



Policy Insights



Enhancing gender equality in EU agri-food systems

Our [Common Agricultural Policy \(CAP\)](#) is purposely designed to support actions and targets that benefit all EU citizens and features a strategic emphasis on fairness. Together with the [Long-term vision for rural areas](#), the newly designed [CAP Strategic Plans \(CSPs\)](#) for the 2023-2027 programming period can contribute to policy goals for all who live in rural areas, including by enhancing gender equality.

Gender equality has been an important strategic objective for European policies since the 1957 [Treaty of Rome](#). The current [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU](#) reconfirms a need for policy emphases on achieving this goal and the [Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#) promotes better integration of gender perspectives in all EU policies.

Gender equality in agriculture can be advanced by building capacity to formulate and implement evidence-based policies that are responsive to the needs of rural women, as advised by the [United Nation's European Commission on Agriculture](#). The [European Institute for Gender Equality](#) draws attention to the significant gaps between women and men in EU agriculture and rural development, noting, for example, how women contributing work within the farm business may not always receive a separate income from male members of the same household. This can hinder rural women's rights, such as in relation to social security, in addition to existing inequalities surrounding ownership of land or farm property.

EU farming bodies like [Copa-Cogeca](#) highlight other aspects of gender inequality, acknowledging that rural women experience a range of barriers that contribute to the glass ceiling. Such barriers can arise in different circumstances, e.g. when starting up rural businesses, and EU farming bodies understand that equality can be improved by increasing equal access to finance, services, and infrastructure. Besides the need for better – and fairer – living and working conditions, another key issue is women's representation and participation in decision-making bodies across the board: EU and national level to local councils, committees, cooperatives boards, etc. Related [international agricultural publications](#) and [evaluations](#) provide further policy insights – as do [experts](#) in this field who study opportunities for redressing inequality from a gender perspective in rural labour markets.



Equality action for rural Europe



Advocacy, awareness raising, capacity development and knowledge sharing can help improve gender equality in rural Europe through peer-to-peer knowledge exchanges on best practices. Topics where most advances can be made have been highlighted by the [EUCAP Network](#). Implementation of CSPs will involve a needs assessment of how gender inequalities can be addressed through interventions aimed at achieving the CAP's three General Objectives and nine Specific Objectives for economic, environmental, and social benefits. Other EU support from cohesion funds and social policy (among others) can also be coordinated to combine with CAP interventions to further help in resolving rural gaps in gender equality. In addition to equal access to resources, rural governance can be planned and managed to be inclusive of rural women across the broad aspects of life in rural areas, for example from rural community councils to school boards to machinery rings.



[Policy tools](#) to help progress the situation are diverse, covering different methods and techniques promoting a proactive approach to improve gender equality. Essential stages involve carrying out comprehensive assessments of gender gaps in access to finance, services, infrastructure, representation and rights. Clarifying the sources of such challenges helps to facilitate policy interventions focused on overcoming specific barriers that rural women may face.

Overarching political commitment is key to make sure progress is planned, objectives are established and resources are allocated. Policy solutions that empower women (including social protection programmes) can be prioritised to help ensure that they enjoy the same access as men to a broad spectrum of opportunities covered by CSP interventions.



Data and its accurate analysis are another essential component in establishing that policies are working. Regular monitoring of CSP implementation and of the progress made through national or other EU support can also help generate improvements.



As farmers, foresters and active rural community members, women will always be vital to the long-term sustainability and resilience of rural Europe. National CAP networks and partners can increase understanding on this by enhancing the visibility of success stories in agri-food value chains and rural development. Channels and platforms can be created to strengthen the voices of everyone equally. Public and private sector bodies can help through capacity building support and advice on [gender-inclusive language](#) could be applied more widely by all – and existing tools can be accepted more easily following acknowledgment of [unconscious bias](#).



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