

P5_TA(2003)0342

Women in rural areas of EU

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 Presidency Conclusions of the European Council 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 Third 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 the financing of 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 Council Regulation (EC) No 1783/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 1999 on the European Regional Development Fund⁵,

¹ OJ L 160, 26.6.1999, p. 80.

² OJ L 160, 26.6.1999, p. 103.

³ OJ L 160, 26.6.1999, p. 113.

⁴ OJ L 161, 26.6.1999, p. 1.

⁵ OJ L 213, 13.8.1999, p. 1.

- having regard to Commission Regulation (EC) No 1750/1999 of 23 July 1999 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999¹,
- 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 1257/1999²,
- having regard to Commission Regulation (EC) No 445/2002³ of 26 February 2002 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 on support for rural development from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF),
- having regard to Council Directive 86/613/EEC⁴ of 11 December 1986 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,
- having regard to Council Directive 86/378/EEC of 24 July 1986 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes⁵,
- having regard to the Commission report on the implementation of the abovementioned Council Directive 86/613/EEC (COM(1994) 163),
- having regard to the guidelines for the evaluation of the Leader + Commission programmes (January 2002),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 July 2002 to the Council and the European Parliament on the midterm review of the common agricultural policy (COM(2002) 394),
- having regard to the Commission 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 (COM(2003) 23),
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a Council Regulation 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 2826/2000 (COM(2003) 23),
- 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,

¹ OJ L 214, 13.8.1999, p. 31.

² OJ L 316, 10.12.1999, p. 26.

³ OJ L 74, 15.3.2002, p. 1.

⁴ OJ L 359, 19.12.1986, p. 56.

⁵ OJ L 225, 12.8.1986, p. 40.

- having regard to the Council Resolution of 2 December 1996 on mainstreaming equal opportunities for men and women under the European Structural Funds²,
- having regard to Council Decision 2001/51/EC of 20 December 2000 establishing a programme relating to the Community framework strategy on gender equality (2001-2005)³,
- having regard to technical document 3 incorporating the policy of equal opportunities between women and men in structural fund programmes and projects of the Commission, March 2000,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2003 on the objectives of equality of opportunities between women and men in the use of the structural funds⁴,
- 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 crops⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 7 November 2002 on the mid-term review of the common agricultural policy⁶,
- having regard to its position of 5 June 2003 on the proposal for a Council Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 1257/1999 and repealing Regulation (EC) No 2826/2000⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 6 September 2001 on 25 years of implementing the Community regulation to promote farming in mountain areas⁸,
- having regard to its 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 2000⁹,
- having regard to its resolution of 30 May 2002 on rural development in the framework of Agenda 2000 – interim balance in the EU and the applicant countries¹⁰,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 January 2001 on the situation of and prospects for young farmers in the European Union¹¹,

¹ OJ C 139, 18.5.2000, p. 5.

² OJ C 386, 20.12.1996, p. 1.

³ OJ L 17, 19.1.2001, p. 22.

⁴ P5_TA(2003)0093..

⁵ P5_TA-(2003)0256.

⁶ P5_TA (2002)0532.

⁷ P5_TA(2003)0257.

⁸ OJ C 72, 21.3.2002, p. 354..

⁹ P5_TA(2002)0274.

¹⁰ P5_TA(2002)0275.

¹¹ OJ C 262, 18.9.2001, p. 153.

- having regard to its 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+)¹,
 - having regard to its position 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)² and its resolution of 3 July 2001 on the Commission Communication to the Council and the European Framework Strategy on Gender Equality - Work Programme for 2001³; whereas the gender mainstreaming principle must be consistently applied in the agricultural sector,
 - having regard to its resolution of 21 February 1997 on the situation of the assisting spouses of the self-employed⁴,
 - 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 the agricultural and fisheries sectors and the rural environment was not taken seriously into account in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and CFP reform proposals, either in terms of the support schemes or support for agricultural development,
 - C. whereas, following the mid-term review of the CAP, 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 women in rural areas 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),

¹ OJ C 339, 29.11.2000, p. 52.

² OJ C 223, 8.8.2001, p. 153.

³ OJ C 65 E, 14.3.2002, p. 43.

⁴ OJ C 85, 17.3.1997, p. 186.

- 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 has clearly been 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 leaves to the discretion of the Member States to decide whether assisting spouses should have personal 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 falls into the 'spouse or partner' category, thus facing 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),
- I. having regard to European Parliament and Council Directive 2002/73/EC amending Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions,
- 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 Member States 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, however, that in practice, women farmers and women working in the fisheries sector in rural areas play a minimal role 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 and women working in the fisheries sector in rural areas;

4. To ensure that the levelling-off approach and that of distributing aid under the second pillar are effective, account should be taken of the number of people working on farms in the context of all programmes and funding; calls consequently, on 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 offering 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; in addition, calls on the Commission to ensure, as a matter of 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, for 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 Internet access), new forms of energy, cooperative working, combating illiteracy, and life-long learning;
6. Calls on 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 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 women in rural areas 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 'women' 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 mostly women - to promote, within the context of the structural funds, quality employment, entrepreneurship among women and a cooperativist culture; considers, moreover, that 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 ensure 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 which would enable them 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/EEC on the equal treatment of men and women engaged in an activity, including activities in the agricultural and fisheries sectors 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 or the fisheries sector 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, so as to cover all the risks faced by the assisting spouse of a farmer, 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 Member States, as it is 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 the present and 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 their work 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) in 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 coordinate and set up the framework of such studies and ensure that these studies will be submitted to 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;
 - 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,
 - 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;
 - 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,
 - 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 Council and the Commission as well as the Governments and National Parliaments of the current and new Member States.