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REPORT

on the role of women in agriculture and rural areas
(2010/2054(INI))

Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the role of women in agriculture and rural areas (2010/2054(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on European Union, particularly Articles 2 und 3 thereof, and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, particularly Articles 8, 153 and 157 thereof,
- having regard to Council Decision 2006/144/EC of 20 February 2006 on Community strategic guidelines for rural development (programming period 2007 to 2013)¹,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)²,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 March 2008 on the situation of women in rural areas of the EU³,
- having regard to the conclusions of the seminar on ‘Women in the Sustainable Development of the Rural World’ held on 27-29 April 2010 in Cáceres on the initiative of the Spanish Presidency of the EU⁴,
- having regard to Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC⁵,
- having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (A7-0016/2011),

Rural areas geared to multifunctionality

A. whereas the sustainable economic development of rural areas and the sustainable, long-term operational capability of economic units in Europe are priorities, and whereas the specific potential of relatively sparsely populated agricultural areas ought to be utilised and developed in a worthwhile way and so as to ensure that such areas continue to be inhabited,

¹ OJ L 55, 25.2.2006, p. 20.

² OJ L 277 E 21.10.2005, p. 1 (*consolidated version 1.1.2010*).

³ OJ C 66 E 20.3.2009, p. 23.

⁴ <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/10/st09/st09184.en10.pdf>

⁵ OJ L 180, 15.7.2010, p. 1

- B. whereas regions that are – within their respective contexts – economically and culturally autonomous, with functional regional distribution circuits, can react to global changes in a more stable way,
- C. whereas a competitive agricultural sector geared towards multifunctionality is an essential basis for sustainable development strategies and for more far-reaching entrepreneurial activities in many regions, and whereas this type of potential, as part of a process of increased diversification of economic activity, has not yet been fully exploited in all areas,
- D. whereas rural areas are particularly affected by population ageing, low population density and, in some areas, depopulation,
- E. whereas, in future, as a result of demographic change, emigration and a general decrease in the proportion of women in the population of many rural areas, it will either not be possible, with existing infrastructure, to ensure adequate local provision of goods and essential everyday services, basic medical treatment and care, pre-school education, schooling and vocational and academic education and further training or adequate cultural and leisure provision, or else the structures for such provision will collapse under economic pressures,
- F. whereas about 42% of the 26.7 million people working regularly in agriculture in the European Union are women and at least one holding in five (around 29%) is managed by a woman,
- G. whereas the significant contribution made by women to local and community development is inadequately reflected in their participation in the relevant decision-making processes,
- H. whereas the principle of gender equality is a basic requirement under the Europe 2020 strategy and should be promoted in order to increase the active involvement of women in economic and social activities and to guarantee respect for human rights,

Women in the rural world and the rural economy

- I. whereas, against a background of economic and social change, the realities of women's lives in rural areas have altered and become more diverse in recent decades, women themselves having played no small part in initiating and effecting the changes, and their economic and social circumstances vary widely both within and between Member States,
- J. whereas women in today's society assume multifunctional roles in the context of their individual family and occupational ties, and this very multiplicity of roles enables them to contribute significantly to progress and innovation at all levels of society and to the improvement of quality of life, especially in rural areas,
- K. whereas, especially in rural areas, family care and care for the elderly are frequently provided by women,

- L. whereas, thanks to years of effort with policies for women and the intensive public promotion of education, advice and business start-up initiatives, *inter alia* under the second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), there have clearly been impressive successes in improving men's and women's living conditions in the countryside,
- M. whereas, despite the high degree of individualisation in the way that people live, the basic challenge for both men and women will remain that of combining their own work and their social and cultural involvement, on the one hand, with responsibility for family, on the other,
- N. whereas, in the circumstances of modern society, this 'multifunctional challenge' can be met only by drawing on support services, facilities and structures, which need to be affordable and accessible,
- O. whereas the multifunctional role played by women in rural areas can contribute significantly to shaping a modern image of women in our society,
- Q. whereas, for both men and women, employment rates are low in rural areas and indeed many women are never active in the labour market, so that they are neither registered as unemployed nor included in unemployment statistics,
- R. whereas ensuring social cover for women who work in agriculture, including farmers' wives with additional sources of income (from combined earnings, individual self-employment or part-time self-employment) as well as temporary and migrant workers, is an essential factor in the modern, sustainable development of rural areas,
- S. whereas the owner of a farm is the only person mentioned on bank documents and for the purposes of subsidies and accumulated rights, and is also the only person to represent a farm within associations and groups,
- T. whereas rural tourism, involving the provision of goods and services in the countryside through family and cooperative tourist enterprises, is a low-risk business, creates jobs, makes it possible to combine family obligations with work and encourages the rural population to remain in the countryside,

Living and doing business in the rural world

1. Points out that the promotion of gender equality is a core objective of the EU and its Member States; stresses the importance of incorporating this principle into the CAP as a way to promote sustainable economic growth and rural development;
2. Points out that efforts are needed to create living conditions in rural areas which correspond to those in urban areas while reflecting the realities of the countryside, in order to offer women and their families reasons for staying and making a successful life there;

3. Calls for the rural world to be promoted as a multifaceted, integrated setting in which people can work and do business, and for the key function of women, their expertise and their competence to be used to this end;
4. Calls on the Commission, therefore, in the negotiations on the next multiannual financial framework, to refrain from further reducing the proportion of the total budget accounted for by agricultural expenditure;
5. Emphasises that the wide range of rural businesses, including service-oriented businesses (e.g. farm tourism, direct marketing, social services, such as care of the elderly and childcare, learning on farms within the context of all-day schooling), underpins service provision in rural areas and should be supported in a sustainable way via the CAP; calls, therefore, for such services to be promoted via the CAP, both opening up new prospects and paid employment opportunities for women and significantly facilitating the reconciliation of family life and work;
6. Calls for the promotion of development strategies that have their own momentum, as a means of supporting the particular creativity of men and women in the countryside, while making use of the specific traditional resources of each rural community;
7. Stresses the importance of a viable, dynamic rural environment with a diverse population; emphasises, in that connection, the importance of adequate development opportunities and challenges for young women;
8. Calls for framework conditions to be provided in rural areas that will enable women of all generations to remain in their own immediate environment and contribute to revival and development there;
9. Stresses the importance of early retirement arrangements for farmers and farm workers with regard to living conditions for women in rural areas; calls on Member States which have not already done so to implement these arrangements;
10. Calls, in this regard, for further efforts to be made to equip all rural areas with the most up-to-date IT infrastructure, above all adequate broadband access, and for action to be taken to facilitate access to information and communication technologies and foster equal opportunities with regard to such access and appropriate training on how to use it; points out that poor levels of broadband access hinders the growth of small businesses in many rural areas across the EU.;therefore urges the Commission and the Member States to abide by their commitment to improve broadband provision in rural areas as a way to boost competitiveness;
11. Calls for electronic forms of enterprise, such as e-business, which make it possible to do business irrespective of the distance from large urban centres, to be promoted and supported among women in rural areas;
12. Points out that, as in urban areas, it is crucial to improve the quality and accessibility of

infrastructure, facilities and services for everyday life in rural areas in order to enable men and women to balance their family and professional lives and to preserve communities in rural areas; this would include childcare facilities as part of farm infrastructure (such as 'farm crèches' and other pre-school facilities), healthcare services, educational facilities (including for lifelong learning), institutions and care for the elderly and other dependants, replacement services in the event of illness and pregnancy, local outlets for everyday goods, and leisure and cultural facilities; calls for agricultural policies to be framed in such a way that women in rural areas are enabled to fulfil their potential in making multifunctional and sustainable farming a reality;

13. Urges the Member States to use the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund to remedy the lack of good transport infrastructure in rural areas and to implement positive policies to improve access to transport for all, particularly people with disabilities, as transport continues to be a factor in entrenching social exclusion and inequality in society, primarily affecting women;
14. Calls for rural development policy to focus more strongly on creating innovative and sustainable living and working conditions in rural areas;
15. Calls on the European Union institutions, the Member States and regional and local authorities to support projects to promote and offer advice for the creation of innovative primary agricultural production enterprises in rural areas that are able to provide new jobs, especially for women, in spheres of action such as: adding value to agricultural products and seeking sales outlets for them, the use of new technologies and contributing to the economic diversification of the area and the provision of services which make it possible to reconcile working and family life;
16. Points out that, in relation to innovative forms of provision, the positive experience gained with projects for women already carried out under the second pillar of the CAP (in particular Axis 3 and the Leader+ programme) should be utilised, and examples of best practice identified;
17. Calls for rural development strategies to place special emphasis on the role of women in helping to achieve the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, in particular initiatives focusing on innovation, research and development;
18. Welcomes, in that connection, ESF/EQUAL projects which seek to throw light on and improve the position of women in agriculture and rural areas;
19. Calls for the new EAFRD Regulation to provide for specific measures to support women in the 2014-2020 programming period which would have a beneficial impact on female employment in rural areas;

Women in the rural economy

20. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to contribute to an informative database

on the economic and social situation of women and their involvement in business in rural regions, and to optimise the use of data already available (e.g. from Eurostat) for the purposes of tailoring policy measures;

21. Is convinced that, given the circumstances of the rural world, training and counselling provision for women that has a specific rural focus must be maintained and developed, in particular in connection with the financial management of farms;
22. Considers it desirable to work towards the creation of a European rural women's network (or a network of women's associations) and draws attention to the successes achieved through CAP second-pillar measures;
23. Recognises the important role played by existing women's networks at various levels, particularly in terms of the local promotion of rural areas and the way they are perceived by the public; draws attention to the need for greater social recognition and for more political and financial support for these networks at local, national and European level, in view of their major contribution to achieving greater equality, particularly as regards training for women in rural areas and the launching of local development projects, including information campaigns on screening to ensure early diagnosis of female cancers (cervical cancer, breast cancer, etc.); calls on the Member States to support increased participation by women in the political process, including their proper representation on the boards of institutions, companies and associations;
24. Calls for social systems to make adequate provision for women in rural areas, taking account of their specific circumstances with regard to paid employment and pension entitlements;
25. Welcomes, in this context, Directive 2010/41/EU and calls on the Member States to implement it effectively as soon as possible, in particular in order to ensure:
 - that spouses and life partners of farmers receive social protection;
 - that self-employed women farmers and female spouses of farmers are guaranteed adequate maternity benefits;
26. Draws attention to the need, especially in rural areas, for sustainable strategies to maintain the vocational skills of women who decide to take a career break to bring up families or act as carers; calls for the reconciliation of work and family life to be facilitated, with a view to enabling women to become or remain involved, and further develop their involvement, in various types of work;
27. Points out that 'farm diversification' is an increasingly important aspect of the rural economy; notes that the role of women in initiating, developing and managing 'farm diversification' projects is significant;
28. Calls for women's entrepreneurial spirit and initiatives to be encouraged, in particular through the promotion of female ownership, networks of female entrepreneurs, and provision in the financial sector for facilitating access for rural businesswomen (including

individually self-employed women, part-time self-employed women with low earnings, and young women) to investment and credit – thus empowering them more effectively in the marketplace and enabling them to develop businesses from which they can make a stable living; calls also for action to be taken to improve the entrepreneurial attitude and skills of women in order to promote their representation in managerial bodies of enterprises and associations;

29. Calls on the relevant national, regional and local authorities to encourage the participation of women in local action groups and the development of local partnerships under the Leader programme, as well as to ensure gender-balanced participation on their management boards;

Women in agriculture

30. Calls for greater account to be taken, in company-level and regional-level development strategies, of women's agricultural and non-agricultural vocational skills; stresses how important it is for women farmers and other women in rural areas to be able to obtain qualifications and training as producers and entrepreneurs, and calls on the Commission and the Member States, in collaboration with regional and local authorities, rural organisations and women's and farmers' associations, to create incentives to promote women's participation in the labour force, to eliminate any discrimination against women at work, and to improve the training of women, including by promoting greater access to postgraduate training and specialist courses in educational establishments, to propose corresponding rural development measures under Axis 3 of the rural development programmes and to encourage existing initiatives; points out that these measures will contribute to the fight against social exclusion in rural areas and that the risk of falling into poverty is greater for women than for men;
31. Calls for support to be given to political efforts to further the role of women in agriculture by making it easier for them, in practical and in legal terms and including with regard to farm ownership, to be active as agricultural entrepreneurs so that – on the basis of their co-responsibility for farm businesses – they can be more closely involved in the associated rights and duties, including *inter alia* in the representation of interests on agricultural bodies and by having a real share in all forms of farm income;
32. Calls for support to be given to women's and farmers' organisations that play an important role in encouraging and initiating new development programmes and diversification in such a way that women can implement new ideas in order to diversify production and service-provision in rural areas;
33. Takes the view that, as part of the forthcoming reform of the CAP, the needs of women in rural areas and the role of women working in agriculture should be taken into account and given priority as regards access to certain services and aid, in line with territorial needs in each Member State;
34. Is convinced that, in the medium term, women ought to be adequately represented in all

political, economic and social bodies in the agricultural sector so that decision-making processes are informed by both female and male perspectives; highlights the importance of introducing specific actions for the benefit of women in order to guarantee that women participate in such bodies on an equal basis;

35. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to facilitate improved access to land and credit for women to encourage the establishment of women in rural areas and as actors in the agricultural sector;
36. Calls for a record to be compiled of previous strategies for ensuring social cover for women working in agriculture (as farmers, farm labourers, seasonal workers, etc.), including the implementation of Directive 2010/41/EU, with reference to country-specific property-law and tax-law situations, and to make this body of experience available for the purpose of developing adequate social cover for women in agriculture in the Member States;
37. Stresses that European policies regarding the living conditions of women in rural areas must also take into account the living and working conditions of female immigrants employed as seasonal farm workers, especially as regards the need for adequate accommodation, social protection, medical insurance and healthcare; emphasises the need to give the greatest possible value to these women's work;
38. Calls on the Commission to include in its summary report to be presented in 2011 under Article 14(1) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) an in-depth analysis of the impact of the measures taken regarding the situation of women in rural areas;
39. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

Explanatory statement

Women are the backbone of the agricultural sector and the rural world and their presence there is increasingly obvious. It is therefore important to highlight the role that women play in farm businesses and in rural areas, taking particular account of its multifunctional nature.

Prospects for development in rural areas geared to multifunctionality

It remains a crucial task for European rural policy to achieve equivalent living conditions in all regions, preventing the one-sided development of heavily populated urban areas, so that, even in rural areas, women and men can look forward to staying put and making a successful life.

The focus of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) over recent decades has been on the positive economic development of agriculture and rural areas. In future, it will be geared increasingly to furthering the high-quality, sustainable use of the countryside in ways that are efficient environmentally and in terms of energy use. That will require fresh efforts and fresh strategies on all sides, and during the development phase it will be more necessary than ever to take account of the needs of women in rural areas and to utilise their potential.

Experience shows that, in rural areas most particularly, quality of life and economic strength are linked to the presence of women and their involvement in a wide range of activities. Specifically, it has become apparent in recent years that significant advances for rural societies generally result from support for women and women's projects. Findings to that effect have been gleaned from experience with such support under the second pillar of the CAP and various other EU funding schemes in all regions of Europe.

Development prospects for women in rural areas

In the process of refocusing EU support strategies for rural areas, it must not be overlooked that the situations in which people live and work have been radically altered, in rural areas most particularly, by social change and changes in social structures, by the dramatic demographic changes that have occurred in certain Member States, by an overall change in values and by a strong tendency towards individualisation. In this context it is necessary, in all policy areas, to pay special attention to the women of Europe.

If we want to keep women of all generations living in the countryside or encourage them to move there, then support policies must reflect their needs and circumstances more strongly than has been the case in the past. It should be borne in mind here that the realities of women's lives in rural areas have altered and become more diverse in recent decades, women themselves – as individuals and in feminist groups – having played no small part in initiating and effecting the changes. The trend towards individual lifestyles presents women with the challenge of integrating their perceptions of work, family and society and their responsibilities in these spheres into the way that they live. In rural areas, as elsewhere, women expect to be able to realise their own plans for their lives, to be economically independent and to meet family challenges.

In the circumstances of modern society, the only way to do this is through recourse to the support of services, facilities and structures that must be affordable and accessible at regional level. One of the core European support strategies must be to maintain this supportive structure and develop it in a woman-friendly way. It is necessary right at the planning stage – for example, when constructing a kindergarten, creating a day-care facility or developing

public transport – to identify new approaches and to involve women of all generations in the decision making. Innovative solutions need to be found that are not exclusively market orientated: for example, for the provision of necessary everyday goods or home help and care services. Relevant examples already exist, developed by women themselves under CAP second-pillar measures. This is an area in which EU funding can help to improve quality of life in rural areas, both for the businesswomen and female service providers whose incomes are boosted and for the women who use the goods and services. The fact that society is ageing in many Member States creates a need, in rural areas particularly, for new types of service and new strategies of care provision geared to women both as providers and as consumers. One of the requirements here is for the ideology-free adaptation of medical and care provision, taking into account relevant experience throughout the EU Member States.

Schooling and vocational and academic education and further training remain fundamental to quality of life and quality of work in rural areas. In certain Member States, in recent years, thanks to the systematic opening-up and development of education and training in rural areas, women have played no small part in the achievement of educational parity between town and country. This strategy needs to be supported, including in those Member States with development needs. Forms of training and counselling provision for women with a specific rural focus have proved their worth in many areas and should continue to be supported. If they can be adapted in an ideology-free way to the everyday reality of the rural world, training and counselling will continue to constitute the core strategy for successful development and innovation even in rural areas that are already highly developed.

In order to tailor policy measures for women in rural areas even more effectively, we will in future need an informative database. It will also be necessary to incorporate a gender perspective into official statistics and rural-development policy indicators and to identify best practices in the 27 Member States.

Development strategies for women in the rural economy and farming

Recent years have seen women, with their individual educational backgrounds, professionalism and skills, contributing to the further development of traditional rural lifestyles and business models. They are, at one and the same time, the stabilising and the modernising force in such types of business, and that makes them indispensable in the sustainable development of rural areas.

This applies particularly in agriculture – a sector where women have made a substantial contribution in recent years to business diversification and adjustment to the market, thereby advancing the practical outworking of the sector's multifunctionality. Farm businesses, by virtue of the innovative products and services they offer as well as their own output, remain a cornerstone of local food supply in rural areas. There is scope for utilising the types of economic potential represented here to an even greater extent than was previously possible with CAP second-pillar funding.

In this context, there are opportunities to provide practical support measures for women in agriculture. Greater account must be taken of the wide range of vocational skills, interests and achievements of women, so that jobs in farming remain an attractive option for them. This will entail women having a full share in the resources that underpin farming as a way of life and a type of business. Women farmers must have a share in rights and duties that is commensurate with their co-responsibility for the farm business, including through the representation of interests on agricultural bodies and by having a real share in farm income.

Ensuring adequate social cover for all women who work in agriculture is another indispensable factor in modern sustainable farming. Experience with systems of agricultural social security in the EU Member States should be taken into account and should, in the medium term, contribute to a definite improvement of the social situation of women in agriculture in Europe.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	26.1.2011
Result of final vote	+: 36 -: 1 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	John Stuart Agnew, Richard Ashworth, José Bové, Luis Manuel Capoulas Santos, Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă, Michel Dantin, Paolo De Castro, Albert Deß, Diane Dodds, Herbert Dorfmann, Hynek Fajmon, Lorenzo Fontana, Iratxe García Pérez, Sergio Gutiérrez Prieto, Martin Häusling, Esther Herranz García, Peter Jahr, Elisabeth Jeggle, Jarosław Kalinowski, Elisabeth Köstinger, Agnès Le Brun, Stéphane Le Foll, George Lyon, Gabriel Mato Adrover, Mairead McGuinness, Krisztina Morvai, Mariya Nedelcheva, James Nicholson, Rareş-Lucian Niculescu, Georgios Papastamkos, Marit Paulsen, Britta Reimers, Alfreds Rubiks, Giancarlo Scottà, Sergio Paolo Francesco Silvestris, Alyn Smith, Marc Tarabella
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Luís Paulo Alves, Pilar Ayuso, Salvatore Caronna, Giovanni La Via, Astrid Lulling