

POLICYBRIEF

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A Regional Overview of Gender Sensitive Dimensions in the European Agricultural Sector

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A Regional Overview of Gender Sensitive Dimensions in the European Agricultural Sector

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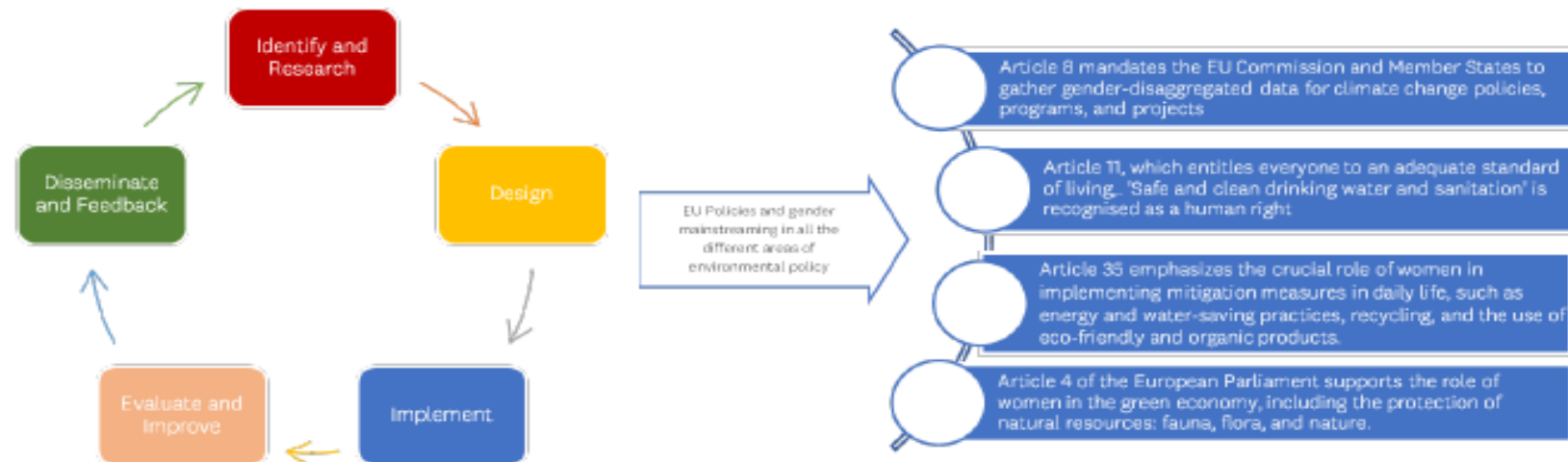


- Underrepresentation of gender-sensitive practices and policies, particularly women's representation in European farm management, land ownership, and agricultural research, reflects a **significant gap in current processes and policies** at regional and national levels. Existing normative procedures do not adequately address the systemic barriers faced by women, often resulting in **unequal opportunities and limited participation in decision-making**.
- Despite evidence showing that women have more significant consideration for holistic approaches to **sustainable water management in agriculture, regional and state-level policy measures currently do not reflect this perspective**.
- In the context of 'buy-in' for the technology support system in the agricultural system, it is essential to note gender-disaggregated responses. Women are more inclined to adopt environmentally and socially friendly technologies, such as nature-based solutions. However, **current policies do not adequately incentivise or support this technology uptake**.
- Efforts to increase gender representation in regional agricultural processes and value chains are being made at the European level. Still, these **efforts must be strengthened and scaled up in a time-specific agenda**. Policy measures could prioritise increasing female representation in all areas of the agriculture sector, including research, land ownership, and farm management.
- The need for more gender-balanced European agricultural systems is still a significant barrier to the region's sustainable agricultural (food and water security) pathways. **Policymakers need to take a more inclusive approach, including women and other underrepresented groups, in designing and implementing policies to ensure that policies meet the needs of all stakeholders and lead to more sustainable outcomes and resilient societies**.

Background and Context

Gender representation in European agriculture and other sectoral agendas and policies is a complex issue that has received increasing attention recently (See Figure 1). While there have been efforts to promote gender equality, women

on Gender Mainstreaming, aim to ensure that women are adequately represented in all areas of scientific research, including in the agricultural sector. While progress has been made in promoting gender equality, much work still needs to be done to ensure gender-equal access to resources, capacity, competencies, and decision-making roles. These critical aspects are noted in Figure 1.



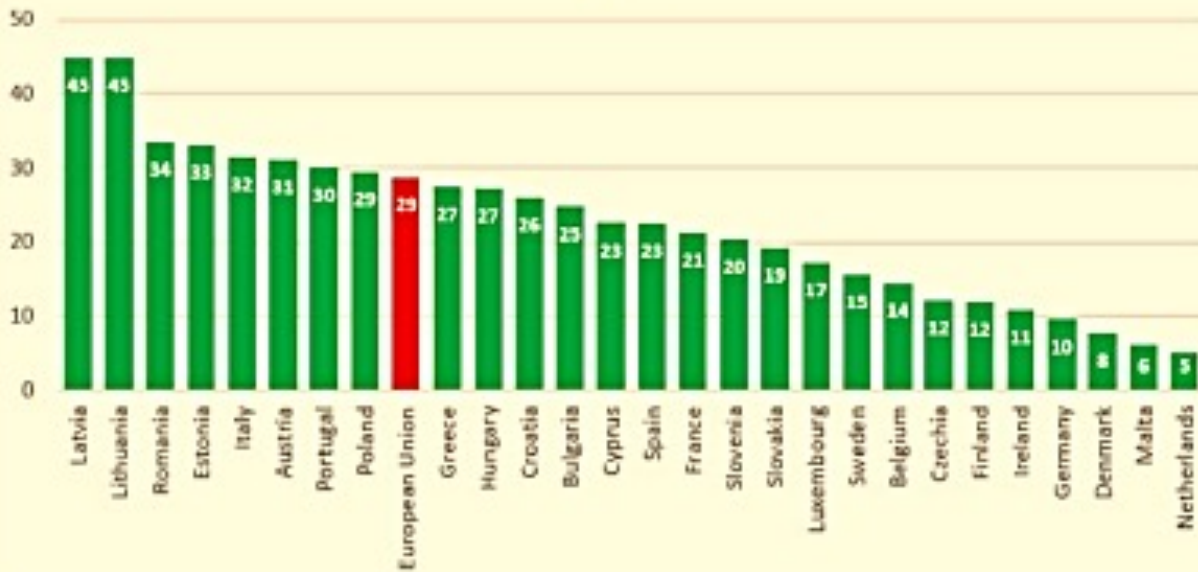
IDENTIFY AND RESEARCH	DESIGN	IMPLEMENT	EVALUATED AND IMPROVE	DISSEMINATE AND FEEDBACK
Assess/analyse gender integration in policies.	Review and update water policy to include gender aspects	Transpose policy into an action plan, prescribe measures and roles	Monitor activities	Raise awareness.
Identify entry points for gender mainstreaming	Design specific actions, activities, interventions	Transform institutions and building capacity	Assess impact and ex-post evaluation (objectives met, distance-to-target, etc.)	Collect feedback, educate

Figure 1. Gender mainstreaming policy process cycle adapted from the European Institute for Gender Equality and the European Standard on Gender Mainstreaming in the European Social Fund. Sources: (EIGE 2017/EU Parliament 2012; A/RES/64/292, UN 2010; A7-0235/2012)

The above-mentioned articles are from the European Parliament resolution of 11 September 2012 on the role of women in the green economy (2012/2035(INI))

Regional Trends

Proportion of farm managers who are women, 2016 (%)



Overview of women farm managers in Europe; Source: Eurostat

FRANCE

Women gaining ground, but gaps remain

GERMANY

Lagging behind on female farm managers

AUSTRIA

Every third farm female-led

WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE ACROSS SOME EU COUNTRIES

ITALY

Female agricultural entrepreneurship still too often remains 'invisible'

SPAIN

Better representation on the ground, but lacking in agricultural organisations

POLAND

Polish agriculture is characterised by relatively high participation of women

Snapshots of gender-focused article from EURACTIV, mainly from reports by Sarantis Michalopoulos¹

Women in the Agrifood Industry How Cross-gender Collaboration Impacts a Successful Transformation of the Sector, Mar 31, 2023.

Discusses gender equality and its substantial meaning for innovation in the agri-food sector. Per European Commission regulations related to the industry, women and men are involved in agriculture worldwide, although their roles differ significantly by region and are changing rapidly.

"Gender equality is not a women's issue; it is a human issue."

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/opinion/women-in-the-agrifood-industry-how-cross-gender-collaboration-impacts-a-successful-transformation-of-the-sector/>

"Women Bring Lousy Luck to Crops": Fighting Stereotypes in Agriculture, Oct 16, 2019.

Spotlights the social-cultural norms in Portugal.

How #women's "multifunctionality" can play in helping the sector advance, especially when it comes to reviving the declining rural areas in the EU and preventing further urbanisation

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/women-bring-bad-luck-to-crops-fighting-stereotypes-in-agriculture/>

Is There Room for Women Farmers in the CAP? March 5, 2019

Discusses how women could be encouraged to join the sector. Moreover, what is the role of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)?

#Women have a key role in helping revive rural areas- discrimination against women in the farming sector is still widespread.

https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/special_report/is-there-room-for-women-farmers-in-the-cap/

'Multifunctional' women could save EU rural areas, March 14, 2017.

Demonstrates advantages of women's multifunctionality in boosting the potential of rural areas.

#A new approach should be adopted for the development of the rural areas, and EU member states and local authorities should provide rural people, especially women

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/multifunctional-women-could-save-eus-rural-areas/>

Strengthening the strategic role of women in rural communities, Feb 8, 2017 (updated: Jan 23, 2018).

This reflects how the rural population in Spain empowers women in the agricultural sector.

#More and more women are finding empowerment through agriculture. In turn, they guarantee the survival of rural communities and the growth of the rural economy.

<https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/video/strengthening-the-strategic-role-of-women-in-rural-communities/>

¹[Euractiv](#) is an independent pan-European media network specialised in EU affairs, established by its Founder Christophe Leclercq in 1999. Sarantis Michalopoulos is a journalist and Senior Network Editor at Euractiv who writes extensively on EU Affairs with special regard to agriculture, food and health and follows closely the ongoing development of the European integration process. The box showcases selected some snapshots of his gender-focused articles within the context of EU's regional agriculture trends.

Key gender-focused points: Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 [European Parliament and Council (17 December 2013) toward rural development [European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005

Point 8 (page 2): Sub-programmes should concern, among others..., young farmers, women in rural areas, and climate change mitigation/adaptation/ biodiversity.

Point 17 (page 4): Diversification of farmers into non-agricultural activities and the setting up and development of non-agricultural SMEs in rural areas should be promoted. That measure should also encourage the entrepreneurship of women in rural areas.

Article 7 Thematic sub-programmes: Point 1 (page 15): To achieve the Union priorities for rural development, Member States may include thematic sub-programmes that address specific needs within their rural development programmes. The thematic sub-programmes may relate to (a) young farmers; (b) small farms as referred to in the third subparagraph of Article 19(2); (c) mountain areas as referred to in Article 32(2); (d) short supply chains; (e) women in rural areas; (f) climate change mitigation/ adaptation /biodiversity.

Article 66 Managing Authority, Point 1 (page 44): reflects ensuring publicity for the programme, including through the national rural network, by informing potential beneficiaries, professional organisations, economic and social partners, bodies involved in promoting equality between men and women, concerned NGO's , including environmental organisations, rules for gaining access to funding as well as by informing beneficiaries of the Union contribution

Annex IV Sub-Programmes in Article 7 (Page 58): mention 'in rural areas' in the context of knowledge transfer and information actions, advisory services, farm management, farm relief services, Investments in physical assets, and Farm and business development. Essential services and village renewal in rural areas, etc.

The gender and regional dynamics within WATERAGRI stakeholders, providing broad insights and aiming to inform strategic considerations and decision-making processes operating within the project's implementation phase.

Within the project group, 36% identified as male researchers.

Women stakeholders, representing 17% of the total, are mainly of Polish (6%), Hungarian (5%), or Finnish (6%) origin.

Notably, 10% of the stakeholders are researchers, while 8% belong to advisory services.

The register of consented stakeholders comprises nearly 127 individuals. The geographical distribution of consenting stakeholders is prominent in Italy (22), Hungary (20), Finland (17), and Poland (17).

Additional contributors include Germany (10), Sweden (9), and France (8). Austria (5) and Switzerland (4) conclude the list.

Gender Specificity in Technology Uptake



Societal Dynamics

Gendering disrupts existing socio-technical systems, reinforcing their stability or challenging their entrenched norms in the broader social order.



Innovation and Sustainability

The gender lens shapes the disruptiveness and sustainability of innovations, influencing justice orientations and other sustainability propositions. The role of young generations becomes crucial in envisioning alternative futures.



Behavioral Shifts

The gender-sensitive approach encourages or discourages changes in daily practices and routines involving motives, meanings, competencies, and materials. This reflects a nuanced influence on individuals and communities.



Mediation in Transitions

Gender plays a mediating role in niche/regime interaction, influencing the amplification of emerging sustainability innovations. It can facilitate the imposition of mainstream solutions or promote the uptake of radical innovations.



Niche Zones

Gender considerations destabilize or stabilize niche formation. This involves social networking, self-organization, and the recognition of diversity, impacting the emergence of alternative practices.

Figure 4. Gender considerations in sustainable projects are pivotal in reshaping societal structures, influencing practices, and fostering innovation. A few crucial aspects shown in the figure are adapted from Wolfram and Kienesberger (2023).

1. Addressing Cultural and Social Barriers	2. Understanding Gendered Perspectives in Sustainable Water Management	3. Promoting Environmentally and Socially Friendly Technology Uptake	4. Targeted Strategies to Address Gender Gaps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackle traditional gender roles /stereotypes hindering women's economic empowerment. • Implement awareness-raising campaigns, mentoring programmes, and networks for female farmers. • Draw inspiration from existing EU policies, such as the Gender Action Plan for Rural Development and the European Charter for Rural Women, to promote women's access to land, credit, education, and training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise that gendered differences in perceptions of sustainable water management may be rooted in socialization and gender roles. • Acknowledge that women, more affected by water scarcity, may prioritize water availability due to their greater responsibility for water management. • Highlight need to address these gendered perspectives in policymaking noting cultural, social, economic, and environmental differences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise the promotion of environmentally and socially friendly technology uptake, including nature-based solutions, in agricultural policies and programmes. • Recognise women's greater inclination towards less labour-intensive solutions. • Develop a tailored gender strategy to promote equality in agriculture, aligning with regional governance strategies such as the Nature Restoration Laws and Water Directive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement targeted strategies to increase gender participation in critical operational areas. • Advocate for inclusive policies that support women in decision-making roles. • Offer training programmes to contribute to a more equitable gender distribution in the project's operational agenda. • Recognize and rectify gender disparities to foster a diverse and inclusive environment, ensuring a holistic and balanced approach to project implementation.

Figure 5. Key recommendation for EU stakeholders and policymakers linked to the agriculture sector

This policy brief reiterates that by prioritising gender equality in land ownership and promoting policies that support women's economic empowerment, the EU can create more inclusive and sustainable agricultural systems that benefit all members of society and member states.