REPORT

on women in rural areas of the European Union in the light of the mid-term review of the common agricultural policy (2002/2241(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities

Rapporteur: Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou
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PROCEDURAL PAGE

At the sitting of 19 December 2002 the President of Parliament announced that the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities had been authorised to draw up an own-initiative report, pursuant to Rule 163 of the Rules of Procedure, on women in rural areas of the European Union in the light of the mid-term review of the common agricultural policy and the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development had been asked for its opinion.

The Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities had appointed Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou rapporteur at its meeting of 18 June 2002.

The committee/It considered the draft report at its meetings of 18 March, 24 April and 10 June 2003.

At the latter/last meeting it adopted the motion for a resolution by ... votes to ..., with ... abstention(s)/unanimously.

The following were present for the vote: ... chairman/acting chairman; ... and ..., vice-chairman/vice-chairmen; ..., rapporteur; ..., ...

The opinion of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development is attached;

The report was tabled on 17 June 2003.
MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

European Parliament resolution on women in rural areas of the European Union in the light of the mid-term review of the common agricultural policy (2002/2241(INI))

The European Parliament,
– having regard to Articles 2, 3(2), and 141(4) of the EC Treaty,
– having regard to Article 13 of the EC Treaty,
– having regard to Articles 33(1)(a) and (b), 33(2)(a) and 35(a) of the EC Treaty,
– having regard to the conclusions of the Summit meeting held in Berlin on 24 and 25 March 1999 (Agenda 2000),
– having regard to the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing on 15 September 1995,
– having regard to the conclusions of the Council of Agriculture Ministers of 27 May 2002 (8959/02),
– having regard to the conclusions of the 3rd World Congress of Rural Women held in Madrid on 2-4 October 2002,
– having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 of 17 May 1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and amending and repealing certain regulations¹,
– having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1258/1999 of 17 May 1999 on financing the common agricultural policy²,
– having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1259/1999 of 17 May 1999 establishing common rules for direct support schemes under the common agricultural policy³,
– having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 of 21 June 1999 laying down general provisions on the structural funds⁴,

having regard to Commission Regulation (EC) No 2603/1999 of 9 December 1999 laying down rules for the transition to the rural development support provided for by Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999¹,


having regard to the Commission report on the implementation of Council Directive 86/613/EEC on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood⁵,

having regard to the guidelines for the evaluation of Commission programmes (Leader+) (January 2002),

having regard to Commission communication of 10 July 2002 to the Council and the European Parliament on the midterm review of the common agricultural policy⁶,

having regard to the Commission proposal to the Council establishing common rules for direct support schemes under the common agricultural policy and support schemes for producers of certain crops⁷,

having regard to the Commission proposal to the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF) and repealing Regulation (EC) No 2826/2000⁸,

having regard to the communication from the Commission to the Member States of 14
April 2000 laying down guidelines for the Community initiative for rural development (Leader+)¹,

– having regard to the Council Resolution of 2 December 1996 on equal opportunities for men and women under the European Structural Funds,


– having regard to technical document 3 incorporating the policy of equal opportunities between women and men in structural fund programmes and projects, Commission, March 2000,

– having regard to Parliament's resolution of 13 March 2003 on the objectives of equality of opportunities between women and men in the use of the structural funds³,

- having regard to its resolution of 5 June 2003 on the proposal for a Council Regulation establishing common rules for direct support schemes under the common agricultural policy and support schemes for producers of certain crops,⁴

– having regard to Parliament's resolution of 7 November 2002 on the mid-term review of the common agricultural policy⁵,

– having regard to Parliament's resolution of 6 September 2001 on 25 years of implementing the Community regulation to promote farming in mountain areas⁶,

– having regard to Parliament's resolution of 30 May 2002 on the mid-term review of the reform of the common organisation of the market in the framework of Agenda 2000⁷,

– having regard to Parliament's resolution of 30 May 2002 on rural development in the framework of Agenda 2000 – interim balance in the EU and the applicant countries⁸,

– having regard to Parliament's resolution of 17 January 2001 on the situation of and prospects for young farmers in the European Union⁹,

– having regard to Parliament's resolution of 15 February 2000 on the Commission's draft communication to the Member States laying down general guidelines for the Community initiative on rural development (Leader+)¹⁰,

¹ OJ C 139, 18.5.2000, p. 5.
³ A5-0059/2003
⁴ P5_TA-PROV(2003)0256
⁵ P5_TA PROV(2002)0532
⁶ P5_TA PROV(2003)0257
⁷ P5_TA(2002)0274
⁸ P5_TA(2002)0275
- having regard to its legislative resolution of 15 November 2000 on the proposal for a Council Decision on the Programme relating to the Community framework strategy on gender equality (2001-2005)¹ and its resolution of 3 July 2001 on the programme of work for 2001; whereas the gender mainstreaming principle must be consistently applied in the agricultural sector²,

– having regard to Parliament’s resolution of 21 February 1997 on the situation of spouses of the self-employed³,

– having regard to Rule 163 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Equal Opportunities (A5-0230/2003),

A. whereas the Council of Agriculture Ministers meeting on 27 May 2002, referred to equal opportunities for men and women in rural areas as an integral part of the Community’s policy on agriculture,

B. whereas improving equal opportunities for women in agriculture and the rural environment was not taken seriously into account in the CAP reform proposals, either in terms of the support schemes or support for agricultural development,

C. whereas, following the mid-term review of the common agricultural policy, the provisions of Agenda 2000 concerning the strengthening of the second pillar (rural development) have become more pressing, while the female rural population has acquired an extremely important role in that context for the development of the European agricultural model and general EU development policy,

D. whereas providing equal opportunities for country women is a prerequisite for the full exploitation of the sustainable-development potential which exists in the rural areas of Europe; whereas CAP prosperity and multifunctionality, agricultural diversification and the progress of rural development depend directly upon the areas of work in which women are engaged,

E. whereas eliminating disparities and promoting equal opportunities for men and women is a main objective of the regulation on the structural funds and, in particular, the EAGGF (European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund),

F. whereas, under the Leader + initiative, women in rural areas are supported by means of strategies which aim to improve their job opportunities or activities and whereas a mid-term assessment of that programme is due to take place at the end of 2003,

G. whereas, from a strictly legal point of view, Directive 86/613 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women

¹ OJ C 337 E, 28.11.2000, p. 196.
² OJ C 65, 14.3.2002, p. 43
³ A4-0005/1997.
during pregnancy and motherhood, is clearly implemented in the Member States; whereas, however, the practical results are not satisfactory in comparison with the original objectives of the directive; whereas, moreover, the wording of the directive is extremely vague and, in regard to social security, it is left to the discretion of the Member States to decide whether assisting spouses should have their own rights or derived rights,

H. whereas, although 37% of the agricultural workforce in the European Union consists of women who play a major role in overall production and in rural development, and form a significant link between production and consumption: (a) the female rural population is ageing, (b) one in two women farmers fall into the 'spouse or partner' category putting them in a difficult position in terms of pay, social security, healthcare, pensions, and professional development, (c) the percentage of women farmers managing farms is exceptionally low, (d) the education and training of women farmers remains at extremely low levels, (e) the participation of women in agricultural co-operatives and agricultural organisations is not satisfactory, (e) illiteracy and unemployment in rural areas affect women most (in some areas the percentage is twice that of men),


J. whereas, with the accession of new Member States, the number of women farmers will increase significantly, given the high proportion of women among the agricultural workforce,

1. Welcomes the conclusions of the Council of Agriculture Ministers of 27 May 2002, the object of which was to incorporate the gender dimension and the implementation of the principle of mainstreaming consistently and, in particular, to establish specific priorities and goals for putting equal opportunities for men and women into practice in agricultural policy and rural development policy;

2. Calls on the Member States to implement the necessary policies to support women farmers, in particular on the basis of the guidelines laid down by the latest Council of Agriculture Ministers, incorporating the gender dimension in general, and the implementation of the principle of gender mainstreaming, in particular, promoting them in the context of the second pillar, the provisions on rural development aid; requests that the Member States to inform the European Commission by the end of 2004 on the progress made;

3. Stresses that the elimination of disparities and the promotion of equal opportunities are amongst the main objectives of the regulations concerning the application of the structural funds and in the programmes and initiatives concerning rural development; notes despite that, however, in practice, women farmers play a minimal part in planning and developing the opportunities offered; requests the Commission to ensure that in the approval procedures for the relevant projects of the Structural Funds due attention is paid to enhancing the role of women farmers;
4. To ensure that the levelling-off approach and that of distributing aid under the second pillar are effective, they should take account of the number of people working on farms in the context of all programmes and funding; calls in consequence on the Member States to reform the current method of calculation, which only takes account of farms, and not of the number of people working, with the effect that all women working as part of a couple are penalised;

5. Calls on the Commission, in the light of the mid-term review of the common agricultural policy and with a view to an important role for women in the rural development strategy, to make a proper analysis of the likely impact of the future programmes on equal opportunities for men and women before they are implemented, taking into account the distribution of funds in accordance with the principle of gender mainstreaming and covering the needs of rural women and, to ensure in priority that resources obtained through the modulation of direct aid are reallocated to programmes that include measures in favour of those groups in society with the greatest needs, but also with development potential, such as women in rural areas of Member States or new Member States;

6. Calls on the Commission, in the context of strengthening the programmes and actions of the second pillar of the common agricultural policy for rural development, to promote:

   (a) measures to set up and strengthen social infrastructure for women farmers and, in broader terms, the inhabitants of rural areas, particularly in the fields of health, education and training, and culture,

   (b) integrated action to develop entrepreneurship, innovation, vocational training, including acquisition of knowledge, acquisition of farm management skills, rural tourism, organic farming, new technologies (and in particular to Internet access), new forms of energy, cooperative working, combating illiteracy, and life-long learning;

6. Calls on the Member States - in the light of the fact that unemployment in rural areas affects women most - to promote, within the context of the structural funds, quality employment and the spirit of enterprise among women; considers, moreover, that the Member States should set up or, where they already exist, strengthen reliable and accredited systems of agricultural and integrated vocational training for women farmers, and life-long learning;

7. Urges the Commission and the Council to ensure that the current CAP reform proposals include effective measures designed to improve equal opportunities for rural women and to enable such women to progress; emphasises in particular that the CAP mid-term review will have a beneficial effect on equal opportunities for men and women only if the objectives thereof are profoundly altered in such a way as to ensure that particular importance is attached to family-based farming and to support for small and medium-sized farmers;

8. Invites the Commission, in view of the limited impact on equal opportunities in rural
areas of programmes and initiatives in the framework of rural development, to provide for a specific programme devoted to the ‘women’ project in the future structural funds programme and rural development (2007-2012);

9. Calls on the Member States - in the light of the fact that unemployment in rural areas affects women most - to promote, within the context of the structural funds, quality employment, the spirit of enterprise among women and a cooperativist culture; considers, moreover, that the Member States should set up or, where they already exist, strengthen reliable and accredited systems of agricultural and integrated vocational training for women farmers, and life-long learning:

10. Urges the Member States, in collaboration with local government, and with the aim of gradually eliminating social exclusion in the rural areas, of creating incentives for the participation of women in work and agricultural production in order to achieve that this participation is more balanced, to implement policies to improve the general living conditions of women in rural areas and to set up an appropriate network of rural services (postal services, libraries) establishing or improving public transport facilities and schools as well as (permanent and seasonal) facilities for childcare, care of the elderly and of disabled people, health services and family planning services in general;

11. Urges the Member States, in cooperation with local bodies, to promote rural-loan policies which will encourage synergies between public and private funds, so as to allow access to microloans and soft loans intended to facilitate women's entrepreneurial initiatives;

12. Calls on the Member States to develop indicators enabling the Member States to collect comparable data so that, in the context of the mid-term evaluation of the Leader + programme, which is to be submitted by the end of 2003, data can be included on the quantitative and qualitative participation of women farmers and the impact of those measures on women’s lives;

13. Calls on the Member States, in the context of the Leader+ initiative and, in particular, the activities of the Local Action Groups (LAGs), to make the gender dimension a matter of priority and to guarantee a minimum level of women’s participation in the LAG partnerships; considers that in this context, financial assistance and advisory support for women must be promoted to enable them to take part in sustainable rural development programmes either as individuals or within cooperative organisations;

14. Regrets the fact that the vague wording of Directive 86/613 on the equal treatment of men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity has resulted in limited progress being made in recognising the work and giving adequate protection to spouses assisting the self-employed in agriculture in the Member States;

15. Regrets that the Commission did not provide for a specific follow-up to previous European Parliament resolutions on assisting spouses of the self-employed, which included calls for:
- compulsory registration of assisting spouses so that they are no longer invisible workers;

- the obligation on Member States to take the necessary measures to ensure that assisting spouses are able to take out insurance cover for health care, retirement pensions, maternity benefit and replacement services and invalidity benefit;

16. In order to raise the status of women farmers by drawing up a ‘European statute for women farmers who are full partners in their business’, which will provide a foundation for basic social rights, calls on the Commission to begin this reform by preparing for a further revision of the directive and to strengthen Article 6 in particular of the directive to enable all the risks faced by the assisting spouse of a farmer to be covered, particularly in relation to social security, health care, old age pension, maternity benefit and replacement services, disability and incapacity benefit; considers that the directive must be more binding in all its aspects on the Member States, it being the only way to ensure that women assisting on agricultural holdings acquire the vocational status to enable them to have not only derived rights but social entitlements in their own right; calls on the Commission to evaluate the current situation for present and the new Member States and to present a revised directive by the end of 2004;

17. Calls on those Member States which have not already done so to take the necessary measures to recognise the work of women assisting on agricultural holdings so that the work they do is recognised and safeguarded in terms of social security and retirement pension, without their having to pay contributions which impose an excessive burden on family farms;

18. Calls on the Commission and Member States to pay particular attention to ensuring equal treatment and opportunities for men and women in this regard, including the integration into the agricultural industry of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value;

19. Calls on the Member States to encourage the balanced representation of women farmers (at local and European level) on the various decision-making bodies at both occupational and government level (professional agricultural organisations, sectoral organisations, agricultural cooperatives, rural women NGOs, Chambers of Agriculture, trade-unions, Ministries of Agriculture etc.) and to cooperate with local government bodies to encourage and support the cultural and social life of women in the countryside (establishment of associations – encouragement of initiatives);

20. Calls on the Member States to raise the status of the profession, which can be achieved, inter alia, by recognising professional experience and the various skills used on farms. Genuine recognition of equivalence between training in other areas and agricultural training would lighten the training load for women farmers, particularly those who enter the profession later in life after working in other areas. Qualifications acquired while working as a farmer should, for these reasons, be eligible for recognition by the competent authorities;

21. Calls on the Commission to set up a unit within DG Agriculture responsible for all
gender and agriculture policies, whose main task should be to add gender mainstreaming instruments to all relevant legislation and policies;

22. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take effective steps to counteract domestic violence, which is particularly prevalent in rural areas, through measures to supplement the existing DAPHNE programme;

23. Calls on the current and new Member States to undertake an in-depth study of the situation of women farmers and, in more general terms, women in the countryside with a view to planning the necessary policies, the relevant legislation and a development strategy geared to their actual needs as well as a systematic collecting and publishing data, quantitative and qualitative indicators and statistics concerning women farmers; requests the Commission to co-ordinate and set up the framework of such studies and see to it that these studies will be submitted to the Parliament by the end of 2004;

24. Welcomes the significant measures taken by the European Leader Observatory, in terms of information, data collection and evaluation in rural areas; calls on the Commission to speed up the launch of the Leader+ Observatory and calls for the systematic recording, evaluation and publication of data, quantitative and qualitative indicators and statistics concerning women in rural areas with the support of Eurostat;

(a) eliminating the current serious gaps in agricultural statistics as regards differing treatment of men and women, and ensuring that the discriminatory distortions operated when data and indicators are collected are removed,

(b) collection, codification and dissemination of statistics, indicators and information by gender (demographic issues, family issues, multiple jobs, income levels, education and training, health, politics, violence, social exclusion) and social policies and programmes and their impact on rural development;

(c) collection and dissemination of best practices and of benchmarks for the incorporation and participation of women farmers in local development and the rural economy and society,

(d) drawing up reports on the implementation and progress of the Leader+ initiative, monitoring and assessing its impact on the lives of women in rural areas;

25. Calls on the Commission, in the light of the review of the common agricultural policy and the accession of new Member States, to take account of the particular characteristics of the applicant countries (major structural differences with the Member States of the EU), bearing in mind the situation of women in the rural economies of the new Member States and the role that they may play in the process of rural development, so that the Leader+ programme can be extended and adapted as necessary to the new circumstances.
26. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council as well as the Governments and National Parliaments of the current and new Member States.
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Women in rural areas of the European Union in the light of the mid-term review of the common agricultural policy

A. The position of women farmers in the European Union today

In the European Union at the present time, in our quest for an effective strategy for rural development and the elimination of regional disparities, we must mobilise all the human resources in rural areas and take action to meet the needs of all citizens based on the values of the European model of agriculture and the fundamental principle of equal opportunities for men and women.

The Union needs young farmers, male and female. The rural population, particularly the women, is ageing and farming attracts very few young Europeans. Despite the fact that 37% of the agricultural work force in the European Union is made up of women and 20% of those are farm managers, the Commission's proposals make no reference to the primary role of women farmers and the need to strengthen that role.

It is at least encouraging that in 2002, the Council of Agriculture Ministers (27 May 2002) recognised equal opportunities for men and women in rural areas as one of the important aspects of the common agricultural policy. It stressed in clear terms the importance of women in this productive sector, their varied contribution to European agriculture and the importance of assisting women in rural areas by means of rural development initiatives, which constitute the second pillar of agricultural policy. This political will must be utilised to ensure:

- the maintenance and development of a qualitative, multifunctional, balanced and environment-friendly European model of sustainable rural development, in which human resources are a component of prime importance;
- the maintenance of a model which takes account of men and women on an equal basis in terms of their role in work and production as well as their participation in decision-making;
- a rural development model which gives women the opportunity to choose to stay in the countryside by creating conditions which provide employment, training and social facilities enabling them to work and live comfortably there.

Participation of women in the rural economy and production

- Quantitative data

Of the 14.65 million people working on farms in the EU, 5.37 million are women (37%)\(^1\). Naturally, the percentages vary from one Member State to another.\(^2\) Countries with the highest percentages of women working in agriculture are Portugal (49%), Austria (around 47%) and Greece (43%). Halfway up the scale are Germany (36%), Italy (33%), France and

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1. Agriculture in Europe: the Spotlight on women, Statistics in focus - Agriculture and Fisheries, Theme 5 - 7/2001

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the Netherlands (32%), and Finland (31%). At the bottom end of the scale are Ireland (around 11%), the UK and Denmark (22%), Sweden (23%), Luxembourg (24%), Spain (25%), and Belgium (28%).

- **Qualitative data (age, position in production, sectors, education - training, working time, pay)**

  **Age:** The female rural population is ageing. The total proportion of women farmers under 35 years of age is only 18%, as compared with 22% for men, between the ages of 35 and 45 17% compared with 17% for men, between the ages of 45 and 65 23.5%, compared with 19.5% for men and over the age of 65 20%, compared with 22% for men.

  **Position in production:** One in five agricultural holdings in the European Union is managed by a women. According to the latest available statistics, 1.3 million women manage agricultural holdings in the EU (19%), representing an increase of only 1% over the last decade. The list is headed by countries such as Austria (29%) and Italy (24%), while the lowest figures are recorded by Denmark (7%) and the Netherlands (6%). Despite this, it should be stressed that 82% of these agricultural holdings managed by women are small-scale, while only 3% are large-scale.

  ‘Spouse-partner’ category: Approximately one in two women (48%) engaged in agricultural production and rural life falls into the category ‘spouse or partner’ of an agricultural producer. 80% of the total number of farmers declaring that they are the ‘spouse or partner’ of an agricultural producer are women. This percentage remains constant and is almost identical in all the Member States. The highest percentages are in the Netherlands (97%) and Ireland (94%), the lowest are in France (72%) and Spain (66%). In some Member States the national social security legislation provides that the person who has declared themselves as the spouse of an agricultural producer may take over that role when the agricultural producer retires.

  The paid employment category: Alongside the ‘spouse-partner’ category, part of the female rural population is turning more and more to other areas and activities within the rural economy in the form of paid employment. This comprises mainly part-time employment in small and medium-sized enterprises in the countryside and represents a means of gaining 'real' professional status where work is recognised and acquires its own value. In this paid employment category, which makes up 7.1% of the total agricultural labour force, women account for 23%. The lowest percentages are in Greece (4.5%), Ireland (7.7%), Italy (9.6%) and Spain (10.3%). The highest are in Portugal (29.1%), Denmark, Germany and Austria (30%) and Finland (40%). In this category, women in full-time employment total 48% and part-time 28%. These are also young women (44% under the age of 35 and only 11% over the age of 55 years).

  **Sectors:** The main sectors of employment for women in the rural economy and agricultural production are considered to be ¹ (a) mixed grazing livestock, (b) horticulture, (c) olive growing and (d) mixed crops. In these four sectors, women provide 31% of total labour and their contribution ranges from 36% to 39%. It is in these sectors that the gap between men's

and women's employment is narrowest.

By contrast, the sectors in which fewer women work are: (a) holdings specialising in cereals, (b) holdings specialising in olive trees, (c) mixed cattle, (d) sheep and goats, and (e) pigs and poultry. Women's contribution to total production and labour ranges from 22% to 28%.

**Working time:** In rural areas it is not possible clearly to define work in terms of place and time. A significant part of this work is not visible. Time spent working on the farm, in the home, free or personal time overlap. The concept of duration of work normally used in describing paid employment cannot be transferred to farming and particularly not to women working in agriculture as partners.

Women farmers (paid workers or working on a family farm) account for 31% of total working time on agricultural holdings, a figure which has remained constant over recent decades.

Part-time employment is more common among women than men. Only 12% of women farmers are in full-time employment (compared with 27% for men) and 54% are in part-time employment (compared with 43% for men). Despite that, it must be stressed once again that the picture varies from one Member State to another. Denmark comes top with 40% of women working full time in agriculture, followed by Belgium and Ireland with 30%. At the bottom are Greece with 4% and Italy with 7%. Part-time employment varies from one country to another as to its nature and often takes the form of temporary or seasonal employment.

Part-time working features mainly on large, permanent holdings, in wine production, fruit and citrus growing, production of cereals and olive growing. By contrast, the hours worked by women in pig and poultry farming, milk production and horticulture are longer than part-time employment.

**Pay**1: The levels of pay of economically active women farmers are almost impossible to calculate given the lack of information. For many women (mainly those working on traditional, manual labour-intensive family holdings or farms) there is no 'pay' in terms of money as the work they do is a contribution to the family income as a whole. Moreover, when they are paid a wage, it is extremely low because, as a rule, the work they do is of 'low status', part time and in sectors where low pay is the norm.

**Quality of life:** There is a total lack of policy to support women farmers in areas of prime importance such as health (preventive medicine, lack of legislative provision in the event of illness, disability, industrial accidents, incapacity, exposure to hazardous substances etc.) as well as areas such as psychological support, information, or recreation. There is also a shortage of childcare facilities and other social facilities such as transport, schools etc. relating to family life.

**Education - training:** Research data and statistics on education and training focus only on the managers of agricultural holdings and not on all farmers, men and women. Although it is possible to say that the level of education is improving; the situation of women is still one of

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1 Women in the rural economy: European Commission, Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs DG V/A/3 - Equal Opportunities Unit Document Ref.: V/7228/93-EN

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concern. On average, women have less education than men. It consists mainly of technology and economics and, as a rule, it is purely practical and technical. 95% of women, as opposed to 87% of men, have had practical training while only 2% of women, as opposed to 7% of men, have had full specialised agricultural training.

Over the last ten years, the percentage of women who have had full agricultural training amounts to only 1 to 2%. In this respect, France leads the way with 9% (compared with 36% for men) and Luxembourg with 8% (compared with 40% for men) with countries such as Portugal with 0% (compared with 1% for men), Greece with 0% (compared with the same 0% for men) and Italy with 1% (compared with 2% for men) at the bottom of the scale.

B. Community policies and European women farmers

- Regulations

A number of Regulations¹, the main one being Regulation 1257/1999 on support for rural development, which set out Community objectives and measures for rural development, state that a number of measures and projects should be carried out by women to eliminate disparities and promote equal opportunities for men and women. However, although the Regulations contain detailed references and provisions on matters such as the status of and benefits for young farmers, education and vocational training or early retirement, they make no provision for the particular problems faced by women in those areas.

The Regulation on the Structural Funds² also stipulates that the Funds should assist in eliminating disparities and promoting equality between men and women in the measures they co-finance. The fund responsible for agriculture and rural development is the EAGGF (European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund). The fund intervenes in rural areas in decline (Objective 2). To be designated rural areas in decline, certain factors, such as population density, rate of employment in agriculture, social and economic problems, ageing, diminishing population employed in agriculture, are taken into account but not the participation and employment of women, who are the most vulnerable section of the working population.

- Directives

The main directive concerning women farmers is Directive 86/613/EEC on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood. This directive seeks to (a) provide social security for assisting spouses (system of voluntary contributions if not covered by their spouses social insurance), (b) recognise the work of assisting spouses (with no obligation on Member States to take specific action), (c) provide the opportunity to obtain help during pregnancy and facilitate maternity, and (d) provide legal redress to protect the above rights.

² Regulation 1260/1999 laying down general provisions on the Structural Funds
From a strictly legal point of view, this directive is clearly implemented by all Member States. In practice, however, the result is not satisfactory in comparison with the original objectives of the directive which were to make a substantial improvement in the status of assisting spouses. The main problem is that the directive is worded in very general and vague terms, particularly in regard to social security where it is left to the Member States' discretion to decide whether assisting spouses should have their own rights or derived rights.

Owing to the broad scope of the various rules incorporated in this directive, it is extremely difficult to determine to what extent national legislation is totally consistent with Community law. The Commission's latest report\(^1\) on the implementation of the directive in Member States' national law provides a very general picture of the situation in the Union.

In a number of countries, national law incorporates women farmers into the general social security and pension schemes (Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands). In Germany, women farmers have derived rights for social security but are incorporated into the general pension scheme. In Spain and France, they also have derived rights for both social security and pensions. In Ireland, they have derived pension rights but not social security rights. Italy does not accord them their own social security rights. Luxembourg has mandatory social security and pensions for both sexes. In Portugal, they have derived social security rights. The UK operates a contributory social security and pension scheme (proportional to the husband's contributions). In Greece, social security is mandatory for one spouse, giving the other derived rights, while pensions are provided only for women farmers who are mothers of several children.

At the present time, there is an urgent need to revise the directive and adapt it to current circumstances, EU objectives and the Community acquis in relation to gender equality.

- **Programmes**

The four Community initiatives, Interreg III, Equal, Urban and Leader+, promote equal opportunities for men and women and, particularly in the case of Leader+, support the young people and women who are one of the pivots of rural development and, as a priority, support strategies aimed at improving job opportunities and activities for those target groups.

An interim evaluation of the Leader+ programme is due by the end of 2003. Guidelines have been laid down for the evaluation (on the basis of standard questionnaires). Key criteria in this evaluation are: (a) to what extent the division of the population receiving assistance by gender contributes to maintaining/promoting a balanced demographic structure, (b) to what extent women are satisfactorily represented in decision-making processes, and (c) to what extent women’s needs in rural areas are taken into account when activities are selected.

\(^{1}\) COM(94) 163
From the initial intermittent assessments available, mainly through the activities of the Local Action Groups (LAGs), the conclusion is that the implementation and promotion of the policy of gender equality in rural areas differs from one Member State to another. In the context of the proposals of the Leader+ programmes, countries such as France make women and young people a matter of priority; the Swedish programme provides for a minimum 40% participation by women in the LAG partnerships, though their actual participation is estimated to be 67%. In the Netherlands, the participation of women in the LAGs is between 20 and 50%. The lowest percentage is in Portugal (17%). At Community level, women’s participation amounts to 30%. Women make up 40% of the promoters of transnational cooperation projects benefiting from technical assistance. By contrast only 3% of the innovative actions are designed by women.

C. With the reform of the common agricultural policy in view

In recent years, the need to strengthen the role of female farmers in agricultural production and in economic development has been given greater recognition in decentralisation, regional, structural and social policy. This is due to switching the focus from the sectoral (first pillar of the CAP) to the regional nature of development, and the recognition that rural areas should be preserved by using local materials and local workforce rather than through price-support mechanisms. Given this new data, which has already been incorporated into Community policy for multifunctional agriculture at the Berlin Summit (March 1999) and with the adoption of Agenda 2000, there is even more need to take the essential measures and promote the participation of women in rural areas in sustainable rural development and to enhance the role they play.

In order for women to play an important role in rural development strategy, there must be a correct analysis of the possible impact on equal opportunities for men and women before the new programmes are implemented and, in reallocating resources, the resources remaining from the reductions in subsidies should be channelled not only to those social groups in most need but also to groups, such as women, with development potential. To identify the problems involved more specifically, women must take part in the deliberations around the mid-term review of the common agricultural policy (pan-European agricultural cooperatives, civil society, agricultural NGOs) in order to take account of their needs and their proposals for improving their standard of living, keeping young people in the countryside and attracting them to it.

Particularly in regard to the Structural Funds, in all the programmes that receive funding, the commitments to equal opportunities for men and women must be translated into objectives, actions and practical measures geared to the actual needs of the local rural communities and the goal of regional cohesion. In the context of Structural Fund operations, support and encouragement should be given to the spirit of enterprise, quality employment and lifelong learning for women farmers and a gradual elimination of disincentives to the participation of women in work and agricultural production and decision-making bodies.

In view of the fact that unemployment in rural areas affects women more than men (in some areas the unemployment rate is twice that of men), it cannot be combated by attempts to

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1 Women in rural areas and LEADER – Info LEADER, March 2001, No. 86.
create new jobs but should also go hand in hand with an improvement in the general conditions of women in rural areas and the creation of an appropriate network to provide social services in their areas. In rural areas, there is a need to create – or where they exist – improve public transport infrastructure as well as care facilities for children and the elderly and healthcare services in general.

The new focus on support for the second pillar of the common agricultural policy, i.e. the promotion of rural development, should systematically take account of promoting women farmers in various sectors and in all the new forms of employment which constitute rural development (rural tourism, new forms of energy, organic farms, local services, cultural events).

The Member States should also be encouraged to carry out research into the situation of women farmers and the planning of the necessary development policies, and the relevant legislation in relation to the needs of their rural areas and, simultaneously, to promote gender equality by every means such as information campaigns and efforts to increase the awareness of the male rural population.

As regards information, data collection and evaluation, the European observatory, Leader, has made an important contribution to rural areas. The networking and information activities carried out by this body however should be underpinned by: (a) the collection, codification and dissemination of statistics and information by gender (demographic issues, issues concerning the family, multiple employment, the level of income, education and training, health, politics, violence, and social exclusion) and Community policies and measures and their impact on rural development, (b) the collection and dissemination of best practices for the integration and participation of women farmers in local development and the rural economy, (c) drawing up reports on the implementation and progress of Leader+, monitoring and evaluating its impact on the lives of women in rural areas.

With enlargement in view: As a result of enlargement and the accession of the new Member States, the number of women farmers will increase significantly. As an indication, a high percentage of the workforce will be women: Bulgaria 50%, Slovenia 48%, Poland 47%, Hungary 47%, Romania 42%, Lithuania 40%, the Czech Republic 35.3%, Cyprus 16.5% and Malta 13%. The total number of farmers will increase by 165% (from 6 million to 16 million) while, concurrently, the gradual increase in subsidies will rise to only 8%. With the revision of the common agricultural policy and enlargement in view, it is absolutely essential to take account of the particular nature of the applicant countries (significant structural differences from the Member States of the EU), bearing in mind the situation of women in the rural economies of the new Member States and the role which they can play in the process of rural development, so that the Leader+ programme can be extended and adapted as necessary to the new circumstances.