminating barriers that prevent women from fully participating in decision-making and leadership roles.

The National Strategy on Promoting Equal Opportunities and Treatment between Women and Men and Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence for the period 2022-2027 refers to women's participation in terms of involving ensuring increased participation of women in decision-making both at national level and regional levels, as well as within international institutions and mechanisms for the prevention, implementation and conflict resolution, in peacekeeping operations.

In Romania, various government initiatives and civil society organizations collaborate to provide training and capacity-building programs aimed at empowering women interested in pursuing careers in politics and public service. These programs are designed to equip women with the necessary skills, knowledge, and networks to succeed in decision-making roles. Some examples:



The Women in Politics Program by National Democratic Institute (NDI) collaborates with local partners to offer training sessions, workshops, and mentoring opportunities for women interested in politics in Romania, covering campaign strategy, public speaking, leadership development, and policy advocacy.

UN Women Romania's Women Leadership Academy provides intensive leadership training for women across sectors, including politics, offering courses on communication, negotiation, strategic planning, and decision-making, along with mentorship programs to prepare them for leadership roles in governance.

Political parties in Romania, supported by governmental agencies and international organizations, organize tailored training programs for women members, focusing on political skills, party structures, navigating politics, campaign management, and communication strategies, exemplified by the Social Democratic Party (PSD) Women's Academy and the National Liberal Party (PNL) Women's School.

Municipalities and local government associations collaborate with civil society to organize leadership workshops for women interested in local politics, covering topics like administration, budgeting, community engagement, and policy development, empowering them to become effective leaders in their communities.

Through various EU funding programs, Romania supports gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives, including training courses on leadership, political participation, and gender mainstreaming, funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), aimed at enhancing women's participation in decision-making at all governance levels.

In Romania, several organizations and networks receive support to advocate for gender equality and women's rights, facilitating women's participation in decision-making and raising awareness about gender issues. One prominent example is the Romanian Women's Lobby (RBL), an umbrella organization that brings together various women's NGOs, working to advance gender equality and women's rights in Romania. RBL engages in advocacy, policy analysis, and lobbying efforts to influence decision-makers and promote women's interests at all levels of governance. Another example is the Association for the Promotion of Women in Romania (APFR), which focuses on empowering women economically, politically, and socially through capacity-building programs, advocacy campaigns, and networking opportunities. Additionally, organizations like the Center for Women's Rights (CDR) and the Association for Women's Welfare and Development (AFWD) provide legal assistance, counselling services, and support networks for women facing discrimination or gender-based violence, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable society in Romania.

The Government Decision No. 1054/2005 (and subsequently GD No. 933 /2013) - Pursuant to Article 108 of the Constitution of Romania, republished, and Article III of Government Ordinance no. 84/2004 amending and supplementing Law no.202/2002 on equal opportunities between women and men, approved with amendments by Law No 501/2004, grants the establishment of and the rules of organisation and operation



of committees and the Municipality of Bucharest in the field of equal opportunities between women and men (COJES). The coordination of the work of the COJES is ensured by the National Commission in the field of equal opportunities between women and men, hereinafter referred to as CONES. COJES is composed of representatives of the deconcentrated structures of central and local public administration authorities or of administrative bodies, trade union confederations, employers' confederations, and non-governmental organisations active in the field of equal opportunities and gender equality. The composition of the COJES shall be determined in accordance with the principle of representativeness and equal opportunities. The President of CONES is the State Secretary coordinating the work in the field of gender equality and has voting rights. [10].

There is no legal obligation to undertake an ex-ante gender impact assessment when drafting laws or policies and gender budgeting is in its foundational stages. While gender budgeting is defined in the amended **Gender Equality Law 2002**, there is no obligation to implement it. Moreover, there is also a project called 'Gender Budgeting in Public Policies' (Bugetarea pe baza de Gen In Politicile Publice) which is one of the first attempts to introduce the concept of gender budgeting. However, the project only operates at the regional level in several counties and targets non-governmental organisations, not regional authorities.

**Q. 3.2: Do measures exist in your country that work to protect against and/or combat harassment (online or otherwise) and violence against women in public life?**

Yes  No  To some extent

Romania has laws in place that criminalize various forms of violence against women, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. These laws provide legal protection for victims and enable authorities to prosecute perpetrators of harassment and violence. One example is the Law no. 324/2006 which comprehensively defines discrimination, encompassing distinctions based on various criteria such as race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, chronic non-contagious illness, HIV infection, membership in a disadvantaged category, or any other criterion aimed at restricting or eliminating the recognition, use, or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural, or other public life domains. It establishes the National Council for Combating Discrimination as an autonomous authority responsible for enforcing the law, elaborating and implementing anti-discrimination policies, and resolving discrimination complaints. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against can file complaints with the Council within one year of the discriminatory act, with provisions for investigation, resolution, and remedies including financial compensation and reinstatement of rights. The law imposes fines ranging from 400 to 4,000 lei for individual discrimination cases and from 600 to 8,000 lei for group or community discrimination cases. Additionally, it enables victims to seek



redress through the judiciary, with proceedings exempt from court fees and obligatory involvement of the Council. The law further mandates the creation of internal petition and complaint resolution procedures within 60 days and a national strategy for preventing and combating discrimination within 3 months of its enactment. Overall, this legislation aligns with European Union directives and underscores Romania's commitment to ensuring equality and combating all forms of discrimination, including sexual harassment and harassment against women, with strict penalties for violators.

Romania has developed a **National Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2022 - 2027** [11], which includes measures to address gender-based violence and discrimination. This plan aims to promote gender equality in all areas of life, including public life, and includes initiatives to raise awareness, provide support services for victims, and strengthen legal protections.

**Q. 3.3: Do measures exist in your country that aim to increase the visibility of women-led innovation in rural areas and/or farming?** *e.g. programmes that aim to improve recognition of rural and farm women-led innovation and challenge gender stereotypes such as around traditional gender roles.*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Beyond the National Strategic Plan within CAP, there are additional national and local agricultural agencies, in collaboration with NGOs and rural development organizations, that may offer funding, training, and networking opportunities specifically tailored for women in rural entrepreneurship and farming. These initiatives - non-centralized and often not institutionally driven - aim to showcase women's contributions to innovation, sustainability, and diversification in agriculture while addressing gender disparities and promoting economic empowerment in rural communities. However, ongoing efforts to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these measures are essential to ensure meaningful progress in increasing the visibility and impact of women-led innovation in Romania's rural areas and farming sector.

#### **PART 4: PAY, PENSION, WORK-LIFE AND FAMILY**

**Q. 4.1: Do measures exist in your country that address the gender pay gap in relation to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

In Romania, specific measures addressing the gender pay gap for rural and farm female innovators and entrepreneurs are not explicitly targeted. However, broader



policies and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality, rural development, and entrepreneurship can indirectly contribute to narrowing the gender pay gap in these sectors - see other sections.

**Q. 4.2: Do gender equality issues exist in relation to government pension schemes and rural and/or farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural and farm female innovators and entrepreneurs may face barriers in accessing social protection programs, including pension schemes, due to factors such as limited awareness, administrative hurdles, and geographical isolation. Lack of access to formal social security mechanisms can exacerbate gender inequalities in retirement income and financial security.

Gender inequalities intersect with other forms of disadvantage, including age, disability, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, further marginalizing certain groups of rural women and limiting their access to pension benefits and social protection.

In rural areas, women may be more likely to engage in informal or unpaid work, including subsistence farming, caregiving, and household chores (see section about CAP/NSP). Informal employment may not be covered by formal pension schemes, leaving many rural women without adequate pension coverage or eligibility for benefits based on their work contributions.

**Q. 4.3a: Are maternity leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

**Q. 4.3b: Do the partners of rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs have entitlements to maternity leave benefits?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

In Romania, maternity leave benefits are available to all employed women (or in forms of tertiary education), including rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs. The relevant legislation governing maternity leave benefits is Law No. 66/2016 on the Statute of the National Social Insurance Budget. Pregnant women are entitled to a maternity leave of 126 calendar days (18 weeks) for one child, during which, women receive maternity allowance, which is calculated as a percentage of their average gross income earned in the six months prior to the start of maternity leave. Throughout



maternity leave, women maintain their health insurance coverage, ensuring access to medical care for themselves and their newborns. Following maternity leave, women have the right to return to their previous position or an equivalent one, with the same working conditions and salary as before the leave. Employers are obligated to reinstate women to their former positions upon their return from maternity leave.

Fathers (same sex parenting not yet legal in Romania) are granted 5 working days of paid paternity leave, with an additional 2 calendar days if they meet specific conditions of paternity recognition. Furthermore, fathers who have completed childcare courses can extend their leave by 10 working days. In cases of maternal death during childbirth or maternity leave, fathers are entitled to the remaining leave, and provisions ensure financial support during this period. This progressive legislation not only promotes gender equality in caregiving responsibilities but also acknowledges the importance of paternal involvement in child-rearing.

**Q. 4.4: Are parental leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

In Romania, parental leave benefits are available to both mothers and fathers, including rural women. Parental leave is regulated by Law No. 66/2016 on the Statute of the National Social Insurance Budget and stipulates that parental leave can be taken until the child reaches the age of 2 years old. The total duration of parental leave can vary depending on the parents' choice of distribution between the mother and the father. During parental leave, parents may receive a parental allowance. This allowance is calculated based on a percentage of the average gross income earned by the parent in the six months preceding the start of parental leave. Throughout parental leave, parents maintain their health insurance coverage, ensuring access to medical care for themselves and their child. Similar to maternity leave, parents are protected against dismissal by their employers during parental leave. Dismissal during this period is prohibited except in exceptional circumstances unrelated to parental leave. After the parental leave period ends, parents have the right to return to their previous position or an equivalent one, with the same working conditions and salary as before the leave. It's important to note that while these provisions apply to both employed and self-employed parents, including rural women engaged in farming activities, self-employed individuals may have different arrangements for parental leave benefits compared to employed individuals under the national social insurance system.



**Q. 4.5: Is childcare availability and cost in rural areas an issue in your country?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

In rural areas of Romania, childcare availability and cost can vary significantly depending on factors such as location, infrastructure, and socioeconomic conditions. Generally, childcare options are more limited compared to urban areas, and the cost of childcare services relative to average income can pose challenges for families, especially those with lower incomes (more numerous in rural areas than in the urban ones). In some rural areas, access to formal childcare facilities such as nurseries, kindergartens, and daycare centres may be limited due to a lower population density and fewer resources allocated for childcare infrastructure. This limited availability can result in long waiting lists for childcare placements, leaving many families without access to formal childcare services. While some public childcare facilities may offer subsidized or low-cost options, private childcare centres tend to have higher fees. The cost of childcare services, even if subsidized, may still represent a significant portion of a family's income, making it difficult for some families to afford childcare while balancing other expenses. The number of available childcare places in rural areas do not always meet the demand, leading to a shortage of spots for children in need of childcare services. This shortage can exacerbate the challenges faced by families, particularly those with parents working or seeking employment, as they may struggle to secure reliable childcare arrangements.

**Q. 4.6: Do other supports exist in your country that can assist rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs achieve work-life balance? e.g. farm relief schemes, supports for businesses towards employment costs**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

There are government subsidies and financial assistance programs aimed at helping rural families afford childcare, thus assisting women entrepreneurs in balancing work and family responsibilities. One example of such a program is the State Aid for Child-Rearing Allowance (AJUTO). The State Allowance for Raising Children (AJUTO) in Romania, governed by Law No. 61/1993, provides financial assistance to families, particularly those in rural areas, for the upbringing and care of children. Eligibility is based on factors such as household income and the number of children, with applications processed through designated government agencies. The allowance amount varies and is typically paid monthly, supporting families in covering various child-related expenses such as food, clothing, education, and healthcare. AJUTO significantly alleviates economic burdens on rural families, ensuring adequate support for children in these communities.



## **PART 5: OTHER AND WIDER INITIATIVES**

**Q. 5.1: Access to finance (e.g. grants, business loans) is a key resource issue for women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. Beyond the finance support measures already discussed in the sections above, are there others important to supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 5.2: Do specific gender quality policies and/or laws exist in your country and have a focus on women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 5.3: Are there other wider government-led initiatives and/or non-government initiatives in your country that show significant promise in addressing key challenges facing women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas that could provide models for future policy measures and/or laws?**

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Romanian Women's Lobby and the Center for the Advancement of Women in Rural Areas (CAFAR) implement programs and advocacy campaigns to address gender disparities in rural areas and support women's participation in agricultural innovation and entrepreneurship.

Several EU-funded projects in Romania focus on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in rural development, offering funding, training, and networking opportunities for women-led initiatives in agriculture and rural entrepreneurship. One example of an EU-funded project in Romania that focuses on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in rural development is the "Enhancing Women's Participation in Rural Development" project. This project provides funding and support for women-led initiatives in agriculture and rural entrepreneurship, including training programs, access to finance, and networking opportunities. Another example is the "Rural Women's Empowerment Program," which aims to strengthen the capacity of rural women to engage in agricultural activities and entrepreneurial ventures through training, mentorship, and access to markets.

**Q. 5.4: This section provides space to add any other information on policy and law in your country that is important to include in our assessment and has not been covered already in this questionnaire (e.g. related to gender quality or specific areas such as finance, education, health, employment etc.)**

Gender impact assessment and gender budgeting: There is no legal obligation to undertake an ex-ante gender impact assessment when drafting laws or policies and gender budgeting is in its foundational stages. While gender budgeting is defined in the amended Gender Equality Law 2002, there is no obligation to implement it.





Moreover, there is also a project (info for 2022) called 'Gender Budgeting in Public Policies' (Bugetarea pe baza de Gen In Politicile Publice) which is one of the first attempts to introduce the concept of gender budgeting. However, the project only operates at the regional level in several counties and targets non-governmental organisations, not regional authorities.

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#### **FURTHER RESOURCES**

- <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/65/MS%20Inputs%20Review%20Theme/Romania.pdf>
- <https://www.moreproject.eu/index.php?lang=EN>



## SLOVENIA

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**National reporters:** Marija Brodnik Lodewijk, Marjeta Jerič, Sonja Gostiša (all Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food) by interview and e-mail; Andreja Krt (Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia) by interview

### GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Slovenia is a parliamentary republic. The National Assembly is the main legislative body, consisting of 90 members elected for four-year terms. The President of the Republic is the head of state. The Prime Minister is the head of government, leading the executive branch. Slovenia is divided into 212 municipalities, which are the primary local government units. The country also has 12 statistical regions used for administrative and statistical purposes. Slovenia has centralised legislative framework. While municipalities manage local issues, they operate within the framework of national laws.

### WIDER NATIONAL CONTEXT ISSUES

The Constitution of Slovenia guarantees equality before the law, prohibiting discrimination based on gender. The Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act ensures gender equality in various spheres, including employment, education, and social services. Law stipulates that all ministries must appoint a coordinator responsible for integrating gender perspectives into measures and policies. In addition to the government and ministries, self-governing local communities – municipalities are also obliged to promote and create equal opportunities. To facilitate these tasks, the law allows municipalities to appoint a coordinator as well. The Office for Equal Opportunities coordinates and monitors the implementation of gender equality policies. The Office reports to the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The Advocate of the Principle of Equality is an independent body that handles complaints and promotes non-discrimination.

## PART 1: POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN FARMING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### 1A: GENERAL CONTEXT

**Q. 1A.1: In your country, is there a commitment to gender mainstreaming, or other method of gender equality assessment (e.g. benchmarking) of all key rural and/or farm policies?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_ To some extent X



Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_ To some extent X

Not specifically to rural or farm policies, but **there is commitment to gender equality in all policies**. In Slovenia, Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (Zakon o enakih ..., 2019) stipulates that all ministries must appoint a coordinator responsible for integrating gender perspectives into measures and policies. In addition to the government and ministries, self-governing local communities are also obliged to promote and create equal opportunities. To facilitate these tasks, the law allows municipalities to appoint a coordinator as well.

Gender policies in Slovenia mainly, but not exclusively, reports to the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities with Equal Opportunitie Sector serving as the central national mechanism for the advancement of women as part of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (Zakon o enakih ..., 2019) and the strategic document Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. **Key areas** of gender mainstreaming in Slovenia are: labour relations, family relations, social welfare, overcoming gender differences and ensuring equal economic independence for women and men, education, reducing inequalities between women and men and overcoming stereotypical social roles, health, improving women's health and reducing health inequalities between men and women, preventing and combating all forms of violence against women and girls, decision-making positions, promoting a balanced representation of women and men, foreign affairs, promoting gender equality and the realisation of women's rights worldwide (Resolucija o ..., 2023).

In the 2023-2030 Resolution, specific actions target vulnerable groups of women, mentioning women in agriculture and other rural women, who are addressed under **Objective 5: Reduce the gender gap** in the risk of poverty and social exclusion. Two key measures target women in rural areas: Measure 1, a cross-ministerial initiative led by the Ministries of Labour, Agriculture and Culture, involves the implementation of programmes to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion for various vulnerable groups of women, including those in rural areas, with ongoing monitoring of effectiveness; and Measure 3, led by the Ministry of Agriculture, focuses on strengthening the role of women in agriculture and ensuring the enforcement of their rights through projects to promote professional events and events for the transfer of new knowledge and practises in agricultural production and processing (Resolucija o ..., 2023).

**Q. 1A.2: Do official datasets exist in your country showing women's participation in rural and farm innovation and/or the wider farm and rural economy? e.g. those collected regularly by national statistics agency or other relevant state bodies**

Farming: Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

There are available **datasets by gender that focus on agriculture**, which covers aspects such as farm managers by age and gender, family and non-family labour force by gender, organic farmers by gender, agricultural holdings with subsidiary activities by gender of the owner/manager, young successors by gender, etc. (Register of



agricultural holdings, 2023/24). The mentioned data is up-to-date and publicly available on request.

However, when it comes to non-farming innovations, the datasets are disaggregated by gender, but rarely differentiating by rural and urban areas (you can only do so by your own spatial classifications of villages/towns/municipalities). The statistical data are available for migrations, risk of social exclusion by gender and age group (SURS, 2023), pension recipients by gender, forms of discrimination (including discrimination in the workplace (UMAR, 2020), much of the data is from the Gender Equality Index (EIGE, Gender statistics Database 2020).

## **1B: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: EUROPEAN LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AT NATIONAL LEVELS**

### **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**

*CAP 2023-2027 Specific Objective 8 (SO8) references enhancing the position of women in farming and accelerating the social inclusion of rural women – “Promote employment, growth, gender equality, including the participation of women in farming, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including the circular bio-economy and sustainable forestry”.*

**Q. 1B.1: How is the gender equality, including the participation of women in farming aspect, of Objective 8 reflected in the SWOT analysis, identification of needs and intervention logic of the CAP strategic plan in your country?**

Rural women are included in the SWOT analysis, identification of the needs within **Specific Objective 7: Attracting young farmers and promoting the development of businesses in rural areas** and **Specific Objective 8: Promoting employment, growth, social inclusion, and local development in rural areas**, including bioeconomy and sustainable forestry, which is reflected in chapters 2.1.SO7.1 and 2.1.SO8.1, as well as the following needs: Need no. 23 Effective generational rejuvenation of agricultural holdings, Need no. 24 Promoting employment and preserving jobs in rural areas, Need no. 28 Strengthening social inclusion, cooperation, and connectivity of rural residents, as well as in Need no. 27 Improving the quality of life and developing services and infrastructure in rural areas.

Within the interventions of the Slovenian CAP strategic plan 2023-2027 (Strategic goal 2, Strategic goal 7, Strategic goal 8, and Strategic goal 9), where relevant, gender equality is also promoted in the form of criteria for selecting operations (additional points for women, higher education, etc.).



**Q. 1B.2: Does your countries CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

The innovation of rural women **is not specifically promoted** under the Common Agricultural Policy. In Slovenian CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 greater importance is attached to mainly in LEADER and in some agricultural innovations women can receive extra points. See further chapters.

**Q. 1B.3: Does your countries CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Slovenian CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 to some extent include innervations that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming.

In the framework of the selection criteria for applications under **the intervention Support for the establishment of young farmers' businesses**, women receive an additional 3 points (advantage - representing 3.8% of all possible points). Women also receive additional points as part of the selection criteria for applications under the investment interventions. Under the selection criteria for applications under the Investments in increasing productivity and technological development, including the digitization of agricultural holdings, and Investments in climate change adaptation in permanent crops, **women receive additional points**.

The criteria for other interventions, for which support is intended for investments in tangible assets, have not yet been finalized, but women are expected to be supported with additional points in these as well.

**Q. 1B.4: Does your national LEADER Programme directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural women – as a target group with fewer employment opportunities in rural areas – are directly or indirectly represented in the committees of the LAGs (37 LAGs in the 2023-2027) and are addressed in various project activities (Potočnik Slavič et al., 2022). Women and young people in rural areas are encouraged to participate in the



preparation of Local Development Strategies, and they are also involved in the decision-making bodies of the LAGs (can somehow indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas). Once these strategies have been approved, rural women have the opportunity to receive funding for the implementation of projects within their LAGs. Women are included within the selection criteria for the choice of local development strategies in 2 out of 16 points of the criteria.

Within the LEADER measures, one of the aims is an increase in social capital, youth, women, and other vulnerable groups engagement in the local rural area. This is particularly demonstrated through enhanced mutual support and trust, as well as increased collaboration of all stakeholders in the design and implementation of the bottom-up approaches (local actors, governance structures). Consequently, this also contribute to achieving the overall Objective 8 of the CAP (p. 445 CAP SP).

Women were included in the selection criteria for Local development strategies (2 out of 16 criteria points).

**Q. 1B.5: Does your national LEADER Programme indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Women are indirectly addressed through approved Local development strategies. The goal of the LEADER intervention is to promote employment, growth, social inclusion, and local development in rural areas through approved local development strategies in the programming period 2023-2027, aiming to achieve the stated goal through the implementation of operations in LAGs and cooperation operations among various LAGs addressing the needs and challenges in rural areas, such as social inclusion of all rural residents, promoting employment and entrepreneurship in rural areas, developing basic services, improving quality of life, developing minor rural infrastructure, developing the concept of Smart Villages, environmental and climate solutions in rural areas, organic farming, and others. LEADER intervention provides funding for different projects, often (rural tourism, education on farm, ...) women are involved.

**1C: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: COUNTRY LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS**

**RURAL**

**Q. 1C.1: Does your country have a Rural Development Policy(s)?**

Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_



Slovenia is concluding the Rural Development Program 2014-2020, which has been extended until 2022. Projects and support are disbursed until the end of 2025.

Currently Slovenia is implementing the Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027 (CAP SP), which was approved by the European Commission on October 28, 2022. The Slovenian CAP SP is co-financed from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. Based on Slovenian CAP SP, Slovenian Rural Development Programme is prepared. It follows European Union two pillar approach. For the first pillar, which includes direct payments to farmers and market-related expenditures, the EU co-finances €680.3 million, while Slovenia co-finances €3.2 million. This pillar primarily aims to provide income support to farmers, ensuring their income stability and the continuous production of agricultural goods. The second pillar focuses on rural development and is supported by both the EU and national funds. In this pillar, the EU co-finances €550.9 million, and Slovenia contributes €564 million (Strateški načrt SKP..., 2023). This funding is used to improve the competitiveness of agriculture, promote sustainable management of natural resources, and achieve balanced territorial development in rural areas.

For rural areas, the Agricultural Act applies (Official Gazette of the RS, no. 45/08, 57/12, 90/12 – ZdZPVHVVR, 26/14, 32/15, 27/17, 22/18, 86/21 – decision of the US, 123/21, 44/22, 130/22 – ZPOmK-2, 18/23, and 78/23).

In 2020, the strategic framework for the development of Slovenian agriculture, food processing, and rural areas was adopted called Resolution on the national program on strategic directions for the development of Slovenian agriculture and food »Our food, rural area, and natural resources from 2021« (Official Gazette of the RS, no. 8/20).

**Q. 1C.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

No measures in Slovenian CAP/Slovenian Rural Development Programme in this programming period directly addresses women-led innovation in rural areas. This was also a criticism (comment) of the European Commission - Slovenia's response that within CAP we support women mainly under LEADER and there is commitment to gender equality in all policies and laws in Slovenia.

In the programming period 2007-2014 Slovenia had measures for supporting women exclusively, but it also raised concerns about fairness and equality for all participants.

**Q. 1C.3: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X





Two indirect supports in Slovenian Rural Development Programme/Slovenian CAP are:

- interventions support for the establishment of young farmers' businesses/farms (extra points for women) and
- intervention LEADER/CLLD.

Both already described more in details in the previous section of CAP.

The focus is on spotlighting good stories of women in rural areas rather on extra support (positive selections) for women. The national Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia run a biennial call for innovation - Innovative Young Farmer Award and Young Woman Farmer Award. Both are well promoted events.

**Q. 1C.4: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes  No  To some extent

As part of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (Zakon o enakih ..., 2019) and the strategic document Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. **Resolution on the National Program for Gender Equality 2023–2030** (Official Gazette of the RS, no. 105/23-8772) addresses women in agriculture under:

**ACTION 3: Strengthening the role of women in agriculture** with an emphasis on ensuring the enforcement of women's rights in rural areas by implementing projects that promote the organization of professional events and presentations of activities contributing to the development and preservation of connections, crucial for the transfer of new knowledge and practices in agricultural production and processing. Responsible authority: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. Within this action, activities of two main organisations are supported: Association of Slovenian Rural Youth, with 39 local associations with 3,000 members, and Association of Farming Women of Slovenia, which was founded in 1995 to raise awareness of women's rights and is currently active in 35 associations with 3,000 members.

Cross-ministerial **ACTION 1: Adoption of measures and programs to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion of the most vulnerable groups of women** (women from other cultural backgrounds with language barriers, Roma women, older women, rural women, women with disabilities, women with more complex associated issues, self-employed women in culture, members of the LGBTIQ+ community, etc.), and monitoring the effects of measures to reduce the risk of poverty and social exclusion for women's groups at the highest risk of poverty. Responsible authorities and participants: Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities;



Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food; Ministry of Culture; and program implementers.

The "Resolution on the National Program for Gender Equality 2023-2030 in Slovenia is implemented within several key policy frameworks and strategies. One is Rural Development Programme, which co-operates within the framework of EU CAP. The other policy frameworks and strategies include:

- 1) The **Slovenia's Development Strategy 2030**: it sets overarching goal for sustainable development, including the promotion of social cohesion and equality (Slovenian Development Strategy 2030, 2017).
- 2) **National Employment Strategy and social protection policies**. The National Employment Strategy includes specific measures to promote gender equality in the labour market. This involves encouraging female entrepreneurship, supporting work-life balance initiatives, and reducing the gender pay gap. Social protection policies also address gender disparities, aiming to provide better support for women in various life stages, especially in relation to childcare and elderly care.
- 3) The **National Program for Education** promotes equal access to education and training. It encourages the inclusion of gender perspectives in educational content and supports initiatives that increase female participation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields.
- 4) The **National Health Program** includes measures to ensure gender-sensitive health services. This involves addressing specific needs of women and men, improving access to reproductive health needs of women and men, improving access to reproductive health services, and promoting mental health awareness across genders.
- 5) **Local government policies** can implement gender equality measures as part of their development plans. Usually, they are focused on increasing female participation in local governance and decision-making.

**Q. 1C.5: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes  No  To some extent

In strengthening social inclusion, poverty alleviation, and ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment in rural areas, there are sought synergies with other ESI funds (primarily ESF+ and ERDF) at the level of the entire Republic of Slovenia (p. 445 CAP SP).

ERDF funds, through the implementation of CLLD, are intended for building an inclusive society and further comprehensive socio-economic development in urban and rural areas, with particular attention to reducing disparities among socially and economically disadvantaged individuals and areas. Synergies between EAFRD and



EMFF exist regarding the goal of EMFF (Enhancing community vitality by increasing social inclusion, attracting women and youth, and preserving and creating new jobs in fisheries and aquaculture) and in addressing two Slovenian CAP strategic plan needs for 2023–2027, primarily in providing basic services in the selected area, creating jobs, improving quality of life, promoting employment and entrepreneurship in rural areas.

We should mention also **the national Rural Network** – has an important communication role between all partners and the local environment in relation to rural development. The Rural Network also contributes to the promotion of innovation, more particular in connection with the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) operational groups in the field of agricultural productivity. Crucial objectives of national Rural Network are:

- contribute to informing the public and potential beneficiaries about the funding opportunities;
- contribute to improving the quality of implementation of the CAP Strategic Plans 2023-2027;
- **Promote innovation in agriculture and rural development** and support mutual learning, involvement and cooperation of all stakeholders in knowledge sharing and acquisition;
- contribute to monitoring and evaluation capacities and activities and contribute to the dissemination of the results of the CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027;

## FARMING

**Q. 1C.6: Beyond the CAP Strategic Plan, does your country have a core Farming Development Policy (s)?** *e.g. agri-food sector policy (note: sub-sector policies can be dealt with in the last question included in this section below)*

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

It is shaped by Agricultural Act (Official Gazette of the RS, no. 45/08, 57/12, 90/12 – ZdZPVHVVR, 26/14, 32/15, 27/17, 22/18, 86/21 – decision of the US, 123/21, 44/22, 130/22 – ZPOmK-2, 18/23, and 78/23) and the strategic framework for the development of Slovenian agriculture, food processing, and rural areas: Resolution on the national program on strategic directions for the development of Slovenian agriculture and food »Our food, rural area, and natural resources from 2021« (Official Gazette of the RS, no. 8/20).

**Q. 1C.7: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

No, but in the previous programming period (2007-2014) of the CAP, Slovenian implemented some additional measures that focused on promoting gender equality,



particularly supporting women in rural areas. This included an additional scoring system on tenders that provided extra points for applications from women. However, this additional scoring system was perceived as discriminatory by some, as it gave preferential treatment to women over other applicants. This approach was intended to address the underrepresentation and unique challenges faced by women in rural areas, but it also raised concerns about fairness and equity for all participants, regardless of gender, so it was cancelled in the next programming periods (an interview Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia).

**Q. 1C.8: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

In 2019, the **Rural Women's Council was established** within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food as an advisory body to the Minister. They shape opinions on important decisions regarding the provision of women's roles in rural areas. The Council consists of three members of the Association of Farming Women, three members of the Association of Slovenian Rural Youth, two members of the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia, one researcher, one representative of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, two representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food and one representative of the Ministry of Finance (KGZS ..., 2019).

The role of Rural Women's Council in practice is questionable. They were set up with the purpose to strengthen inter-institutional co-operation, to raise awareness of the problems of women in rural areas and other issues etc. in last five years their work and role is not recognised.

**Q. 1C.9: Do laws governing farm ownership include any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm ownership?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

No specific laws that exclusively address gender equality in farm ownership. The prevailing practice on Slovenian farms is still that if there is a male successor, he will take over the farm. However, among young farmers, the share of female farm manager/holders is 17,6 % (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, 2023).

**Q. 1C.10: Do other policy(s) or law (s) exist in your country that facilitate improved gender equality in relation to running the farm business?**

Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

In the framework of the selection criteria for applications under the Slovenian CAP intervention Support for the establishment of young farmers' businesses, women receive an additional 3 points, representing 3.8% of all possible points. With this



intervention, new women farm ownership was supported (from previous programming period).

**Q. 1C.11: Do laws governing farm transfer and inheritance have any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm inheritance?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

No laws governing the farm transfer and inheritance in the direction to support gender equality. The prevailing practice on Slovenian farms is still that if there is a male successor, he will inheritance the farm.

**Q. 1C.12: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Relevant policies were mentioned in previous chapters.

**Q. 1C.13: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming? e.g. organic farming, horticulture, agri-tourism, care/social farming**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Resolution on the national program on strategic directions for the development of Slovenian agriculture and food "Our food, countryside, and natural resources from 2021" (Official Gazette of the RS, no. 8/20). Women are addressed within the specific objective C.4 Social inclusion, rural women, and care for vulnerable groups.

The normative regulation of subsidiary activities on the farm (Regulation on subsidiary activities on the farm, 2015 (Official Gazette of the RS, 57/15, 36/18 in 151/22)), some of which are primarily carried out by women, provide social security, work at home and possibility that women run their own part of the (farm) business. But the Regulation do not address innovation, at least in part, innovation is recognised and "promoted" by agricultural advisors (working on the field).

## **PART 2: OTHER POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS SUPPORTING WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS**

### **2A: INNOVATION**

**Q. 2A.1: Do specific, targeted policy (s) exist in your country related to women-led innovation? e.g. in areas such as enterprise, research and development**

Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_



Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, together with the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, leads a **programme to promote women's entrepreneurship**. The initiative is primarily aimed at women who have been unemployed for at least three months, have a higher education, have a convincing business idea and want to start their own business. The programme, which consists of a two-month entrepreneurship training course and a grant of EUR 3.000-5.000 for self-employment, helped more than 1000 women to become self-employed already. Although the geographical preferences were not explicitly stated, the overall aim was to inspire women from different backgrounds, possibly also in rural areas, to become entrepreneurs.

The Employment Service of the Republic of Slovenia also offers annual support for "Green Jobs". The purpose of the job incentives is to contribute to greening the economy, strengthening efforts to use energy and resources more efficiently and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, these incentives reduce the number of unemployed. It subsidises employment to the value of EUR 680 per month, targeted at the unemployed. It is not specifically targeted at women, unfortunately farmers are not eligible.

**Q. 2A.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included specifically related to farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 2A.3: Does innovation policy in your country focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?** *e.g. innovation policy could mean policies supporting business innovation, research and innovation and more specific areas such as ecological, technological and digital innovation*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Even the Resolution on Slovenia's Science Research and Innovation Strategy 2030 (2022) specifically addresses these areas in only one point:

- nurturing the next generation of top scientists, including measures to launch independent careers, while encouraging the development of different career paths, with particular attention to the careers of women researchers;

The content itself does not address women's innovation, even less so in agriculture and rural areas.

**Q. 2A.4: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**



Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 2A.5: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas? e.g. perhaps those related to areas such as social enterprise, rural tourism, creative industries**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

## **2B: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND NETWORKS**

**Q. 2B.1: Are there policy (s) in your country that directly support women in rural areas and/or farming to access further education and training?**

Farming: Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

As part of the Slovenian CAP intervention "Support for the Establishment of Young Farmers' Farms," eligible individuals (female and male) are required to undergo training in farm management and financial skills. Additionally, they can also choose to be educated in the following areas: digitization in agriculture and the adoption of new technologies, entrepreneurship, adaptation to and mitigation of the impacts of climate change, animal and plant health, preservation of natural resources and biodiversity, farm relationships – intergenerational cooperation and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

However, research suggest that agricultural advisory service in Slovenia treats female farmers as secondary actors in agriculture, neglecting to afford them the same level of attention in educational programs as men, who are traditionally viewed as the primary figures in farming (Istenič, Charatsari, 2017).

**Q. 2B.2: Are there mentoring/peer to peer learning programmes in your country that focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_ X

Within **project TERA** (<https://projekt-tera.si/en/project-tera/>) 40 mentors were selected from the network of existing members of Association of Young Farmers and Association of Rural Women, who will form 20 mentoring pairs. Mentor pairs will work



in 20 different local environments, which will be spread across all regions of Slovenia. The mentors have passed the training for members of the mentoring scheme, and until the end of January 2024, they will conduct workshops based on the TERA educational program throughout Slovenia. In addition to offering workshops, mentors will be available for additional individual monitoring, counselling and mentoring of people, with the aim of improving the coordination of professional and private lives of people living in rural areas.

**Q. 2B.3: Are there networking programmes in your country focused directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Association of Farming Women of Slovenia organize different educational workshops, seminars, excursions, etc. They also organize social events (e.g. the annual national games of rural women), competition for the title of "Female Farmer of the Year" organised by the agricultural newspaper Kmečki glas in cooperation with the local association of women farmers, endeavour to preserve rural communities and cultural heritage (e.g. with traditional food events) and raise awareness of issues such as violence, cancer, mental health, etc. through various project activities. Challenges include the non-professional (voluntary) structure of the organisation, the ageing of its members and the lack of interest among younger generations, as well as the shift away from agriculture (Rac et al., 2022). The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food co-finances the activities. In 2023, a budget of €144,000 is available for rural women's associations. This is about half of the annual budget of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food for the co-financing of non-profit organisations in rural areas, which is distributed annually through three public tenders (Sedmo periodično poročilo ..., 2021).

**Q. 2B.4: Are there other education, training, mentoring and networking programmes, or other education-related supports, in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Every year, the Agribusiness Conference takes place, which promotes entrepreneurship and innovation in agriculture and the food processing industry. It is organized by the newspaper Finance, but also supported by ministry. This year's theme was Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Agriculture. Many women participate in it and are part of their visibility campaign.





Across various research and applied projects, national and international projects, supported by different ministries, Sector for Equal Opportunities at the Ministry of Labor, Family, and Social Affairs or European Commission, different activities are implemented. In this projects, different universities, research institutes, development agencies, agricultural schools, NGOs, associations, etc. participate. One project for women empowering is project TERA (Balancing professional and private life in the countryside) developed educational programme and mentoring scheme. Every year, also Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities finance 5-7 national projects about gender equality.

### PART 3: EMPOWERMENT

**Q. 3.1: Do measures exist in your country that support women's representation and participation in local, regional, and/or national decision-making?** *e.g. at the political level, in rural and/or farming organisations, participation in policy monitoring and development.*

Yes  No  To some extent

Slovenia has implemented various measures to support women's representation and participation in decision-making at the local, regional, and national levels. Some of these measures include 1) quotes: Slovenia has introduced gender quotas in electoral lists for parliamentary and local elections in 2004 to ensure a minimum representation of women in decision-making bodies; 2) Gender Equality Plans: Organizations, including governmental institutions and political parties, are encouraged to develop and implement gender equality plans to promote women's participation in decision-making processes; 3) Different awareness campaigns to promote women's participation in decision-making and to challenge stereotypes and biases; 4) Programs are organized to provide training and capacity-building opportunities for women interested in pursuing leadership roles in politics and public administration; 5) Various policies and initiatives are in place to support work-life balance, childcare facilities, and flexible working arrangements, which can facilitate women's participation in decision-making while balancing their family responsibilities.

**Slovenian Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry (KGZS):** they providing education (different topics) for rural women and youth - focused support for these two groups/organisations than for other organisations. They are given extra care, as a group that needs extra attention, extra help. Considered as a "sensitive vulnerable group" - rural youth have made great progress, but there are big differences in the cooperation with of rural women. Problems linked to generational transition (fewer young women involved, participating, more individualism is noticed).

**Q. 3.2: Do measures exist in your country that work to protect against and/or combat harassment (online or otherwise) and violence against women in public life?**

Yes  No  To some extent



Laws pertaining to the protection against and combatting of harassment and violence against women in public life include:

1. Prevention of Family Violence Law (Zakon o preprečevanju nasilja v družini): This law addresses various forms of violence within families, including domestic violence against women, and provides measures for the protection of victims.
2. Criminal Code (Kazenski zakonik): The Criminal Law contains provisions that criminalize acts of violence, including physical, sexual, and psychological violence, as well as harassment and stalking. These provisions apply to both offline and online environments.
3. Gender Equality Law (Zakon o enakosti spolov): While not specifically focused on violence and harassment, this law promotes gender equality in all areas of life, including in public and private spheres, and provides a legal basis for addressing gender-based discrimination and inequalities.

The result of project »Rural powerlessness« - neMOČ podeželja (<https://zspm.si/nemoc-podezelja/>) should be mentioned. The project aimed to increase knowledge of mental health on farms and to raise awareness among individuals about the importance of mental health for the quality of life on farms and beyond. They want to broaden individual perceptions of its importance and empower young people to identify different mental health problems and ways of coping with them.

After the project was completed, **the Slovenian Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry (KGZS) set up an integrated support service for farmers** in 2023, and an additional person was provided to provide psychosocial support for farmers. They note that women are more likely to seek help. The support for farmers will be implemented until the end of 2024. It is currently being implemented in the form of a public procurement, but "in the future, we will strive to make this type of advice a permanent feature, as it has already become clear in the first three months of the advice that there is a great need for it.

**Q. 3.3: Do measures exist in your country that aim to increase the visibility of women-led innovation in rural areas and/or farming?** *e.g. programmes that aim to improve recognition of rural and farm women-led innovation and challenge gender stereotypes such as around traditional gender roles.*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

**Association of Rural Women of Slovenia awards** its members with the title of "Female farmer/rural women of the Year" every year during the celebration of World Rural Women's Day.



Every year, the **Agribusiness Conference** takes place, aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and innovation in agriculture and the food processing industry. It is organized by the newspaper Finance. This year's theme was Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Agriculture. Women are also among the recipients of awards every year.

Also, within different projects the visibility of women-led innovation in rural areas and farming is stimulated.

#### **PART 4: PAY, PENSION, WORK-LIFE AND FAMILY**

##### **Q. 4.1: Do measures exist in your country that address the gender pay gap in relation to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Slovenia has laws in place prohibiting gender-based pay discrimination. These laws aim to ensure that women receive equal pay for equal work. Organizations, including agricultural and rural development agencies, are encouraged to develop and implement gender equality plans that address various aspects of gender equality, including pay equity.

Public services have regulated and harmonised pay, and there are no gender differences. But there are differences in the private sector and the business sector.

##### **Q. 4.2: Do gender equality issues exist in relation to government pension schemes and rural and/or farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

In the past, social security on farms was limited to one member, while others had only health insurance. This was a significant issue, but it has been eradicated today.

Farm insurance is now somewhat more favourable compared to others, with lower contributions for health and pension insurance for farm workers. This means that farm workers pay lower contributions than other employees.

However, despite these improvements, farm insurance holders still do not have the right to unemployment benefits. This limitation remains and is something that could be the subject of further efforts to improve social security conditions in rural areas.



**Q. 4.3a: Are maternity leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Slovenia introduced the option of sharing parental leave between parents as early as 1976, making it the second country in Europe to do so. Additionally, Slovenia was the first country to introduce one-year parental leave in 1986 and also the first to provide 100 percent salary compensation for this leave.

From the perspective of parental care, there are maternity, paternity, and parental leaves, maternity, paternity, and parental benefits, the right to reduced working hours, and entitlement to social security contribution payments due to parenthood, as well as entitlement to social security contribution payments in the case of four or more children. All these benefits are available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs.

Maternity leave is intended for mothers and lasts for 105 days in the form of full absence from work, including 15 mandatory days. It begins 28 days before the expected due date, except in the case of premature birth. By submitting an application for the entitlements upon the birth of a child, the mother claims the right to maternity leave and maternity benefits, the right to parental leave and parental benefits, extended parental leave, and the right to childbirth assistance if not claimed by the father (MDDSZ 2022). Parental leave is intended for both the mother and father, lasting 130 days for each parent (a total of 260 days) in the form of full or partial absence from work. The mother can transfer 100 days of parental leave to the father, while 30 days are non-transferable and can only be used by her (the father can generally use a maximum of 230 days, exceptionally all 260 days). The father can transfer 130 days of parental leave to the mother (the mother can use all 260 days). In the case of the birth of twins or more children, premature infants, or children in need of special care, parental leave is extended. A portion of parental leave lasting up to 75 days per parent can be transferred and used until the child completes the first grade of elementary school (MDDSZ 2022).

**Q. 4.3b: Do the partners of rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs have entitlements to maternity leave benefits?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Paternity leave is intended for fathers and lasts for 30 calendar days. The father must use at least 15 calendar days from the birth of the child until one month after the end of parental leave/parental allowance, and the remainder up to 30 days at any time until



the completion of the child's first grade of elementary school. Other individuals who actually care for and protect the child after its birth are also entitled to paternity leave (another person and the mother's spouse, unmarried partner, or registered partner of the same-sex civil partnership, as well as the spouse, unmarried partner, or partner of the same-sex civil partnership of the person benefiting from maternity leave). In the case of the simultaneous birth of twins or more live-born children, paternity leave for the second or subsequent child is extended by an additional ten days. Paternity leave is also extended for the second or subsequent child in the case of adopting twins or more live-born children or two or more children of different ages until the completion of the first grade of elementary school of the oldest child (MDDSZ 2022).

Parental leave is intended for both the mother and father, lasting 130 days for each parent (a total of 260 days) in the form of full or partial absence from work. The mother can transfer 100 days of parental leave to the father, while 30 days are non-transferable and can only be used by her (the father can generally use a maximum of 230 days, exceptionally all 260 days). The father can transfer 130 days of parental leave to the mother (the mother can use all 260 days). In the case of the birth of twins or more children, premature infants, or children in need of special care, parental leave is extended. A portion of parental leave lasting up to 75 days per parent can be transferred and used until the child completes the first grade of elementary school (MDDSZ 2022).

**Q. 4.4: Are parental leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Yes. Slovenia introduced the option of sharing parental leave between parents as early as 1976, making it the second country in Europe to do so. Additionally, Slovenia was the first country to introduce one-year parental leave in 1986 and also the first to provide 100 percent (full) salary compensation for this leave. All these benefits are available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs.

**Q. 4.5: Is childcare availability and cost in rural areas an issue in your country?**

Yes  No  To some extent

The childcare network in Slovenia is widely spread, even in rural areas. However, research conducted twenty years ago revealed that female farmers underutilize these services, possibly due to the belief that women who do not work outside the home can take care of their children themselves, thus saving on the family budget (Istencič, 2007). Studies in the USA (e.g., Rissing, Andrea., Shoshanah Inwood, and Emily Stengel. 2021) have also shown that a barrier to accessing childcare services is non-standard working hours (afternoons, weekends, etc.) on farms, while daycare centres and



schools operate during standard working hours, which is presumably also the case in Slovenia.

Childcare in Slovenia is subsidized through various mechanisms. Depending on family's income and the number of children the cost of childcare varies (from 0% to 77% of full price of childcare). Parents are divided into 10 income groups. Less than 3% of parents are exempt from paying for services, while the majority of parents pay 35% of the full daycare fee. Second child in childcare institution is for free. Another mechanism for parents is extra childcare allowance (this is received by all parents, no matter if they enrol their children in childcare institutions).

**Q. 4.6: Do other supports exist in your country that can assist rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs achieve work-life balance? e.g. farm relief schemes, supports for businesses towards employment costs**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

For example: Reduced working hours due to parenthood. The right to work part-time due to parenthood is granted to one of the parents who cares for and protects the child, up to the child's third year; one of the parents who cares for and protects a child with moderate or severe physical disabilities or moderate or severe mental disabilities up to the child's 18th year; one of the parents who cares for and protects at least two children up to the completion of the first grade of elementary school for the youngest child, with one year of utilizing the right being non-transferable for each parent (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, no. 64/18).

One of the parents who leaves the labour market to care for and protect four or more children, with whom they share permanent or temporary residence in the Republic of Slovenia, and who has been insured for parental care for at least 12 months in the last three years or has been an active job seeker in accordance with the law regulating the labour market for at least 12 months in the last three years, is entitled to have social security contributions paid in accordance with the seventh paragraph of Article 50 of this Act until the completion of the first grade of elementary school for the youngest child, in accordance with regulations governing primary school (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, no. 64/18).

The problem is that most of these social transfer rights do not belong to rural women if they do not have their disability, pension, and health insurance arranged. Such examples are becoming increasingly rare, but older female farmers/women on farms are still often among them.



## PART 5: OTHER AND WIDER INITIATIVES

**Q. 5.1: Access to finance (e.g. grants, business loans) is a key resource issue for women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. Beyond the finance support measures already discussed in the sections above, are there others important to supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 5.2: Do specific gender quality policies and/or laws exist in your country and have a focus on women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

Already mentioned in previous chapters.

**Q. 5.3: Are there other wider government-led initiatives and/or non-government initiatives in your country that show significant promise in addressing key challenges facing women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas that could provide models for future policy measures and/or laws?**

Every year, the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities co-finances projects of non-governmental organizations that promote equal opportunities for women and men (Enakost žensk in moških, 2024).

Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities is granting public interest status in the realm of gender equality dictates that a non-governmental organization (NGO) is bestowed with this designation upon meeting the specified criteria; and is supporting around 5-7 projects each year (Enakost žensk in moških, 2024).

**Q. 5.4: This section provides space to add any other information on policy and law in your country that is important to include in our assessment and has not been covered already in this questionnaire (e.g. related to gender quality or specific areas such as finance, education, health, employment etc.)**

The Framework for designing the gender Equality implementation plan at Faculty of Arts, university of Ljubljana (our institution); <https://www.ff.uni-lj.si/en/node/59812>

At the September CoP meeting in Slovenia, we plan to present the professional and scientific activities in the field of gender equality at our Faculty.



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## SPAIN

**Assessment by:** Patrizio Ricci and Víctor Ricardo Martínez, Consulta Europa

### GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Spain's governance structure is decentralized, with significant autonomy granted to its 17 autonomous communities. This federal-like system allows regional governments to tailor agricultural and rural policies to local needs. National policies, such as those guided by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), are harmonized with EU directives, ensuring coherence across regions. This decentralization facilitates diverse and region-specific agricultural development strategies, though it also requires robust coordination to maintain consistency and equity in policy implementation across the country.

## PART 1: POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN FARMING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### 1A: GENERAL CONTEXT

**Q. 1A.1: In your country, is there a commitment to gender mainstreaming, or other method of gender equality assessment (e.g. benchmarking) of all key rural and/or farm policies?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Spain's dedication to gender mainstreaming in agriculture and rural development is key in its national Rural Development Program. The program is designed to directly and indirectly support women-led innovations in farming and rural areas, addressing gender inequalities and promoting inclusive growth. The commitment to gender mainstreaming and equality assessment in Spain is implemented through various mechanisms, including:

- Integration of gender perspectives in policy and strategic planning.
- Implementation of targeted initiatives aimed at closing gender gaps.
- Evaluation of policies' impacts on gender equality to ensure continuous improvement and alignment with national and European goals.

Relevant policies and laws in the Spanish system that reflect the commitment to gender equality in rural and farm policies include:



- **The Spanish National Rural Development Program (NRDP):** Part of the broader CAP framework, the NRDP includes specific measures aimed at promoting gender equality and women's participation in rural economies. These measures are designed to support women's entrepreneurship, access to training and education, and participation in decision-making bodies.
- **The Law for Sustainable Rural Development:** This law addresses the overall framework for rural development, including provisions that focus on promoting gender equality and empowering women in rural areas. It acknowledges the critical role of women in rural development and seeks to support their innovation and leadership in the agricultural sector.
- **The Strategic Plan for Gender Equality:** This national plan outlines Spain's commitment to gender equality across various sectors, including agriculture and rural development. It includes specific objectives and actions aimed at reducing gender gaps in the labor market, enhancing women's entrepreneurship, and ensuring equal participation in decision-making processes.
- **The Organic Law for Effective Equality between Women and Men:** Although not exclusively focused on rural or farm policies, this law provides a comprehensive legal framework for promoting gender equality and challenging differences across all sectors in Spain. It sets out principles and measures that are also applicable to the agricultural sector, ensuring that gender mainstreaming is an integral part of policy development and implementation.

**Q. 1A.2: Do official datasets exist in your country showing women's participation in rural and farm innovation and/or the wider farm and rural economy? e.g. those collected regularly by national statistics agency or other relevant state bodies**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

The primary source of such data is the **Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE)**, which conducts various surveys and compiles statistics relevant to the agricultural sector and rural areas, including gender-disaggregated data.

Some of the key datasets and sources that provide information on women's participation in rural and farm innovation and the wider rural economy include:

- **Agricultural Census and Surveys:** Conducted every ten years, with the most recent in 2020, the Agricultural Census provides comprehensive data on agricultural holdings, including information on the gender of the holders. It offers insights into women's ownership and management of agricultural land and participation in agricultural activities.



- **Survey on the Structure of Agricultural Holdings:** Conducted between Agricultural Censuses, this survey provides updated information on the structure of farms, including the gender of farm managers and labor force participation, allowing for the analysis of trends in women's participation over time.
- **Labour Force Survey (Encuesta de Población Activa - EPA):** This quarterly survey includes data on employment and unemployment rates by sector, including agriculture, disaggregated by gender. It provides insights into women's participation in the rural labor market and their employment status.
- **Rural Development Programs (RDPs) Monitoring and Evaluation Reports:** These reports, part of the CAP framework, include data on the implementation of specific measures aimed at promoting gender equality and women's participation in rural development initiatives. They offer insights into the impact of these measures on women's empowerment and innovation in rural areas.

## **1B: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: EUROPEAN LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AT NATIONAL LEVELS**

### **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**

*CAP 2023-2027 Specific Objective 8 (SO8) references enhancing the position of women in farming and accelerating the social inclusion of rural women – “Promote employment, growth, gender equality, including the participation of women in farming, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including the circular bio-economy and sustainable forestry”.*

**Q. 1B.1: How is the gender equality, including the participation of women in farming aspect, of Objective 8 reflected in the SWOT analysis, identification of needs and intervention logic of the CAP strategic plan in your country?**

The integration of gender equality and the participation of women in farming within the framework of Specific Objective 8 (SO8) of the CAP 2023-2027 in Spain is reflected through a detailed SWOT analysis conducted as part of the CAP strategic planning. This analysis, as presented at the 7th Meeting of the Permanent Subgroup on LEADER and Community-Led Local Development in Brussels on 4 February 2020, provides insights into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to rural development and the inclusion of gender perspectives.

#### **SWOT Analysis Results from the Spanish Delegation in 2020:**

##### **Strengths:**



- Extensive experience of Spanish Local Action Groups (LAGs) in managing rural development projects.
- Active role of LAG networks, which increases governance and social capital.
- The flexibility of LEADER measures tailored to local specificities promotes the economic diversification of rural environments.
- High support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) encourages entrepreneurship, job creation, and job consolidation.
- The added value of participatory methodologies in engaging communities.

**Weaknesses:**

- Difficulties in cooperation among regions/countries.
- Increasing complexity of administrative procedures.
- **Low presence of women in decision-making bodies**, highlighting a gender gap in leadership roles within rural development projects.
- Evaluation tools not effectively showing the real added value of gender-sensitive approaches.
- Difficulties in implementing multi-fund attempts to support integrated local development strategies.

**Opportunities:**

- Multi-funded options for more integrated Local Development Strategies (LDS).
- Experience in some Autonomous Communities with the Simplified Cost Option for LEADER, offering potential models for reducing administrative burdens.
- Potential synergies with territorial policies through addressing the demographic challenge, which could enhance gender equality and social inclusion.

**Threats:**

- Lack of a clear legal form for LAGs at a national level, complicating their relationship with the administration and the application of legislation.
- A prolonged transition between programming periods that jeopardizes the continuity of revitalization processes.
- Depopulation and the challenge of low and dispersed populations, which put at risk local revitalization efforts and could disproportionately affect women in rural areas.



The SWOT analysis reflects a critical understanding of the role of gender equality in rural development, highlighting the **low presence of women in decision-making bodies** as a significant weakness. This insight directly impacts the CAP strategic plan's intervention logic, necessitating focused measures to enhance women's participation in leadership roles within the agricultural sector and rural development initiatives.

To address these needs, the CAP strategic plan in Spain incorporate targeted interventions aimed at promoting gender equality. This will include training and mentorship programs for women, initiatives to increase women's access to resources and decision-making platforms, and efforts to streamline administrative processes to be more inclusive of women-led projects.

**Q. 1B.2: Does your countries CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

The CAP strategic plan highlights an approach towards social sustainability, including direct support for women in agriculture. The Key intervention are:

- **Gender Balance Approach in Financial Aid:**

Spain's CAP Strategic Plan for the coming years seek a gender balance approach in the allocation of financial aid, marking a significant step toward cultivating an equitable agricultural landscape. This approach provides additional financial resources specifically for women who are looking for new agricultural ventures. With this financial boost, the goal is to eliminate the barriers that have traditionally kept women on the fringes of the agricultural sector.

The strength of this approach is its capacity to address directly the financial obstacles that women encounter in agriculture, thereby providing lifeline to kick-start or develop enterprises under female leadership. Nonetheless, while the infusion of capital is a cornerstone of this strategy, it is recognized that financial support is but one element of a larger picture. To cultivate a sustainable ecosystem of women-led agricultural enterprises, there is a need to pair this financial support with comprehensive assistance—ensuring women can not only access the financial means but also the land, knowledge, and market opportunities needed to grow and flourish.

- **Coordination with Other EU Funding Sources:**

Spain's CAP Strategic Plan has a harmonized focus on aligning with other European Union funding sources, such as the **Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)**. This collaborative strategy is to boost local development in rural areas, with an eye on fostering employment



opportunities, especially for women and those in less advantaged regions. The Plan aims to construct a solid foundation of support that link together financial assistance with the necessary infrastructure, technological advancements, and educational opportunities through the use of EU funds.

**Q. 1B.3: Does your countries CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Spain's CAP Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 indeed includes interventions that could indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas, although they may not be explicitly designed exclusively for women. These interventions form part of a broader strategy aimed at enhancing the socio-economic fabric of rural areas, promoting sustainability, and addressing the specific needs of the agricultural sector. Here are the indirectly interventions from the plan:

- **Investments in Farm Modernization and Development:** More than **EUR 1.82 billion** is allocated to investments in farm modernization, processing, marketing, and development of agricultural products and infrastructures. While not exclusively targeted at women, these investments indirectly benefit women-led enterprises by providing them with access to new technologies and processes that could enhance their competitive edge.
- **Promotion of Producer Groups and Organisations:** The plan includes support for farms to participate in producer groups, producer organizations, local markets, short supply chains, and quality schemes. With **EUR 90 million** allocated, this can indirectly support women-led innovation by helping them to better organize, gain market access, and sustain their operations, which is essential for scaling up and integrating into wider agricultural networks.
- **Knowledge Sharing, Innovation, and Digitalisation:** While the Recovery and Resilience Facility will enhance digital infrastructure, the CAP Strategic Plan aims to ensure farmers and foresters, including women, can capitalize on digital advancements. This can help close the digital skills gap and bring innovative solutions to women in agriculture.

**Q. 1B.4: Does your national LEADER Programme directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

The LEADER Programme in Spain is designed to promote local development strategies that can indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. The programme emphasizes a community-led approach, where Local Action Groups





(LAGs) — comprising public, private, and civil society stakeholders — develop strategies that are tailored to the specific needs of their regions, which can include support for projects led by women. The key strengths of this programme are:

- **Community-Led:** The bottom-up approach of LEADER empowers local communities to identify and support initiatives that can have the most significant local impact, which may include women-led projects.
- **Networking and Cooperation:** LEADER encourages networking and cooperation between different regions and sectors, potentially allowing women entrepreneurs to share best practices and collaborate on larger projects.

While some of the key weaknesses identified are:

- **Indirect Support:** While LEADER can support women-led projects, there is no direct mandate that a certain percentage of funding should go to such projects, which could lead to variability in support across different regions.
- **Bureaucracy and Complexity:** The application process for LEADER funding can be complex, which might discourage some women-led initiatives from applying.

**Q. 1B.5: Does your national LEADER Programme indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

The programme is not exclusively designed for women but operates on the principles of inclusivity and addressing the specific needs of rural communities, which often include promoting gender equality and empowering women.

Key Strengths of Indirect Support Through LEADER:

- **Community Focus:** LEADER initiatives are grounded in the specific needs and strengths of rural communities, which may include support for projects that benefit women or are led by women.
- **Diverse Funding:** LEADER provides funding for a wide range of projects, from agricultural innovation to rural tourism, which women can access to support their initiatives.
- **Capacity Building:** The programme often includes training and networking opportunities, which can indirectly benefit women entrepreneurs by enhancing their skills and connecting them to broader networks.



Key Weaknesses of Indirect Support Through LEADER:

- **Lack of Targeted Measures:** Without targeted measures or quotas, there is no guarantee that women-led projects will receive funding, and support can vary between regions.
- **Complexity of Access:** The application process and criteria for LEADER funding can be complex and time-consuming, which might disproportionately impact smaller, women-led projects with fewer resources.

**1C: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: COUNTRY LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS**

**RURAL**

**Q. 1C.1: Does your country have a Rural Development Policy(s)?**

Yes  No  To some extent

Spain's Rural Development Policy is designed to address the diverse challenges faced by rural areas. This policy is integrated into the broader framework of the **European Union's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**, ensuring alignment with EU-wide objectives. Through the **National Rural Development Program (Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Rural)**, Spain periodically updates and adapts its policies to meet the evolving needs of its rural communities.

At the heart there are several initiatives supported by the CAP. **Economic development** is a primary focus, with measures aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector. This includes supporting the diversification of the rural economy and promoting value-added activities such as agritourism and local food production. In addition to economic development, **environmental sustainability** is a cornerstone of Spain's rural policy under CAP. The policy promotes sustainable land management practices and the preservation of biodiversity. It also invests in actions to combat climate change and mitigate its impacts on rural areas. Through **agri-environmental measures**, farmers are incentivized to adopt practices that conserve the environment and maintain the natural landscape.

A notable aspect of the CAP's is the **LEADER approach**, which empowers local stakeholders by involving them in the development of their communities. This bottom-up method provides funding and support for initiatives led by local action groups, ensuring that development strategies are tailored to local needs and opportunities. Furthermore, the CAP supports **young farmers** with financial aid and training, encouraging generational renewal and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the agricultural sector.



Complementing these CAP-driven initiatives, Spain's national policy addresses broader social challenges to improve the quality of life in rural areas. **Social inclusion** is a key priority, aiming to reverse rural depopulation trends by improving living conditions, providing education and training opportunities, and ensuring access to essential services and infrastructure. This national policy underscores the importance of **social services**, supporting the provision of education, healthcare, and social welfare to combat rural depopulation and enhance social wellbeing.

**Q. 1C.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes  No  To some extent

These measures are part of a comprehensive approach to empower rural communities, improve competitiveness, and promote social inclusion. Those that directly affect women, as part of the Programa Nacional de Desarrollo Rural are:

- **Rural Women's Entrepreneurship Programs:** Initiatives like "Emprendedoras Rurales" or "Programa de Desarrollo Rural" support women's entrepreneurship through training, mentoring, and financial assistance. focusing specifically on women, these programs address the unique challenges they face in starting and running businesses in rural areas. The success of these programs hinges on continuous funding and the ability to adapt to the changing needs of women entrepreneurs.
- **Rural Development Programs with Gender Perspective:** Incorporating a gender perspective into rural development planning can ensure that projects address gender inequalities and support women's economic empowerment.

**Q. 1C.3: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes  No  To some extent

Spain's Rural Development Policy includes several measures that, while not specifically targeted at women, indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas. These measures are designed to improve the overall infrastructure, economic conditions, and sustainability of rural areas, creating an environment where women-led initiatives can thrive.

**Indirect Support Measures Include:**

- **Infrastructure Development:** Investments in rural infrastructure such as transportation, connectivity, and utilities can benefit women-led businesses by improving access to markets and services. The infrastructure can be a game-changer for rural businesses, reducing logistical challenges and costs. projects



can be slow to implement and may not address immediate needs or specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs.

- **Agri-environmental Schemes:** Initiatives that encourage sustainable farming practices and environmental stewardship can indirectly support women who often lead in sustainable and organic farming. Schemes can provide an additional income stream and market differentiation for women-led businesses focusing on sustainability. Certification and compliance with agri-environmental standards can be complex and resource-intensive.
- **Education and Training Initiatives:** Providing education and training opportunities to the broader rural population can indirectly benefit women by enhancing their skills and capabilities. Education is a key driver of empowerment and can help women identify and seize new opportunities. Training programs need to be accessible and relevant to women's realities and time constraints to be effective.

**Examples of Indirect Support:**

- **Rural Development Grants for Innovation:** Grants aimed at fostering innovation in rural areas can indirectly support women who are leading innovative projects.
- **Support for Local Product Promotion:** Initiatives that promote local products and regional branding can benefit women-led businesses that produce artisanal or local specialty products.

While these measures can provide a supportive backdrop for women-led innovation, they may not address all the specific barriers women face.

**Q. 1C.4: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes  No  To some extent

The integration of gender perspectives into rural development and innovation policies is seen as critical for addressing the unique challenges faced by women in rural areas and for leveraging their potential as drivers of rural growth and innovation. Policies and laws:

- **The National Rural Network (Red Rural Nacional):** While not a law, this network promotes rural development projects and initiatives across Spain, including those by or for women. It serves as a platform for sharing best practices, resources, and opportunities for funding, directly supporting women-led innovation through information dissemination and networking.



- **Equality Laws and Gender Mainstreaming in Public Policies:** Spain's commitment to gender equality is reflected in laws such as the Organic Law for Effective Equality between Women and Men (Ley Orgánica para la igualdad efectiva de mujeres y hombres), which mandates gender mainstreaming in all public policies. This legal framework indirectly supports women-led innovation in rural areas by ensuring that gender equality is a consideration in rural development initiatives and funding.
- **Rural Women's Advancement Programs:** Various regions in Spain implement programs specifically aimed at empowering rural women, including support for entrepreneurship and innovation. These programs may include training, mentorship, and financial assistance tailored to the needs of women in rural areas. The regions with the most programs are: Andalucía, Castilla y León, Cataluña, Galicia, Extremadura, Aragón, Castilla-La Mancha. are part of a broader national and regional effort to promote gender equality and empower women in rural areas. They align with Spain's National Strategy for Gender Equality and are implemented through regional adaptations of the National Rural Development Program.
- **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD):** As part of the CAP, the EAFRD provides funding for rural development projects in Spain. While not exclusively for women, it fosters development on innovation, social inclusion, including young farmers, with possibilities of benefiting women-led initiatives in rural innovation.

**Q. 1C.5: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes  No  To some extent

In Spain, several policies and legislative measures indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas, even if they are not explicitly designed with a gender-specific focus. The main laws that indirectly support women innovation in rural areas are:

- **Rural Development Program (Programa de Desarrollo Rural - PDR):** Aligned with the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy, Spain's PDR focuses on improving the competitiveness of the agriculture sector, ensuring sustainable management of natural resources, and achieving balanced territorial development. While not exclusively targeted at women, the program's support for entrepreneurship, agricultural diversification, and value-added activities indirectly benefits women-led initiatives.
- **Law of Improvement of the Structure of Agricultural Holdings (Ley de Mejora de la Estructura Territorial Agraria):** This law aims to improve the



viability of agricultural holdings and encourage generational renewal. Also, indirectly supports women entrepreneurs in agriculture looking to innovate or expand their operations y facilitating access to land and modernization.

- **Spanish Strategy for Science, Technology, and Innovation (Estrategia Española de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación):** This national strategy promotes research and innovation across all sectors, including agriculture and rural development. Through funding and support for R&D activities, the strategy indirectly benefits women leading innovative projects in rural areas. One of the primary goals is to strengthen public-private collaboration, enhance knowledge transfer, improve the situation of researchers and institutions, and ensure the application of gender equality principles in R&D. The strategy anticipates doubling the combined public and private investment in R&D to reach the European average by 2027, increasing from 1.24% of GDP in 2018 to 2.12% in 2027. The phase 2024-2027 aims to establish R&D as a fundamental pillar of the state.
- **Law for the Sustainable Development of the Rural Environment (Ley para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Medio Rural):** This law addresses the overall development needs of rural areas, focusing on improving living conditions, economic diversification, and environmental sustainability. While it targets all rural residents, measures that improve infrastructure, services, and economic opportunities can indirectly help women entrepreneurs and innovators.
- **State Pact Against Gender Violence (Pacto de Estado contra la Violencia de Género):** While focused on combating gender violence, this pact includes measures to promote gender equality and empower women. By improving safety and support services for women, the pact indirectly creates a more favorable environment for women's participation in rural economies and innovation.

## FARMING

**Q. 1C.6: Beyond the CAP Strategic Plan, does your country have a core Farming Development Policy (s)?** *e.g. agri-food sector policy (note: sub-sector policies can be dealt with in the last question included in this section below)*

Yes  No  To some extent

Spain has a comprehensive approach to agricultural and farming development that extends beyond the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plan. These policies address various aspects of farming development, from innovation and modernization to environmental sustainability and market access. Key policies are:



- **Spanish Agri-Food Industry Plan:** This plan focuses on strengthening the agri-food sector's value chain, from production to distribution. It aims to increase the sector's competitiveness, innovation, and export capacity while ensuring sustainability and quality. The plan supports research and development, digital transformation, and the adoption of sustainable practices across the agri-food sector.
- **Rural Development Program (Programa de Desarrollo Rural - PDR):** While aligned with the CAP, Spain's PDR also reflects national priorities for rural and agricultural development. It supports the modernization of agricultural holdings, promotes agri-environmental measures, enhances the viability of rural economies, and encourages generational renewal in farming. The program provides financial aid, training, and technical assistance to farmers and rural entrepreneurs.
- **National Plan for the Application of Agricultural Technologies (Plan Nacional para la Aplicación de Tecnologías Agrarias):** This policy focuses on the integration of advanced technologies in farming practices to improve productivity, sustainability, and resilience. It encourages the adoption of precision agriculture, biotechnology, and digital solutions to address challenges such as climate change, resource efficiency, and market demands.
- **Food Chain Law (Ley de la Cadena Alimentaria):** This law aims to improve the functioning of the food chain from farm to fork. It seeks to ensure fair trading practices, improve transparency, and guarantee fair value distribution among all actors in the food chain, thereby supporting farmers and enhancing the sector's sustainability.

**Q. 1C.7: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes  No  To some extent

Spain's approach to supporting the agricultural sector includes various programs and initiatives that, while broadly aimed at the entire sector, create an environment conducive to women-led innovation in farming. The integration of gender perspectives into broader agricultural policies is increasingly recognized as essential for achieving sustainable development and equality. The key measures:

- **Rural Development Programs (RDPs):** Part of the broader Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) framework, RDPs offer support for modernization, competitiveness, and sustainability in farming. Though not exclusively for women, these programs can benefit women-led initiatives through funding for innovation, business development, and sustainability projects. By providing financial aid for projects that include technological advancement,



diversification, and sustainable practices, RDPs indirectly support women who are leading innovative projects in the agricultural sector.

- **LEADER Initiative:** Part of the RDP, the LEADER approach focuses on local development, encouraging projects that are innovative and sustainable. While community-led, projects that demonstrate strong leadership by women or that specifically support women's roles in rural economies can receive support.

**Q. 1C.8: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_X\_\_

Several measures indirectly support women-led innovation in farming by creating an enabling environment for entrepreneurship and innovation across the agricultural sector. Among the others:

- **Innovation Support through the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS):** AKIS connects farmers, researchers, and advisors to promote the exchange of knowledge and foster innovation within the agricultural sector. While AKIS is not exclusively aimed at women, its efforts to enhance innovation accessibility benefit women farmers looking to implement new technologies or practices. By facilitating access to the latest research and innovation, AKIS indirectly supports women who are pioneering new agricultural techniques or business models, though targeted efforts may be needed to ensure women's full participation.
- **Agri-environmental Schemes:** These schemes, part of the Rural Development Programs, incentivize sustainable farming practices that can include organic farming, biodiversity conservation, and water management. Women leading initiatives in sustainable agriculture can indirectly benefit from the financial and technical support offered. These schemes promote a shift towards more sustainable and potentially innovative agricultural practices. Women at the forefront of sustainable farming can leverage these incentives to develop and expand their projects.
- **Digital Transformation in Agriculture:** Programs aimed at enhancing digital skills and integrating digital technologies into agricultural practices support the sector's modernization. While gender-neutral, these initiatives can indirectly benefit women by providing them with the tools and knowledge to innovate. The adoption of digital technologies can open up new opportunities for innovation in farming. Ensuring that women have equal access to digital training and resources is crucial for leveraging this potential.
- **Rural Development Grants for Diversification:** Grants that support the diversification of rural economies into non-agricultural sectors provide





opportunities for women to explore alternative income sources, including agritourism, direct sales, and artisanal product development. Diversification can reduce dependency on traditional farming, allowing women to innovate and tap into new markets. However, access to these grants and the ability to meet their requirements may vary.

- **Support for Young and New Entrants in Agriculture:** Initiatives aimed at encouraging generational renewal in farming often include financial aid, training, and mentorship for new entrants. While not exclusively for women, these initiatives can indirectly support women looking to enter the sector with innovative projects. Addressing the barriers faced by new entrants can be particularly beneficial for women, who may face additional challenges in accessing land and capital. Tailored support could enhance their opportunities for innovation.

**Q. 1C.9: Do laws governing farm ownership include any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm ownership?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_X\_\_

While there are no specific laws that exclusively address gender equality in farm ownership, several legal frameworks and policies indirectly support the goal of improving gender equality within the agricultural sector. These laws and regulations aim to create a more equitable environment for women in agriculture, touching on aspects such as inheritance and access to resources, which are crucial for farm ownership. The main laws and policies regulating this are:

- **Organic Law for Effective Equality between Women and Men (Ley Orgánica para la igualdad efectiva de mujeres y hombres):** Although this law covers a broad range of sectors, its principles apply to agriculture as well. It mandates equality of treatment and opportunities in the professional realm, which includes agricultural activities and farm ownership. The law aims to eliminate gender discrimination, which can indirectly support women's equal rights to own and operate farms. This law supports the principle that women should have equal opportunities to own and manage agricultural land and businesses by promoting gender equality across all sectors.
- **Rural Development Programs (RDPs):** Part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) framework, Spain's RDPs include measures that can indirectly support women in achieving farm ownership. This includes support for young farmers and initiatives aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation in rural areas. While not exclusively for women, these programs offer financial aid and technical support that can help overcome some of the barriers to farm ownership. Encouraging women's entrepreneurship in agriculture indirectly facilitates greater gender equality in farm ownership.



- **Law of Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (Ley de Reforma Agraria y Desarrollo Rural):** This law, along with regional laws that address rural development and agrarian reform, focuses on improving the economic viability of rural areas and may include provisions that support the redistribution of land resources. While gender equality is not the primary focus, the law's implementation can support women's access to land and farm ownership.
- **Legislation on Inheritance and Property Rights:** Spanish civil law, including provisions related to inheritance and property rights, applies to farm ownership. While these laws do not specifically address gender equality, the application of general principles of equality and non-discrimination can indirectly support women's rights to inherit and own farm property.

**Q. 1C.10: Do other policy(s) or law (s) exist in your country that facilitate improved gender equality in relation to running the farm business?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_X\_\_

The **European Institute for Gender Equality** highlights Spain's commitment to gender equality in science and innovation, noting the existence of equality units or working groups in all public research bodies under the Ministry of Science and Innovation. The Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities includes measures aimed at promoting gender equality within research organizations and encouraging gender-specific and sensitive research. The **III Public Administration Equality Plan** focuses on advancing gender mainstreaming and addressing discrimination, including within the Ministry of Science and Innovation and its dependent bodies.

**Q. 1C.11: Do laws governing farm transfer and inheritance have any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm inheritance?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_X\_\_

The laws governing farm transfer and inheritance are embedded within the broader civil law framework, particularly within the Spanish Civil Code (Código Civil), which applies to inheritance matters across various sectors, including agriculture. While these laws do not contain provisions specifically targeted at improving gender equality in farm inheritance, the application of general principles of equality and non-discrimination are intended to ensure that women and men have equal rights in inheritance matters, including the transfer of farm properties.

- **Spanish Civil Code (Código Civil):** The Civil Code provides the legal framework for inheritance in Spain, including the succession rules that apply when a person dies intestate (without a will) and the rights of heirs and legatees. The Civil Code's application is gender-neutral, meaning that sons and daughters have equal rights to inherit their parents' assets, including



farms. While the Civil Code does not have specific provisions aimed directly at promoting gender equality in farm inheritance, its adherence to equality and non-discrimination principles supports the notion that women have the same rights as men to inherit farm properties.

- **Foral Law (Derecho Foral) or Special Civil Laws:** In regions of Spain with special civil laws, such as the **Basque Country, Navarre, Aragon, Catalonia, and Galicia**, there are unique provisions regarding inheritance that differ from the general Civil Code. These laws also adhere to the principles of equality, although they may have specific customs and practices regarding farm transfer and inheritance. Even in regions with their own special civil laws, the principle of gender equality is maintained, ensuring that women have equal rights to inherit farms. However, cultural practices and traditional norms in some rural areas may influence the application of these laws.

**Q. 1C.12: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

All the policies that directly support women-led innovation in farming have been addressed.

**Q. 1C.13: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming? e.g. organic farming, horticulture, agri-tourism, care/social farming**

Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_

All the policies that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming have been addressed.

## **PART 2: OTHER POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS SUPPORTING WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS**

### **2A: INNOVATION**

**Q. 2A.1: Do specific, targeted policy (s) exist in your country related to women-led innovation? e.g. in areas such as enterprise, research and development**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

In Spain, while there might not be policies exclusively targeted at women-led innovation in the strictest sense, several initiatives and programs support gender equality and aim to empower women in various sectors, including enterprise, research,



and development. These initiatives are part of a broader national strategy to promote innovation and entrepreneurship among underrepresented groups, with women being a key focus:

- **Women's Institute (Instituto de la Mujer):** Part of the Ministry of Equality, the Women's Institute develops programs and actions aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering women. This includes support for women entrepreneurs and innovators through training, financial aid, and networking opportunities. While not limited to the agricultural sector, these initiatives can benefit women in rural areas looking to innovate in farming and related enterprises. The Institute's programs often focus on overcoming barriers to women's participation in the economy, including in the fields of research, development, and enterprise, thereby indirectly supporting women-led innovation.
- **Rural Development Programs (PDRs):** Integrated into the broader framework of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), Spain's PDRs include measures that, while not exclusively targeted at women, support the economic empowerment of rural women. This can include funding for projects that innovate in agricultural practices, agri-food businesses, and rural tourism. These programs aim to enhance the sustainability and competitiveness of rural areas, with specific measures that can indirectly support women-led innovation by providing financial assistance, technical training, and access to new technologies.
- **State Research Agency (Agencia Estatal de Investigación):** Responsible for funding research projects across various fields, the agency has programs aimed at promoting gender equality in research and innovation. This includes encouraging projects led by women and ensuring that gender perspectives are integrated into research design and implementation. Through grants and funding opportunities, the agency supports innovation across multiple sectors, including agriculture and food sciences, indirectly benefiting women researchers and innovators.

**Q. 2A.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included specifically related to farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes X No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Andalucía, Castilla y León, Cataluña, Galicia, Extremadura, Aragón and Castilla-La Mancha have implemented specific programs aimed at supporting entrepreneurship among rural women. These programs may offer training, mentorship, and financial support for women looking to start or expand their businesses, including innovative farming projects. Tailored to the needs of women in rural areas, these programs seek



to address specific challenges faced by women entrepreneurs and promote innovation in the rural economy.

**Q. 2A.3: Does innovation policy in your country focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?** *e.g. innovation policy could mean policies supporting business innovation, research and innovation and more specific areas such as ecological, technological and digital innovation*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 2A.4: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

**Q. 2A.5: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?** *e.g. perhaps those related to areas such as social enterprise, rural tourism, creative industries*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

- **Social Enterprise and Social Economy Policies:** Spain has recognized the role of the social economy and social enterprises in promoting inclusive growth and innovation. Policies supporting social enterprises often provide financial aid, training, and networking opportunities that can benefit women entrepreneurs in rural areas, including those involved in social farming projects or agri-tourism. i.e. The Spanish Strategy for Social Economy aims to promote social innovation and entrepreneurship, which can support women-led initiatives that address rural development challenges.
- **Rural Tourism Development Initiatives:** Policies aimed at promoting rural tourism can indirectly support women-led innovation by encouraging the development of sustainable tourism projects, agri-tourism, and cultural heritage initiatives. These often include funding, marketing support, and capacity-building measures for entrepreneurs. i.e. The National and Regional Plans for Rural Tourism development offer support for innovative tourism projects, which can include women-led enterprises focusing on sustainable and experiential tourism in farming communities.
- **Creative Industries Support:** While focused on the broader creative sector, support for creative industries can benefit women in rural areas who engage in



innovative projects that combine traditional crafts with new technologies or business models. i.e. Programs offering financial support and training for entrepreneurs in the creative industries can also benefit women in rural areas looking to innovate in areas like agri-food products, handicrafts, or rural cultural projects.

## 2B: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND NETWORKS

**Q. 2B.1: Are there policy (s) in your country that directly support women in rural areas and/or farming to access further education and training?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

There are not specific, singular policies exclusively dedicated to directly supporting women in rural areas and/or farming to access further education and training. However, various broader policies and programs, often part of national and EU-level rural development and gender equality initiatives, provide support mechanisms that women can access to improve their skills and qualifications.

The Rural Development Plan (PDR) foresees training courses in new agricultural techniques, sustainable practices, business management, and digital skills. The Women Institute (Instituto de la Mujer) have programs and workshops focused on empowering women, including those in rural areas, through education, entrepreneurship training, and leadership development.

**Q. 2B.2: Are there mentoring/peer to peer learning programmes in your country that focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Spain does not have widely recognized national programs exclusively dedicated to mentoring or peer-to-peer learning that focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas as a specific category. However, initiatives mentioned in Q. 2B. 1, aim to foster entrepreneurship, innovation, and skill development among rural populations, including women.

**Q. 2B.3: Are there networking programmes in your country focused directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent \_\_\_



Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

**Q. 2B.4: Are there other education, training, mentoring and networking programmes, or other education-related supports, in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Spain is involved in various broader initiatives that indirectly support the empowerment and development of women in these sectors. These initiatives are often part of Spain's commitment to rural development, gender equality, and innovation enhancement.

**Beside the abovementioned PDR and Women Institute**, it worth mentioning:

- **Agricultural Cooperatives and Associations:** These entities sometimes offer training programs, workshops, and networking opportunities for their members. Such initiatives can indirectly support women in agriculture by providing them with the skills and networks needed to innovate and grow their businesses.
- **National and Regional Entrepreneurship and Innovation Centers:** These centers often provide training, mentoring, and networking opportunities for startups and entrepreneurs, including those in the agricultural sector. Programs may include boot camps, workshops, and incubation services that, while not specifically designed for women, are accessible to and can benefit women entrepreneurs in rural areas.

While direct, targeted support for women-led innovation in farming and rural areas may be limited, Spain offers a range of broader educational, training, mentoring, and networking initiatives that indirectly support women's entrepreneurship and innovation in these sectors.

### **PART 3: EMPOWERMENT**

**Q. 3.1: Do measures exist in your country that support women's representation and participation in local, regional, and/or national decision-making? e.g. at the political level, in rural and/or farming organisations, participation in policy monitoring and development.**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Spain has implemented measures to support and enhance women's representation and participation in decision-making processes across various levels, including local, regional, and national stages. Even though already mentioned above in different answers, a list of the main policies and measures is:



- **Organic Law for Effective Equality between Women and Men (Ley Orgánica para la igualdad efectiva de mujeres y hombres):** The law aims to address the gender gap in political and institutional representation, making it applicable to sectors where women are underrepresented, including agriculture and rural development.
- **Rural Development Programs (RDPs)** under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP): Through fostering inclusive community development, RDPs indirectly enhance women's roles in shaping rural policies and initiatives.
- **Women's Institute (Instituto de la Mujer)** and its Regional Counterparts: The Women's Institute and regional entities develop and implement programs aimed at promoting gender equality, including initiatives to increase women's participation in decision-making processes. These initiatives help build capacity among women in rural areas, enabling them to take on leadership roles and participate actively in policy development and monitoring.
- **LEADER Approach within the RDP:** The LEADER program, part of the EU's approach to rural development, encourages the participation of local communities in developing and implementing local development strategies. LEADER projects often aim to empower rural communities, including promoting women's leadership and participation in rural development initiatives.

Spain does not have extensively detailed measures specifically targeting women's representation and participation in decision-making specifically in farming and rural areas, but broader gender equality policies in Spain create a supportive framework.

**Q. 3.2: Do measures exist in your country that work to protect against and/or combat harassment (online or otherwise) and violence against women in public life?**

Yes  No  To some extent

Spain has established a robust legal and policy framework aimed at preventing violence against women, providing support to victims, and promoting gender equality. Most of the laws and policies were already mentioned above, but it is important to highlight the key policies and laws that are in place within the country:

- **Organic Law on Integral Protection Measures against Gender Violence (Ley Orgánica de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género):** Enacted in 2004, this landmark legislation was one of the first of its kind in Europe. It provides a comprehensive approach to combating gender-based violence, including physical, psychological, and sexual violence against women. The law covers various measures ranging from prevention and education to protection and assistance for victims. This law not only addresses





domestic violence but also seeks to protect women from harassment and violence in all spheres of life, including in public roles and online spaces.

- **Organic Law for the Effective Equality of Women and Men (Ley Orgánica para la igualdad efectiva de mujeres y hombres):** This law, enacted in 2007, aims to promote gender equality and prevent discrimination against women. It includes provisions to prevent harassment and discrimination in the workplace and other areas of public life. While its primary focus is on achieving equality, the law also contributes to creating safer environments for women by addressing harassment and promoting respectful interactions.
- **State Pact Against Gender-Based Violence (Pacto de Estado contra la Violencia de Género):** Adopted in 2017 and updated in 2023, this agreement between various political parties, institutions, and social organizations outlines a set of measures and actions to eradicate violence against women. It emphasizes the importance of education, awareness-raising, and the role of media in preventing violence and harassment. The pact strengthens the commitment across different sectors of society to fight against gender-based violence and includes actions specifically targeting harassment in public life and online.

As we fill this questionnaire, Spain continues to update and reform its legal framework to better protect women from harassment and violence. This includes reforms to address online harassment and cyber violence, recognizing the evolving nature of threats against women in the digital age. These reforms aim to adapt to new challenges and ensure comprehensive protection for women against all forms of harassment and violence, including in online spaces.

**Q. 3.3: Do measures exist in your country that aim to increase the visibility of women-led innovation in rural areas and/or farming?** *e.g. programmes that aim to improve recognition of rural and farm women-led innovation and challenge gender stereotypes such as around traditional gender roles.*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_X\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_X\_\_

In Spain, measures and initiatives aimed at increasing the visibility of women-led innovation in both rural areas and farming do exist, although they may not be as widespread or as explicitly focused as those in other areas of gender equality. These efforts are part of broader strategies to promote rural development, gender equality, and innovation. They also seek to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes, highlighting the contributions of women in these sectors.



#### PART 4: PAY, PENSION, WORK-LIFE AND FAMILY

##### Q. 4.1: Do measures exist in your country that address the gender pay gap in relation to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_

Addressing the gender pay gap, including in rural and farm sectors, is part of broader national efforts to promote gender equality across all areas of employment and entrepreneurship. There are not measures exclusively targeting the gender pay gap among rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs, but various policies and laws are designed to combat gender inequality and promote fair labor practices indirectly contribute to reducing this gap. Most of them were already mentioned in the previous sections, but a more tailored focus on the Gender Pay Gap is outlined below:

- **Organic Law for Effective Equality between Women and Men (Ley Orgánica para la igualdad efectiva de mujeres y hombres):** This foundational law promotes gender equality in the workplace and includes provisions to ensure equal pay for work of equal value. While it applies to all sectors, its principles can indirectly affect women in rural and farming areas by promoting fair labor practices. The law mandates companies to take active steps toward gender equality, including implementing equality plans that could address pay disparities. In rural contexts, this could translate into better support for female entrepreneurs and innovators through equal access to funding, resources, and recognition.
- **State Pact Against Gender Violence (Pacto de Estado contra la Violencia de Género):** Among its broad measures, the pact includes actions aimed at improving women's economic independence and employment opportunities. While focused on combating gender violence, the pact's emphasis on economic empowerment is relevant for addressing income disparities. Initiatives under the pact that promote employment and entrepreneurship for women can also benefit those in rural and farming sectors, potentially impacting the gender pay gap.
- **National Strategy for Rural Women (Estrategia Nacional para las Mujeres Rurales):** Proposed initiatives aimed at enhancing the role and recognition of women in rural areas could indirectly address issues related to the gender pay gap by promoting women's leadership and participation in the rural economy. Though not explicitly focused on the pay gap, empowering women in rural economies and acknowledging their contributions can lead to improved income equality.



**Q. 4.2: Do gender equality issues exist in relation to government pension schemes and rural and/or farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

While Spain's social security and pension systems are designed to be gender-neutral, structural and socio-economic factors can lead to disparities that indirectly affect women in rural and farming areas. **The pension scheme is governed by the following policy:**

- **General Social Security Regime (Régimen General de la Seguridad Social):** Spain's social security system provides coverage for employees, including those in the agricultural sector. However, disparities in contributions can arise from gendered differences in labor market participation and earnings. While the system itself is gender-neutral, structural inequalities in the labor market and traditional employment patterns in rural areas can indirectly affect women's pension rights and entitlements.

However, there are special provisions for those active in the rural and farming system and for the self-employed:

- **Special Agrarian Social Security Regime (Régimen Especial de la Seguridad Social Agraria):** This special regime covers farm workers, addressing the specificities of agricultural employment. Issues related to underreporting of income or informal work arrangements can affect pension contributions, potentially impacting women more significantly. Efforts have been made to adapt social security coverage to the realities of agricultural work, but gender disparities in income and employment stability may still influence women's future pension entitlements.
- **Self-Employed Workers' Social Security Regime (Régimen Especial de Trabajadores Autónomos - RETA):** Female entrepreneurs and innovators in rural areas, including those in farming, often fall under this regime. The voluntary nature of higher contribution levels and fluctuating incomes can result in lower pension accruals for women. Measures to encourage fair contributions and provide information on the long-term benefits of higher pension contributions could help address gender disparities in pension entitlements among self-employed women.

**Q. 4.3a: Are maternity leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_



**Q. 4.3b: Do the partners of rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs have entitlements to maternity leave benefits?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

The social security system provides maternity leave benefits not only to employed women but also to self-employed women. Consequently, their partners also have entitlements to maternity leave benefits, known as "**birth and care of a minor leave**" (**prestación por nacimiento y cuidado de menor**), reflecting Spain's commitment to supporting families and gender equality. The key laws, policies and systems that support this are:

- **Social Security System (Seguridad Social):** Spain's social security system covers maternity leave benefits, which have been extended to self-employed individuals, including those working in rural and farming sectors. This ensures that female entrepreneurs and their partners in these areas are entitled to maternity and paternity leave benefits.
- **Royal Decree-Law on Urgent Measures for Social Protection and the Fight Against Job Precariousness in the Working Day (Real Decreto-ley de medidas urgentes de protección social y de lucha contra la precariedad laboral en la jornada de trabajo):** Recent reforms have aimed to improve social protection for self-employed workers, making social security contributions more flexible and accessible, which indirectly benefits rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs and their partners regarding maternity/paternity leave.

The implementation of these policies and laws, leads to the possibility for parents to be entitled the following parental leaves:

- **Maternity Leave:** Female entrepreneurs are entitled to 16 weeks of maternity leave, with the possibility to share part of this leave with their partners.
- **Paternity Leave:** Partners of female entrepreneurs also have entitlements to paternity leave, which, has been extended to match the maternity leave duration, therefore 16 weeks.
- **Parental Leave:** Beyond the initial maternity and paternity leave periods, parents may be eligible for additional parental leave to care for their child, although this might vary in terms of payment and duration compared to employed workers. The aim is to offer flexibility and support for parents managing their professional and family responsibilities.



**Q. 4.4: Are parental leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

As outlined in question Q 4.4, in Spain parental leave benefits are available to all eligible parents, including rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs. This includes both maternity/paternity leave and additional parental leave provisions, ensuring that self-employed individuals in rural and farming sectors can also access these benefits. The system is designed to support the principle of shared responsibility for childcare and to promote gender equality in both the domestic and professional spheres. The laws and policies that regulate this are the same as the answer in question Q 4.4. Parental leave benefits, encompassing maternity and paternity leave, are accessible to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs in Spain, reflecting the country's efforts to support working parents across different employment sectors, including the self-employed in rural areas.

**Q. 4.5: Is childcare availability and cost in rural areas an issue in your country?**

Yes  No  To some extent

Childcare availability and cost in rural areas are issues in Spain, as in many countries, where disparities exist between urban and rural access to services. In rural areas, families may face challenges related to fewer childcare facilities, limited opening hours, and the geographical distance to available centres. While the Spanish government has implemented policies to improve childcare services and support families, these challenges can be more pronounced in rural and farming communities.

However, the Spanish government offers various subsidies and financial support mechanisms to help families with the cost of childcare, although access to these benefits may vary based on location and specific criteria. The criteria vary, but the accessibility to these funds is broad and open to everyone in different measurement, according to geographical residency in relation to the childcare structure, income, family composition, etc.

**Q. 4.6: Do other supports exist in your country that can assist rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs achieve work-life balance? e.g. farm relief schemes, supports for businesses towards employment costs**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

There are other supports and schemes that exists in Spain aiming at assisting individuals, including rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs, in achieving a



better work-life balance. While these supports may not always be exclusively targeted at women or those in rural areas, they can indirectly benefit female entrepreneurs and workers in the agricultural sector by addressing common challenges related to business operation, employment costs, and personal well-being. Among those that were already quoted several times in this questionnaire and that are affecting the overall experience of women in rural and farming environment, such as the **Rural Development Programs (RDPs)**, **Social Security Contributions for Self-Employed (RETA)**, **LEADER Approach Initiatives** and **Training and Professional Development Programs**, in the context of this question it is important to quote two measures:

- **Subsidies for Hiring Employees:** Various subsidies and incentives are available for businesses that hire employees, including reductions in social security contributions for hiring family members or permanent staff. These measures can help rural and farm businesses, led by women, to grow and delegate tasks, improving the work-life balance of entrepreneurs.
- **Childcare Support and Family Services:** While challenges exist in terms of accessibility and cost, especially in rural areas, government and regional initiatives aimed at improving childcare services and providing family support can indirectly assist female entrepreneurs in balancing their professional and personal responsibilities.

## **PART 5: OTHER AND WIDER INITIATIVES**

**Q. 5.1: Access to finance (e.g. grants, business loans) is a key resource issue for women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. Beyond the finance support measures already discussed in the sections above, are there others important to supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas?**

Yes  No  To some extent

Beyond the discussed finance support measures within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Rural Development Programs (RDPs) and specific gender equality initiatives, there are additional resources and programs designed to support entrepreneurs, which can be particularly beneficial for women in farming and rural innovation.

- **National and Regional Grants and Subsidies:** Various grants and subsidies are available at both the national and regional levels aimed at supporting rural development, entrepreneurship, and innovation. Many Autonomous Communities in Spain offer their own grants and subsidies aimed at rural development and agricultural innovation. These can include support for starting



agri-tourism businesses, organic farming transitions, or implementing sustainable agricultural technologies.

- **Microcredit Programs and Social Loans:** Spain has several microfinance institutions offering microcredit programs aimed at entrepreneurs who might not have access to traditional banking services. An example is **MicroBank**, La Caixa's social bank, that offers microcredits for entrepreneurs, including those in rural areas looking to start or expand their businesses. These loans are designed to be accessible to individuals who may not qualify for traditional bank loans.
- **Innovation and Research Funding:** Through the **State Plan for Scientific and Technical Research and Innovation**, the government funds projects that contribute to innovation in various sectors, including agriculture. Women entrepreneurs involved in research and development (R&D) activities can access these funds to support innovative projects. The **State Research Agency (Agencia Estatal de Investigación)** provides grants for research projects, including those related to agricultural innovation. These grants can support women-led research initiatives aiming to develop new farming technologies or sustainable practices.
- **European Union Funding:** Beyond national programs, Spain also benefits from various EU funding schemes designed to support rural development, innovation, and entrepreneurship, such as the **European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI)** and Horizon Europe. These programs offer opportunities for funding women-led innovation projects in rural and farming areas.

**Q. 5.2: Do specific gender quality policies and/or laws exist in your country and have a focus on women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent  \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent  \_\_\_

As outlined throughout this questionnaire, in Spain, gender equality policies and laws exist that broadly promote gender equality across various sectors, including a focus on rural development and agriculture. While there might not be policies or laws exclusively targeting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas, several initiatives and strategies incorporate gender equality principles that benefit women in these sectors indirectly. These were extensively outlined in previous answers and are the **Organic Law for Effective Equality between Women and Men (Ley Orgánica para la igualdad efectiva de mujeres y hombres)**, **Rural Development Program (Programa de Desarrollo Rural - PDR)**, **Women's Institute (Instituto de la Mujer)**, **LEADER Approach**.



**Q. 5.3: Are there other wider government-led initiatives and/or non-government initiatives in your country that show significant promise in addressing key challenges facing women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas that could provide models for future policy measures and/or laws?**

Spain has several government-led and non-government initiatives that address challenges facing women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. These initiatives demonstrate innovative approaches to supporting women in these sectors and could provide valuable models for future policy measures and laws. Among the governmental initiatives the most important are:

- **Innovation Groups in Agriculture (Grupos Operativos en Agricultura):** Part of the Rural Development Program, these groups aim to promote innovation in agriculture by bringing together farmers, researchers, and other stakeholders. While not exclusively for women, these groups can support women-led innovation by fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange. These groups can serve as a model for how targeted collaboration and support for innovation can benefit women in farming, especially in developing and applying new technologies and sustainable practices.

Among the Non-Government Initiatives, the most important are:

- **Rural Women's Associations:** Organizations such as the Federation of Rural Women's Associations (FADEMUR) work to promote the rights and interests of women in rural areas. These associations advocate for policies that support women's entrepreneurship and participation in rural economies. FADEMUR and similar organizations play a crucial role in raising awareness of the specific challenges faced by women in rural areas and farming, and their initiatives can inform future policy development.
- **Agrarian Innovation and Women (Innovación Agraria y Mujeres):** Some non-profit organizations and research institutions focus on promoting innovation in agriculture with a gender perspective. These initiatives often involve research, training, and dissemination of best practices related to women-led innovation in agriculture. By highlighting the contributions of women to agricultural innovation and identifying barriers to their participation, these initiatives provide valuable insights for policy and program development.
- **Women for a Fair Rural World (Mujeres por un Mundo Rural Justo):** This initiative, spearheaded by various stakeholders, focuses on empowering women in rural areas through education, entrepreneurship, and leadership development. It aims to create a more equitable rural world where women can fully participate and lead. Programs that foster leadership and entrepreneurship among rural women can serve as foundations for policies that more directly support women-led innovation in farming and rural development.





**Q. 5.4: This section provides space to add any other information on policy and law in your country that is important to include in our assessment and has not been covered already in this questionnaire (e.g. related to gender quality or specific areas such as finance, education, health, employment etc.)**

Beyond the specific areas already discussed, several other policies and laws contribute to creating an equitable environment for women, addressing finance, education, health, and employment. These frameworks not only support women's rights and opportunities but also aim to tackle structural inequalities and promote social inclusion. The cornerstone is two comprehensive gender equality legislation:

- **Organic Law 3/2007 for the Effective Equality of Women and Men (Ley Orgánica 3/2007 para la igualdad efectiva de mujeres y hombres):** This cornerstone legislation establishes the framework for promoting gender equality across all aspects of Spanish society, including mandates for equal opportunities in employment, measures to combat gender-based violence, and provisions for balancing work and family life.
- **Organic Law 1/2004 on Measures of Integral Protection against Gender Violence (Ley Orgánica 1/2004 de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género):** Focused on combating gender-based violence, this law provides comprehensive measures for protection, assistance, and prevention, crucial for ensuring women's safety and well-being.

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- Agencia Estatal de Investigación (<https://www.aei.gob.es/>)
- Programa Nacional de desarrollo Rural (<https://www.mapa.gob.es/es/desarrollo-rural/temas/>)
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- Plan para la promoción de las Mujeres en el Medio Rural (<https://www.inmujeres.gob.es/actualidad/NovedadesNuevas/PromocMujeresMediorural.htm>)
- Régimen General de la Seguridad Social (<https://www.seg-social.es/wps/portal/wss/internet/Trabajadores/Afiliacion/10548/10562/4072>)
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- Grupos Operativos en Agricultura (<https://redpac.es/grupos-operativos>)
- Real Decreto-ley de medidas urgentes de protección social y de lucha contra la precariedad laboral en la jornada de trabajo (<https://www.boe.es/eli/es/rdl/2019/03/08/8>)
- Ley para el desarrollo sostenible del medio rural (<https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2007/12/13/45/con>)



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## SWEDEN

**Assessment by:** Annie Roos (Linnaeus University) and Helene Ahl (Jönköping University)

**National reporters:** For the work with this assessment, we have been in contact with people from The Federation of Swedish Farmers – LRF, the national AKIS group, Eldrimner, Luleå University of Technology and Leader Mälardalen. We are grateful for their contributions; all errors are our own.

### GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The Swedish government organisation is three-layered. All three layers have elected parliaments and tax its citizens. The state government manages national legislation and the state budget. It has many independent authorities (340 in 2023) that execute state policy. 21 regions are responsible for health care, regional transportations systems, culture, and regional growth. The regions may be actors in regional rural development initiatives. 290 municipalities are responsible for anything local. Most importantly schools, social services, and care. Many have a trade and industry office tasked to develop the municipality. Their task is traditionally one of trying to attract industries and people to the municipality to increase the tax base – particularly urgent for rural municipalities.

### WIDER NATIONAL CONTEXT ISSUES

Sweden had a national program dedicated to supporting women's entrepreneurship which ended in 2015. The program has been extensively researched. The studies found that the program was geared towards stimulating economic growth rather than gender equality [1-5]. At present, there are no legal or policy provisions specifically for women. Instead, all laws and policies are to be gender mainstreamed. As a result, the number of policies that indirectly may support women's rural innovations are the same as those that may support any innovation, and consequently too many to be covered in this report.

We thus limit the discussion to the main general innovation policies, and to policies that target rural development, or industries typically dominated by women. Temporary projects targeting women may still be carried out by government authorities or other state-sponsored organizations. These are not covered in the present report.



## PART 1: POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN FARMING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### 1A: GENERAL CONTEXT

**Q. 1A.1: In your country, is there a commitment to gender mainstreaming, or other method of gender equality assessment (e.g. benchmarking) of all key rural and/or farm policies?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Sweden has a **general gender equality policy**. Below is the verbatim formulation from the webpage of the Swedish Gender Equality Agency [6].

“The overarching goal of the gender equality policy is that women and men are to have the same power to shape society and their own lives. To this end, six sub-goals have been specified:

1. Equal division of power and influence. Women and men are to have the same rights and opportunities to be active citizens and to shape the conditions for decision-making.
2. Economic gender equality. Women and men must have the same opportunities and conditions as regards paid work, which give economic independence throughout life.
3. Equal education. Women and men, girls and boys must have the same opportunities and conditions with regard to education, study options and personal development.
4. Equal distribution of unpaid housework and provision of care. Women and men must have the same responsibility for housework and have the opportunity to give and receive care on equal terms.
5. Equal health. Women and men, girls and boys must have the same conditions for a good health and be offered care on equal terms.
6. Men’s violence against women must stop. Women and men, girls and boys, must have the same right and access to physical integrity.”

To this aim, *all* policies are to be gender mainstreamed.

The use of gender mainstreaming as a strategy to achieve the gender equality goals dates to 1994. According to the strategy, gender equality work must be integrated into all decision making, on all levels and at each step in the policy process – from proposals to implementation to evaluation. The consequences for women and men of each policy proposal must be analysed. So, this applies also to policies for farming and rural areas. At the same time, this means that there is a general absence of *specific* policies supporting women in farming and rural areas.

However, according to our contact at Luleå University of Technology in the current government’s letters of regulation to Sweden’s government authorities they are not explicitly tasked to work with gender mainstreaming or equality. Now it is up to each agency to figure out if and how they are to work with the issue.



**Q. 1A.2: Do official datasets exist in your country showing women's participation in rural and farm innovation and/or the wider farm and rural economy? e.g. those collected regularly by national statistics agency or other relevant state bodies**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Since 1994 all statistics in Sweden is to be gender separated, hence, women and men should be analysed and presented in all statistics. That means that all individual statistics are separated, and the sexes are singled out.

For example, the following statistics are official and divided among the sexes:

- Agricultural enterprises and hectare area by county and age (since 1996).
- Type of business (sole proprietorship for example).
- Agricultural operational orientation and its hectare area
- Working people in the agricultural sector
- Turnover in the agricultural sector

Women's business ownership in rural areas can be derived by counting them in municipalities classified as rural.

For innovation the data is only published on the business level and not on an individual level, hence women's participation is not shown.

More statistics is available from Statistics Sweden for researchers, but one must pay for it as well as obtain ethical clearance to use it.

## **1B: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: EUROPEAN LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AT NATIONAL LEVELS**

### **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**

*CAP 2023-2027 Specific Objective 8 (SO8) references enhancing the position of women in farming and accelerating the social inclusion of rural women – “Promote employment, growth, gender equality, including the participation of women in farming, social inclusion and local development in rural areas, including the circular bio-economy and sustainable forestry”.*

**Q. 1B.1: How is the gender equality, including the participation of women in farming aspect, of Objective 8 reflected in the SWOT analysis, identification of needs and intervention logic of the CAP strategic plan in your country?**

The SWOT-analysis [7] notes that women are highly underrepresented as farmers, as landowners, as rural entrepreneurs and as support recipients for farming and rural



development. Women's farms are smaller than men's, and women are highly under-represented as board members in boards for rural companies. Women have a lower disposable income than men, and are more likely to work part time, i.e. they do much unpaid work in the household. Women leave rural areas for education or jobs to a higher extent than men. Urbanization continues, which makes service provision in sparsely populated areas increasingly untenable (page 43 and following).

On the positive side, the SWOT notes that women are over-represented as owners of rural businesses in tourism, hospitality, and local food manufacturing, many of which are necessary to sustain a farm or a rural community.

**Q. 1B.2: Does your country's CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

There are no forms of support directly targeted to women, however, some forms of support are thought to be particularly useful for women, and are mentioned in connection with SO8, as detailed below.

**Q. 1B.3: Does your country's CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 include interventions that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent  \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent  \_\_\_

"Women" are mentioned sparingly in the Swedish 619-page CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 [8], and only in connection with SO8. The English goal formulation is reiterated in Swedish. There is no direct support to women, but there is support available for farm diversification which is sorted under goal SO8 (p. 440). Support can be given for:

New construction, renovation and extension of buildings and facilities, including fixed equipment; Inventory in the form of: i) mobile facilities in the Sámi industries ii) production equipment in manufacturing and iii) equipment in the Sámi industries. Services, and immaterial investments (such as a patent, for example).

Similarly, support can be awarded for refinement of food and agricultural products (p. 445). Support can be given for:

New construction, renovation and extension of buildings and facilities, including fixed equipment. Inventory in the form of 1) mobile food processing facilities, 2) mobile food marketing and serving facilities, 3) food processing production equipment. Services. Intangible investments.



Given that most farms are male-owned, support for buildings, inventory and equipment are likely to benefit more men than women.

Women are mentioned in an appendix, about a pre-evaluation of the plan. It says (p. 588) “One strand of objective 8 is ‘gender equality, including women's participation in agriculture’; However, there is no analysis of the potential of the proposed measures to achieve the desired effects in this area.”

All in all, there is an absence of specific interventions to support women or gender equality. A research study of the Swedish CAP concludes that it basically pays lip service to gender equality [9].

**Q. 1B.4: Does your national LEADER Programme directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent x\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent x\_\_\_

Sweden has 40 Leader areas. The 2023-2027 Leader budget is 1,7 billion SEK (approximately 150 million euro), half of which comes from EU and half from the Swedish state, regions and municipalities [10]. Leader is specified in the CAP strategic plan [8] but the plan specifies no measures targeted directly to women. However, in connection with instructions for the development of local Leader strategies and in line with Sweden’s gender mainstreaming policy the plan says: “The overarching principles of sustainable development, equal treatment, non-discrimination and equality between women and men must be taken into account in the development, implementation and follow-up of the strategy” (p. 492, our translation). An evaluation of the 2014-2020 project period showed that goals of increasing women’s entrepreneurship are found in local Leader Area strategies [11].

**Q. 1B.5: Does your national LEADER Programme indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes x\_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes x\_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

The Leader model, which focuses on bottom-up projects is important particularly for social innovation in rural areas. In conversation with Leader Mälardalen (the LAG for the area between Örebro and Stockholm) highlights the following:

- Equality is part of social sustainability but tends to be overlooked compared to other dimensions when projects are scored.
- Issues raised and prioritized depend on who is employed at the local office. While there is the umbrella of the national and local strategic Leader plan, the execution varies. Leader Mälardalen actively asks critical questions of those





who apply, focusing on who is involved in the project, how the project will be run, and who is the target group.

- While everyone can apply for funds there is a feeling that more women than men are interested in applying. They find women entrepreneurs to be especially active with ideas, for example about diversification, but no statistics are available.
- Leader Mälardalen urges applicants to have both sexes represented.
- The gendered entrepreneurial landscape (see Q. 2A.1) is reflected in project applications. When the group leader is a man, it is more likely to be a project about construction, and they are usually larger and more visionary projects. Women-lead groups tend to focus more on “soft values”, they are simpler and without much connection to the strategic plan of Leader.
- Projects constitute one area where the employees can affect equality and foster women-led innovations, and another is communication. They say they can think more of equality in their communication: who they are promoting, how, and what projects are communicated. Again, this also depends on who is working at the LAG office.

For the Local Action Group around Växjö one of the principles they are working with is “Approved projects must strengthen democracy and promote positive social development, taking into account different target groups/stakeholders and their different needs and conditions.” [12]. Two issues identified when developing the strategy for the LAG are that women are leaving the countryside and that it is increasingly difficult to involve women in local voluntary organizations.

## **1C: DIRECT & INDIRECT SUPPORT FOR WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS: COUNTRY LEVEL POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **RURAL**

#### **Q. 1C.1: Does your country have a Rural Development Policy(s)?**

Yes  No  To some extent

Since 2022, Sweden does not have a specific rural development policy, as we had 2014-2022 [13]. Instead, from 2023 rural issues are governed by three instances that are interlinked and sometimes overlapping. 1) a national CAP strategy (more focused on agricultural issues) [14], 2) a national strategy for sustainable regional development (which governs the funds for regional development), and 3) a governmental bill of a coherent policy for rural areas (that lies as a basis for the strategies) [15, 16].

These three documents are expanded on in the Excel-file with the inventory.



**Q. 1C.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

The national CAP strategy does not cover women's issues – see answer under Q.1B.2.

The national strategy for sustainable regional development does not have a direct focus on women.

The government proposal of a coherent policy for rural areas addresses women several times and a focus on women is seen as a strategic area, as follows:

More (rural) women entrepreneurs are called for. Strengthening women's entrepreneurship has great potential to contribute to the development of both society, businesses, and people. For women's entrepreneurship to be able to reach its full potential, the conditions for entrepreneurship must be equal, for example access to public financial capital and advice for entrepreneurs.

For supply of skills in the rural the proposal suggests taking advantage of women's higher degree of education in rural areas. This is related to women more often leaving for the cities. Further focus on distance learning is advocated.

Especially forestry (the sector with most women owners) is lifted as a potential area of entrepreneurial development.

Tourism is also lifted as a potential important sector for women's entrepreneurship in remote rural areas.

**Q. 1C.3: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

The national CAP strategy does not cover women's issues – see answer under Q.1B.3

The national strategy for sustainable regional development talks about equality between women and men but does not specify how to address it. It focusses extensively on innovation, but not women-led innovation. Innovation is a strategic area of focus. Some areas of focus that potentially indirectly could support women-led innovation:

Micro businesses (up to 9 employees) are to be recognized as important players for regional development.



It is of particular importance to use social entrepreneurship and social enterprises as an important resource in the work of solving societal challenges through innovation.

A good business climate will contribute to greater diversity of entrepreneurs.

**Q. 1C.4: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to directly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

No. Because of gender mainstreaming. See answer to Q. 1A.1

**Q. 1C.5: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to rural areas in your country that are important to indirectly support women-led innovation in rural areas?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

When talking to stakeholders, no rural policy initiatives were identified that target women-led innovation in farming or rural areas.

## **FARMING**

**Q. 1C.6: Beyond the CAP Strategic Plan, does your country have a core Farming Development Policy (s)?** e.g. agri-food sector policy (note: sub-sector policies can be dealt with in the last question included in this section below)

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

*Please expand on your answer below. Please include a short description of any policy(s)*

Sweden only has a strategy for CAP.

**Q. 1C.7: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_ n/a

**Q. 1C.8: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_ n/a

**Q. 1C.9: Do laws governing farm ownership include any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm ownership?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_



No special provision. Laws are equal for men and women.

**Q. 1C.10: Do other policy(s) or law (s) exist in your country that facilitate improved gender equality in relation to running the farm business?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

No special policy/law regarding this. Laws are equal for men and women.

**Q. 1C.11: Do laws governing farm transfer and inheritance have any special provisions that support improved gender equality in farm inheritance?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

No special provision. Women have been able to inherit since 1845. Since then, inheritance laws are equal for men and women. Children inherit their parents in equal measure. Fifty per cent of the estate *must* be given to the children, by law, but the normal case is that they inherit the whole estate. If a farm is transferred to a child before the death of the donor, the other children must be compensated accordingly, for example by a buyout or a transfer of other assets.

**Q. 1C.12: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming?**

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

No. Because of gender mainstreaming. See answer in Q. 1A.1.

**Q. 1C.13: Are there other significant policy(s) and/or law(s) related to farming in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming? e.g. organic farming, horticulture, agri-tourism, care/social farming**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent

In the **National Food Strategy** [17], Sami women are highlighted as traditional bearers of knowledge in Sami food. They are seen as an important source of knowledge for the continued preservation and development of the Sami meal tradition. The government have invested in Sami food with for example product development, quality labelling and visibility of Sami food in schools and tourism.

This is the only time women are singled out in the National food strategy. In other instances “women and men” are mentioned, such as in the following formulations: “Such a goal forms the basis for the future development of the food chain and for creating faith in the future among the women and men who are entrepreneurs and who work in the food chain.” (page 21), “With the emergence of more environmentally friendly techniques, the opportunity for individual women and men who are



entrepreneurs to carry out fish farming is increasing.” (page 61), and “For the women and men who are agricultural entrepreneurs and who develop businesses such as farm shops or business ideas within, for example, the hospitality industry, organic production can contribute to a positive profiling of the business.” (page 74).

According to our contact at The Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF) the National food strategy is an important document that calls for more innovation, but not necessarily for women-led innovations.

A new national strategy is now formed by the government. For LRF important parts to focus on is to simplify the rules and regulations, hence they do not call for further equality or women focus.

## **PART 2: OTHER POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS SUPPORTING WOMEN-LED INNOVATION IN FARMING AND RURAL AREAS**

### **2A: INNOVATION**

**Q. 2A.1: Do specific, targeted policy (s) exist in your country related to women-led innovation? e.g. in areas such as enterprise, research and development**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_x\_

Vinnova, Sweden’s innovation agency, is tasked to execute the government’s innovation policy. They regularly issue calls for projects or programs. Some specific measures for women have been advertised from time to time, but for the most part, high-tech and engineering is prioritized; industries that are largely male dominated. Please see their website for an overview of present calls [18].

According to our contact at Luleå University of Technology, Vinnova has been working with equality for the past 20 years as part of the letter of regulation from the government. Previously, more calls for projects and programs were aimed directly at gender equality, but currently it is only an add-on in some calls.

Further, Swedish innovation policy has always had a focus on scalability which affects women and men differently since women and men generally are active in different sectors in Sweden. Women are predominantly active in sectors associated with for example culture, creativity, tourism, and services. Men are more active in for example IT, medicine, natural science, research and development, and manufacturing (and more recently Ai and deep tech). The “male” sectors are also those that are highly prioritized in Swedish policy. These sectors can show scalability, profits, patents, and are those who secure the most venture capital and funds from the government. Other types of organisations or way of organising for innovation is rarely shown and extremely rarely funded.



In conclusion, government funds are seen as equally available to both women and men, but they are distributed very differently in reality.

**Q. 2A.2: If yes or to some extent, are there measures included specifically related to farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent  \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent  \_\_\_

In March 2024, 35 calls are advertised on the webpage of Vinnova, Sweden's innovation agency [18]. Of these, three may be considered relevant for rural areas: biomass, foodtech, and bio-innovation. However, Vinnova envisions that larger, research-based companies or universities apply.

In conversation with our contact at AKIS, a discrepancy in the Swedish innovation system has been identified. There is a long-term tradition that it is only The Swedish Board of Agriculture that grants funds for farming (primary production). As a result, other funding agencies such as Vinnova or The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth states in many of their calls that farmers and primary production cannot apply. So, Vinnova may issue a call for the whole food-supply chain to collaborate and apply, but without those in primary production. The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth states that all business owners can apply except farmers. Consequently, they exclude some of the actors that could help solve a societal issue from applying for grants. This affects farmers and their ability to innovate.

**Q. 2A.3: Does innovation policy in your country focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas? e.g. innovation policy could mean policies supporting business innovation, research and innovation and more specific areas such as ecological, technological and digital innovation**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

As mentioned earlier, government policies targeting women have been replaced by gender mainstreaming of all policies. Targeting one sex only is usually not allowed – it could mean discriminating men.

That said, there are many policies and programs for innovation, some of them focusing on rural industries, that on paper should be equally available to women and men. However, they often concern high tech or life sciences and therefore usually favour industries dominated by men. Please see the web page of the Swedish Innovation Agency for an overview of present calls [18].



**Q. 2A.4: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that directly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No x To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No x To some extent \_\_\_

When talking to stakeholders the message is clear that there are no policies directly reaching women-led innovation in farming or rural areas.

Our contact at Luleå University of Technology, would also like to highlight that the same prioritizing of (male gendered) sectors (see Q. 2A.1) are seen also in regional policies and regional initiatives.

**Q. 2A.5: Are there other important innovation policies and/or laws in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas? e.g. perhaps those related to areas such as social enterprise, rural tourism, creative industries**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent X

On March 8, women's day, the government gave The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth the assignment to work with female entrepreneurship during 2024-2026 [19]. The work will focus on:

- Implement initiatives that promote young women's entrepreneurship.
- Carry out knowledge-raising efforts to facilitate and improve the conditions for small businesses to participate in public procurement.
- Implement initiatives that stimulate young women's entrepreneurship.
- Develop methods to produce statistics with a focus on women's ownership.
- Carry out knowledge-raising initiatives regarding financing opportunities.
- Organize events in connection with International Women's Day in 2025 and 2026 with the aim of drawing attention to women's entrepreneurship.

This assignment is not linked to innovation nor to rural/farming in particular. The program budget is modest (SEK 8 million, about 700 000 Euro)

Also, in conversation with our contact at Luleå University of Technology, we want to highlight that the government here is urging for more women to become entrepreneurs, but they are not calling for changes in the innovation system they themselves have created. Economic growth (for example through scalability) is still more valued than equality.



**2B: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND NETWORKS**

**Q. 2B.1: Are there policy (s) in your country that directly support women in rural areas and/or farming to access further education and training?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No x To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No x To some extent\_\_\_

Men and women have the same access to further education in Sweden, and women are better educated than men – women take 65% of all university degrees since many years back. Education at all levels is free of charge, and there is a generous student loan program for living expenses. Many educational programs are delivered digitally to local learning centres which makes them accessible also in rural areas. The 156 folk high schools and the many study associations are often located in rural areas and provide a wide variety of courses and programs [20].

Since 2015, Sweden has a national resource centre for artisan food, Eldrimner, located in rural areas [21]. They offer courses as “applied science” (YH in Sweden) and is a well-known resource for farmers to develop their products into artisan foods, hence an opportunity for farmers and people living in rural areas to be innovative. When we contacted Eldrimner, their view is that there are significantly more women than men who attend their courses and education programs.

**Q. 2B.2: Are there mentoring/peer to peer learning programmes in your country that focus directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

When talking to stakeholders, no long-term programmes were identified that target women-led innovation in farming or rural areas.

**Q. 2B.3: Are there networking programmes in your country focused directly on supporting women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No X To some extent\_\_\_

When talking to stakeholders, no long-term networking programmes can be identified that target women-led innovation in farming or rural areas. Many of our contacts talk about historical opportunities to network but none about current networks specific for farming/rural.





**Q. 2B.4: Are there other education, training, mentoring and networking programmes, or other education-related supports, in your country that indirectly support women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

As a result of the programme “Promoting women’s entrepreneurship” (2007-2015), many female-only business owner networks were created, also in rural areas. Their innovative effect is questioned [22]. Many of these networks still exist but without governmental support. These kinds of networks are mostly run as projects and do not have a high rate of survival once the project period is over. It is rather common that municipalities also create these kinds of networks to foster equality.

### **PART 3: EMPOWERMENT**

**Q. 3.1: Do measures exist in your country that support women's representation and participation in local, regional, and/or national decision-making?** *e.g. at the political level, in rural and/or farming organisations, participation in policy monitoring and development.*

Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent \_\_\_

The **gender equality law** applies [6], but there are no specific policy measures to support women’s representation in decision making. Implicitly, however, there is a widely shared understanding that male-only boards or decision-making bodies are politically incorrect.

The Swedish parliament had, in 2022, 46 % women, the regional councils 49 % women and the municipal councils 43 % women. State authority boards were comprised of 51 % women [23]. The government is in 2024 comprised of 24 ministers, 10 of which are women. Private enterprise lags behind: the listed companies had, in 2021, 13% female CEOs, 10% female chairperson of the board, and 36% female board members, according to Statistics Sweden.

**Q. 3.2: Do measures exist in your country that work to protect against and/or combat harassment (online or otherwise) and violence against women in public life?**

Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_\_

The **discrimination act** [24] prohibits direct or indirect discrimination, inadequate accessibility, harassment, sexual harassment and instructions to discriminate based on a person’s sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, disability, sexual



orientation and age. Employers are to monitor that no discrimination occurs in their workplace, and offenses are penalized.

**Q. 3.3: Do measures exist in your country that aim to increase the visibility of women-led innovation in rural areas and/or farming?** *e.g. programmes that aim to improve recognition of rural and farm women-led innovation and challenge gender stereotypes such as around traditional gender roles.*

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

There are no formal measures, but the lack of people, particularly women, in rural areas is well recognized and debated in media and there is also some research in the area.

#### **PART 4: PAY, PENSION, WORK-LIFE AND FAMILY**

**Q. 4.1: Do measures exist in your country that address the gender pay gap in relation to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Gender pay discrimination is not allowed [24], but only large employers are mandated to analyse their pay structure and rectify any imbalances.

**Q. 4.2: Do gender equality issues exist in relation to government pension schemes and rural and/or farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes  No \_\_\_ To some extent\_\_\_

Pensions in Sweden are based on a person's life-time income, and there is no widow's pension. The full-time worker is the norm. Women generally have lower pensions than men since:

- 1) women work in low-wage industries such as services, care, and retail,
- 2) women are more likely to work part time,
- 3) women still take 70% of the parental leave days, and
- 4) there is still a gender pay gap of about 5%, every other factor controlled for,



...all of which affects pensions. This applies to all women in Sweden but may be particularly pertinent in rural areas where there are fewer job opportunities than in the cities, and where many women are self-employed or work in the family business.

**Q. 4.3a: Are maternity leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

**Q. 4.3b: Do the partners of rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs have entitlements to maternity leave benefits?**

Sweden has parental leave, not maternity leave. See Q 4.4 below.

**Q. 4.4: Are parental leave benefits available to rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs?**

Farming: Yes  No  To some extent

Rural areas: Yes  No  To some extent

Parents have 480 days paid **parental leave** to be shared. Renumeration is based on the parent's income (80% with a cap, but employers often add more) for the first 390 days, and the rest has a lower, fixed renumeration [25].

90 days are reserved for each parent, which has resulted in men taking 30% of the leave days, which is over and above the reserved days. It has also resulted in the "working mom" as a norm – over 85 % of Swedish working age women are in the labour market. A housewife is a denigrated position in Sweden and less than 1% are homemakers.

A possible weakness is that when on paid parental leave, one cannot work (that would provide a double income and be considered cheating), which can make it a bit hard to run a business (especially a farm) while having a baby. The idea is that when the mother works, the father should take parental leave.

The Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF) would also like to add that due to the low profitability of farms (or, in some cases, the low willingness to take out a reasonable salary) can push young women out of farming since they can get better salaries and hence better parental and other income-based benefits by working elsewhere. This affects women farmers to a higher degree than male farmer due to the pattern of women taking care of children to a greater extent (and thus needing their renumeration to a higher degree).

The system is very flexible, on the other hand. One can be on parental leave 25, 50, 75 per cent, or full time, and the time can be allotted over time as one wishes. 384 days must be used during the child's first four years, and 96 can be save and used up till the age of 12. There is also a monthly child allowance up until the child is 15, and



then a study allowance for children in upper secondary school. Parents can also stay at home with a sick child, with pay, for up to 60 days per child and year.

Changes will take place from July, 2024, when 60 parental leave days can be taken by both parents at the same time if they wish, before the child is 15 months old. Days can also be transferred to close relatives [26].

**Q. 4.5: Is childcare availability and cost in rural areas an issue in your country?**

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_x\_\_

Any child aged 1 is guaranteed a place in public, high quality, and subsidized childcare/preschool [27]. It is very affordable – fees are income based with a cap. The highest fee is 150 euros per month, and it is free for students. Every municipality must offer preschool to every child by law, but the municipalities need a certain number of children to build a day care centre/preschool, so those who live in sparsely populated areas may have to drive some distance to their closest one – or they simply choose not to live in such areas.

**Q. 4.6: Do other supports exist in your country that can assist rural and farm female innovators/entrepreneurs achieve work-life balance? e.g. farm relief schemes, supports for businesses towards employment costs**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_X\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ To some extent \_\_X\_\_

There is no official system or programme for farm-relief (*avbyttarservice*) in Sweden. It has been debated a couple of times and people in the industry look with awe at Finland's policy. A few individual companies offer farm-relief services, and Sweden's largest cattle farmers association offers "Växa" farm relief service which covers the whole country [28]. These services are not publicly supported.

Through The Swedish Public Employment Service, you can get 6 months of support from The Social Insurance Agency when starting your own business if you are unemployed [29]. Your remuneration is based on your previous salary. This remuneration is also paid if your need to close your business and become unemployed.

In addition, business owners can get support from The Swedish Public Employment Service when they employ a person with a disability, health issues, in long-term unemployment or has newly immigrated [30]. The amount of remuneration varies but as a standard they pay the social security fees (31,42 % of the salary, with a cap).



## PART 5: OTHER AND WIDER INITIATIVES

**Q. 5.1: Access to finance (e.g. grants, business loans) is a key resource issue for women-led innovation in farming and rural areas. Beyond the finance support measures already discussed in the sections above, are there others important to supporting women-led innovation in farming and rural areas?**

Yes  No  To some extent

As mentioned earlier, Swedish policy is to be gender mainstreamed, so there are no policies specifically for women-led innovation. On the other hand, the government agencies tasked to support innovation and entrepreneurship are to make sure that their support is equally available to women and men, in urban as well as in rural areas. Important sources of finance (besides banks) are:

**Vinnova, Sweden's innovation agency** [18] has a mission to strengthen Sweden's innovative capacity and contribute to sustainable growth [31]. Vinnova regularly issues calls for funding for innovative projects. STEM and digital solutions dominate. It also has calls for international collaboration with specific countries, such as one on plant-based protein, a call on circular transport systems, and a call aimed at incubators who have the global sustainability goals in Agenda 2030 and a gender perspective as a driving force. Historically, Vinnova has funded several projects related to gender equality and the inclusion of women in innovation systems, and projects are evaluated against gender equality considerations.

**The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth** [31] is tasked to promote sustainable growth and competitive companies throughout Sweden. It offers knowledge, networks, and financing for companies and for the regions. The vision is to have more companies in Sweden that want to grow and have the capabilities and courage to do so. It administers the EU Regional Development Program and a primary task is helping to ensure that EU funds are invested in projects that promote regional growth and employment. It has nine offices throughout the country. Programs are to be gender mainstreamed and the agency has issued several publications on how to achieve it, as well as projects and publications on the green transition, and also examples of good businesses practices in rural areas. It also administered the program on women's entrepreneurship that ended in 2015. There are currently no programs only for women.

**Almi** [32] is a corporation, co-owned by the state (51%) and by the regions (49%). It offers loans, business development counselling, business training and venture capital and is an important resource for start-ups and small and medium sized businesses. Almi has had a focus on increasing the share of female board members in Swedish companies and run trainings, networks, and manages a list of board qualified women



member candidates. Some of their 16 regional offices run “Women Lead” which are local networks of women CEOs and owners.

**Jobs and Society** [33] is present in over 200 Swedish municipalities and provide free start-up counselling. It is well used – ten percent of new firms have received help from them. It is co-financed by about 30 businesses, unions, and state authorities.

**Coompanion** [34] assists those who want to start a cooperative business. Coompanion is financed by The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth. They initiate local and regional development projects with a focus on cooperation and entrepreneurship and seek third party financing for such projects. They have 25 offices, and services are free. Focus of late have been projects helping to integrate refugees. They have a focus on social responsibility, so goals are economic and social.

**Incubators** [35] are important sources for support for business development. There are over 60 all over Sweden, but most of them close to a university and thus not present in remote rural areas. They are owned by the universities, the regions, and the municipalities.

In addition, there are hundreds of specialized **trade organizations** [36] who assist their members with vital services. Two very large ones of immense importance for rural areas are the

**Swedish Forest Owners Associations** [37] with 112 000 members, who own 6 million hectares of forest land, and

**The Federation of Swedish Farmers – LRF** [38] who has 140000 individual members, representing 70000 enterprises.

**Q. 5.2: Do specific gender equality policies and/or laws exist in your country and have a focus on women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas?**

Farming: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Rural areas: Yes \_\_\_ No  To some extent\_\_\_

Sweden has a general gender equality law. Please see answer under Q1.A.1

**Q. 5.3: Are there other wider government-led initiatives and/or non-government initiatives in your country that show significant promise in addressing key challenges facing women-led innovation in farming and/or rural areas that could provide models for future policy measures and/or laws?**

We, or our interviewed stakeholders, have not been able to identify any such initiatives.

**Q. 5.4: This section provides space to add any other information on policy and law in your country that is important to include in our assessment and has not been**



covered already in this questionnaire (e.g. related to gender quality or specific areas such as finance, education, health, employment etc.)

We, or our interviewed stakeholders, have not been able to identify any such initiatives.

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