



EU CAP Network Workshop: Women-led innovations in agriculture and rural areas

Workshop Report



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Executive summary

The EU CAP Network workshop titled 'Women-led innovations in agriculture and rural areas' convened in the picturesque city of Krakow, Poland, spanning one and a half insightful days, from Wednesday 17 April to Thursday 18 April 2024. Over 80 people, hailing from 24 EU countries, came together to explore, showcase, network and champion innovations spearheaded by women in agriculture and rural areas across the EU. The workshop brought together women currently at the helm of innovation, as well as those aspiring to lead, alongside advisors, researchers, community activists, policymakers, and other key stakeholders. Together, everyone engaged in a dynamic workshop filled with information sharing and interactive sessions.

The key aim of the workshop was to empower women in farming and rural areas through knowledge exchange, highlighting successful projects led by female innovators, and fostering networking opportunities. It sought to achieve this by:

- **exploring** EU programmes supporting women in agriculture
- **showcasing** innovative initiatives led by women entrepreneurs
- **identifying** their needs and barriers to business development
- **promoting** women-friendly entrepreneurship ecosystems
- **facilitating** networking among participants to support women-driven innovation and entrepreneurship in rural areas

An official welcome on day one, given by Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle, Director for Strategy and Policy Analysis, DG AGRI, European Commission, set the scene for one and a half days of activities ranging from keynote talks to field trips and interactive and plenary sessions. Amid the discussions, debates and conversations, the following key messages emerged:

- **challenges** still lie in access to finance, changing perceptions and addressing stereotypes, family, and care responsibilities
- **provide** networking opportunities, mentorship, knowledge sharing and promoting innovation examples
- **empower** young women to consider career paths in the world of agriculture and in rural entrepreneurship
- **improve** market access for diverse products produced via women-led innovations
- **emphasise** local-global interconnectedness and showcase female farmers and rural entrepreneurs through national networks.



Introduction

Women are a pivotal factor in rural areas, contributing substantially to both civil society and economic growth. They lead successful farm and rural businesses and play essential roles in their communities, often managing farm work with off-farm entrepreneurship and family care responsibilities. Nonetheless, despite their fundamental contributions, women encounter discrimination and barriers to accessing fair employment opportunities, particularly in rural settings where informal and low-paying jobs are predominant. Efforts to address these challenges, such as gender mainstreaming across European policies, including in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), aim to promote women's participation in farming and support women's entrepreneurship, while recognising and abating the barriers they face.

Despite representing a majority of the rural workforce in the EU (51%), women still encounter inequalities in employment rates and a 12.7% pay gap compared to their urban counterparts (Eurostat, 2022). In farming, where they represent a minority, women encounter additional hurdles such as limited access to land and uneven treatment from financial institutions. Initiatives such as the [EU's gender equality strategy](#) and workshops focused on women-led innovations highlight the importance of empowering rural women, not only for their individual prosperity, but also for the overall development and inclusivity of rural economies and communities.

Taking the above into account, the EU CAP Network, supported by the Support Facility for Innovation and Knowledge Exchange, including EIP-AGRI, together with the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission (DG AGRI), organised a workshop on women-led innovations. This workshop aimed to empower women in farming and in rural areas through knowledge exchange, identifying successful initiatives led by female innovators, and fostering networking opportunities.

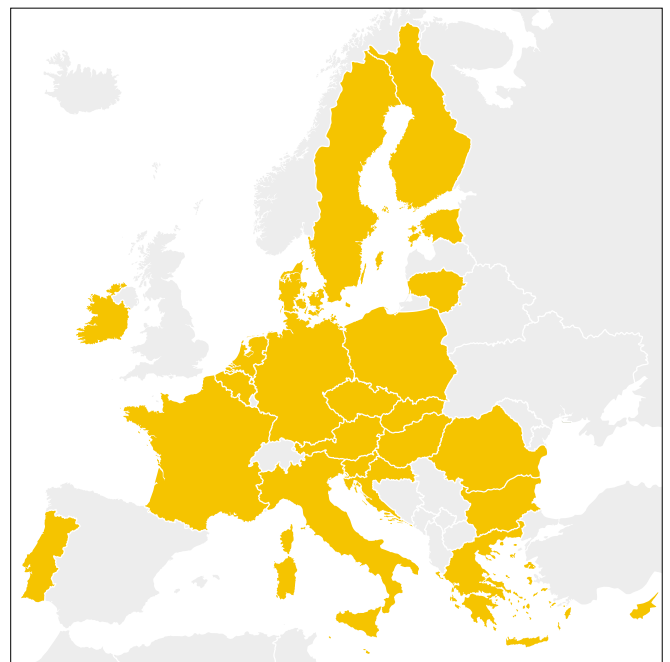


Wordle: addressing rural gender challenges, source: Maura Farrell, 2024

1. Workshop participants

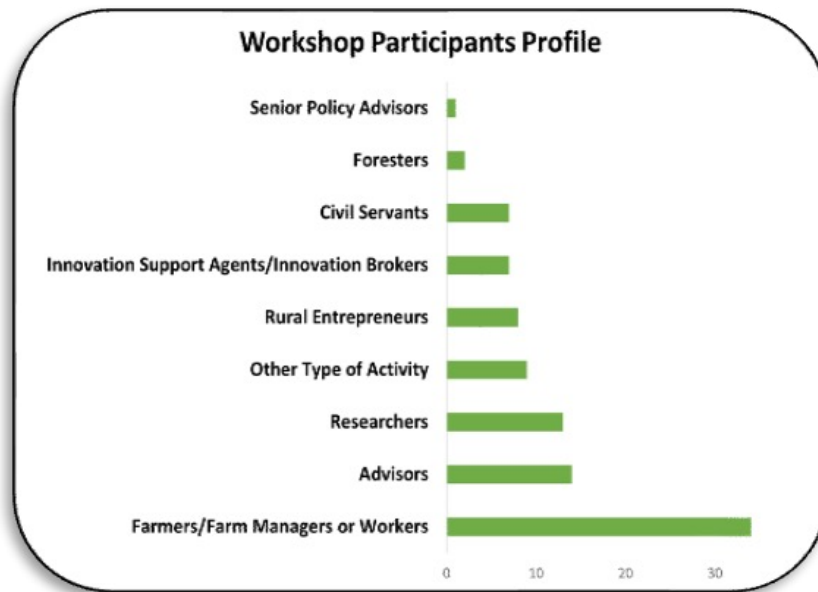
Workshop attendees were selected to participate following an open call for expression of interest. After a thorough selection process, the initial pool of 181 applicants was narrowed down to just over 80 participants coming from 24 EU Member States, the majority of whom were women.

Figure 1. Attendees by country (excluding organising team and EU commission members)



Source: European Commission



Figure 2. Profile of workshop participants

Source: European Commission

*Participants and the organising team attending the EU CAP Network Workshop 'Women-led innovations in agriculture and rural areas'*

The event drew a varied collection of participants, with a significant representation of farmers, farm managers and farm workers, numbering 34 participants in total, indicating a strong representation from the agricultural community. Advisors and researchers made up another substantial portion, with 14 and 13 attendees respectively, suggesting a blend of practical expertise and academic insight. Additionally, there were nine attendees engaged in other types of activities, adding further diversity to the group. Notably, rural entrepreneurs (excluding farmers or foresters) and innovation support agents each accounted for eight and seven attendees respectively, highlighting a focus on innovation and entrepreneurship within rural contexts. Foresters and civil servants/senior policy advisors were also present, albeit in smaller numbers, the latter indicating government and policy involvement in the agricultural sector.

The participants in the workshop represented projects or initiatives supported by a range of different funding sources, namely EU CAP, Horizon 2020, and Horizon Europe. Under CAP, showcasing community-led initiatives, a number of participants highlighted collaborations with LEADER Local Action Groups, and within EIP-AGRI Operational Groups. Engagement in projects with other European funding, such as Erasmus and INTERREG, was also alluded to, reflecting cross-border cooperation, while some relied on self-funding or lacked project-based support, demonstrating a varied approach to agricultural and rural development.



2. Plenary sessions and field trips

The workshop was convened over one and a half days and was carefully structured to enhance engagement and learning. It commenced with an official welcome address, followed by a dynamic session on connecting. Both days began with an incisive 'setting the scene' segment. Participants were offered a selection of three enriching field trips, followed by valuable feedback sessions.

A highlight was the so-called 'Spiral of Innovation' Session, fostering creative thinking and collaboration. Networking flourished during the social dinner, culminating in a stimulating world café experience on day two. The workshop concluded with ample final conclusions, cementing key takeaways and insights gained throughout the event.

2.1. Day 1

2.1.1. Welcome address: EU Commission



Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle, Director for Strategy and Policy Analysis, DG AGRI, European Commission

Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle, Director for Strategy and Policy Analysis, Directorate-General, for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), European Commission provided a [video-linked message](#) for all the participants.

The Director's speech emphasised the essential need for gender equality in agriculture and rural areas. In stressing the significance of equal opportunities for girls and women, Catherine Geslain-Lanéelle acknowledged the disparities that still exist in the depiction and economic situations of women in farming and rural areas in comparison to men. This recognition of the key issues facing rural and farm women has previously set the stage for the targeted gender actions of the EU Commission. These include attempts to close the gender gap in agriculture and rural areas, through the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, Objective 8 in the Common Agricultural Policy, and key gender elements in the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas. These strategies and policies implement a holistic approach to gender inclusion, involving investment in research, infrastructure, and services, in addition to promoting women's participation in decision-making processes.

2.1.2. Speed dating: let me get to know you



Who are you?



What is the special about women-led innovation?



What is innovation for you?



2.1.3. Setting the scene: interviews and discussion

Associate Professor **Maura Farrell**, University of Galway, and Coordinating Expert of the event, took charge of setting the scene for day one. Maura, who is also the project Coordinator of the EU-funded FLIARA (Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas) project, embarked on a journey through traditional farming, shedding light on the often overshadowed and overlooked contributions of women in agriculture and rural areas. Transiting to the present, she highlighted modern times, in which women are leading farm innovations and rural businesses. A key message here was the expanded opportunities for rural and farm women to engage in farm diversification, entrepreneurship, and rural business development. Women who undertake farm diversification can add value to a family farm facing viability issues, while rural business development is crucial for the sustainability of a rural village, town, and remote rural locations. Another important takeaway from the presentation was the increasing involvement of women in various aspects of agriculture beyond traditional farming. Women are taking on diverse roles in agriculture, including farm management, extension and advisory, education and training, and agricultural policy and advocacy are filled by women. Additionally, within farming itself, women are significantly contributing to farm diversification such as agritourism, organics, social farming, farm shops and markets, artisan foods, farm accommodation, and the wool industry.

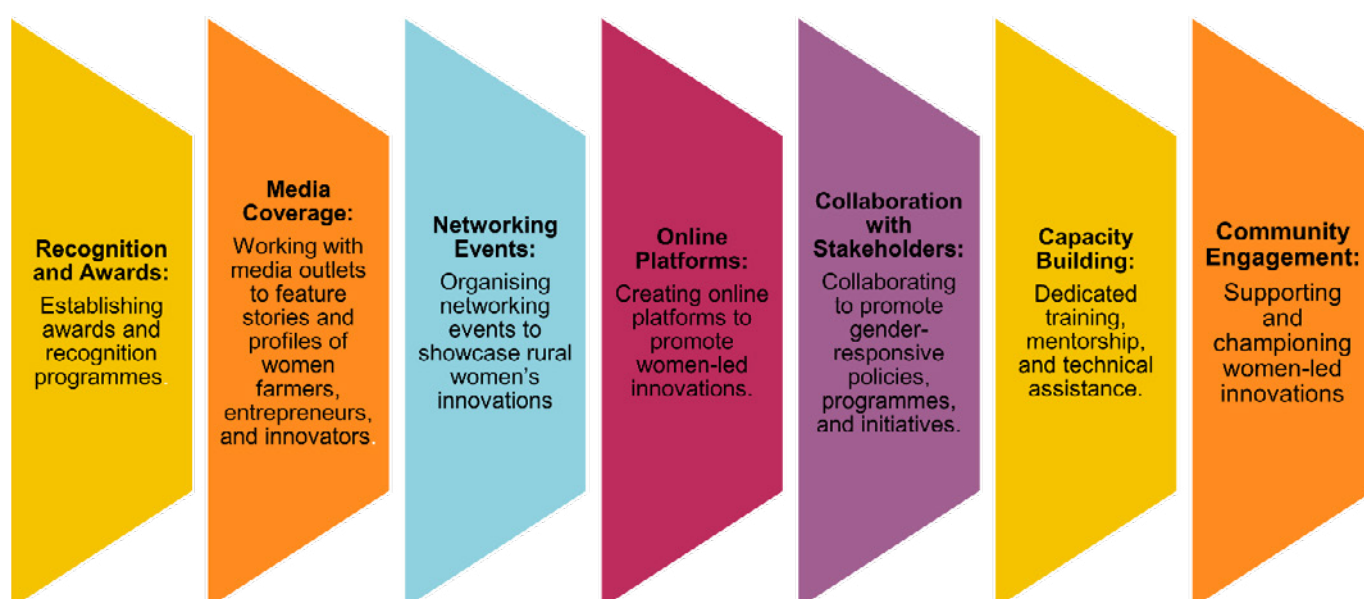
To support women currently leading innovations and encourage those interested in doing so, Maura suggested the following:

- > improve access to appropriate training which targets the specific needs of rural and farm women
- > provide easy access to financial support and resources
- > ensure mentorship and guidance is available to women interested in farm diversification and rural business
- > improve policy supports or encourage greater uptake of EU gender-supportive policy at a national level
- > provide programmes and initiatives which encourage women-led innovations on farms and in rural areas



To keep innovation moving, Maura suggested we must learn by example and enhance visibility through the following methods:

Figure 3. Enhancing visibility



Source: Maura Farrell, 2024



2.1.4. Interview session: from concepts to reality



In setting the scene, Maura Farrell was joined by three innovative speakers, who represent countless women in agriculture and rural areas across the European Union. The three women selected to take part in an interview session were chosen prior to the event from the full cohort of those attending and were selected to represent women in agriculture, advisory, entrepreneurship, farming, and research. The women were asked a series of questions, placing an emphasis on their key innovation achievements, the challenges they face as women driving rural and farm innovations, the skills women require to advance rural and farm innovations, and key advice these women would offer to others aiming to start a farm or a rural innovation. The women had the following responses:

Ann-Sofi Backgren, who works at the Finnish Rural Network (National CAP Network) as a Network Coordinator, felt one of her biggest achievements was *'Promoting the exchange of stories among women'*, while addressing *'stereotypes about female farmers and promoting role models in rural areas was a key challenge'*.

Mariya Nikolova, a farm manager, with Opora Bulgaria Ltd., emphasised the importance of women in agriculture sharing knowledge, while also encouraging women to be *'brave, honest and willing to try new things'*.

Maria Soto Gallardo, a Spanish Director of the COOPRADO foundation, drew attention to the importance of engaging young women in agriculture for generational renewal and rural innovation, and also advocated for the *'involvement of women in advisory services'*.

In general, all three panellists highlighted the importance of a supportive community for women innovators, while also emphasising the need to promote female-led innovators, which can challenge and change the existing stereotypical narrative around women in agriculture and rural entrepreneurship. Collectively, the speakers felt that addressing the challenges faced by farming and rural women and leveraging their achievements can continue to drive progress and create a more inclusive and dynamic rural society.

2.1.5. Field visits: real-life inspiration

Three very different and stimulating field visits were arranged by the Polish Rural Network, which sought and succeeded in inspiring the workshop participants. The field visits showcased tangible examples of women-led initiatives that support the event's objectives of empowering women in farming and rural areas through knowledge exchange and networking. The visit to Fundacja Laboratorium Inspiracji Społecznych (Laboratory of Social Inspiration) illustrated how community spirit and joint projects can transform local environments, fostering a strong sense of togetherness and shared purpose among inhabitants. The Targ Wielkowiejski (The Great Rural Market) highlighted the innovative use of local strengths to create sustainable market opportunities in rural areas. Exploring the work around Ojcowski Pstrąg (Ojców Trout) demonstrated the entrepreneurial spirit of women in establishing successful family businesses within the challenging environment of a national park. Finally, the visit to KGW 'Pod kwitnącą jabłonią' (Rural Homemakers' Club) and Lavendziarnia (The Lavender Field) showcased the vital role of rural homemakers' clubs and family businesses in rejuvenating village activities and creating value-added agricultural products. These visits collectively highlighted the significant impact of female innovators in rural development, directly contributing to the workshop's aim of empowering women through practical insights and inspiring success stories.

Table 1. Field visit details

	Field Visit Theme	Business/Project/Initiative Name	Description
Field Visit A:	Strengthening Communities	Laboratory of Social Inspiration	Community development organisation collaborating with locals for collective projects.
		The Great Rural Market	Local market with local produce and crafts.
Field Visit B:	Entrepreneurship	Ojców Trout	Fish farm, promoting local food.
Field Visit C:	Family Farming	Rural Home Makers Club	Developing social potential, smart village approach, and a small ceramic wares business.
		Lavendziarnia	Family business grows and processes various products based on lavender.

Source: European Commission





2.1.6. Field trip feedback: contribute to a common understanding

Following the field visit, the workshop participants were asked to creatively draw their field trip experience in groups. What emerged was a vibrant tapestry of feedback, each animated and insightful. Some participants represented the depth and care for the community that was witnessed on the field trip, while others depicted the passion, sustainability, and interconnectedness they had seen, themes that were as diverse as products shared, be it wine, fish, or jam. What reverberated profoundly with all the participants was the strength and resourcefulness of the women they met on the field trips. The businesswomen/female entrepreneurs and community groups faced challenges in establishing their innovations, including access to land and finance, market access, breaking down patriarchal barriers, and trying new and novel business ventures. Despite these challenges, they found solutions and embraced both tradition and modernity. For most participants, the field trips represented the power of creativity and cooperation, but also emphasised the potential that lies in every small endeavour. What was most apparent to everyone was that innovation was thriving within these communities, fuelled by a real desire for positive change and a passion for both community development and individual success.



2.2. Making the link: EU research and innovation by and for rural women



Arianna Pasa, Research Programme Officer in the Research and Innovation unit at the European Commission, DG AGRI, provided an overview of the importance of research and innovation by and for women. In doing so, she outlined the importance of the **European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025**, which aims to mainstream gender equality across EU policies, and highlighted the effort done through Horizon Europe, the EU research and innovation framework programme, to foster gender-equal workplaces and integrate the gender dimension in research projects to enhance quality results and societal significance.

Focusing on farming and rural entrepreneurship, Horizon Europe is currently funding three distinct projects exploring the innovative practices of women in agriculture and in rural areas. These include the **FLIARA (Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Area) project**, **Grass Ceiling**, and the **SWIFT (Supporting Women-Led Innovation in Farming Territories) project**, which were introduced later in the afternoon.

2.2.1. Workshop session: Spiral of Innovation

The afternoon workshop was highly engaging, and centred around the conceptual framework, known as the **Spiral of Innovation**. The model serves as a guiding light, illustrating the complexity between technological developments and social changes intrinsic to the innovation journey. At its core, the Spiral depicts a vibrant process, showcasing how innovation serves as a stimulus for further progression, thus propelling the sequence of innovation forward. Consisting of seven distinct stages: **Initial Idea, Inspiration, Planning, Development, Realisation, Dissemination, and Embedding**, the framework offers a roadmap for understanding the advancement of innovative activities. For all women engaged in innovative practices either on farms or within a rural setting, the Spiral of Innovation reflects their journey, with each stage of the Spiral reflecting their experiences.

The seven phases of the Spiral of Innovation are explained below in Table 2. The explanations draw on the work of Wielinga (2008), however, it is reformatted to take into consideration the innovation journey women in agriculture or rural areas may take on an individual basis or as part of a community enterprise or initiative. Using the Spiral of Innovation in the workshop session offered participants a dynamic framework to experience the different stages of innovation through the real-life experiences of pioneering farm and rural women. By incorporating stories from these innovative women at each stage of the Spiral, participants gained invaluable insights into practical steps taken, challenges overcome, and strategies leading to success. This approach not only highlighted the tangible application of each innovation stage, but also inspired and equipped attendees with the knowledge and confidence to navigate their own paths to success.

Table 2. Spiral of innovation stages

Number	Spiral of Innovation Stage	Explanation
1	Initial Idea	Rural or farm women consider a new idea based on a problem or opportunity on farm or in their rural area.
2	Inspiration	The women may seek inspiration from others and form an informal network around the initiative.
3	Planning	The innovator formulates action plans, while discussing and trying out their new idea.
4	Development	This is the phase of experimentation to develop new practices and to collect evidence.
5	Realisation	The innovation goes into full-scale implementation.
6	Dissemination	Effective new practices are picked up by others.
7	Embedding	The new practice becomes widely accepted, with local, national, or international success.

Source: European Commission



2.2.2. Workshop process

To utilise the Spiral of Innovation during the workshop, seven innovative women were chosen from the attendee list prior to the event. Three of these women represented the Horizon Europe-funded women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas

projects, while the remaining four innovative women were leading farm diversification and social innovation projects while producing market-based products both on- and off-farm.

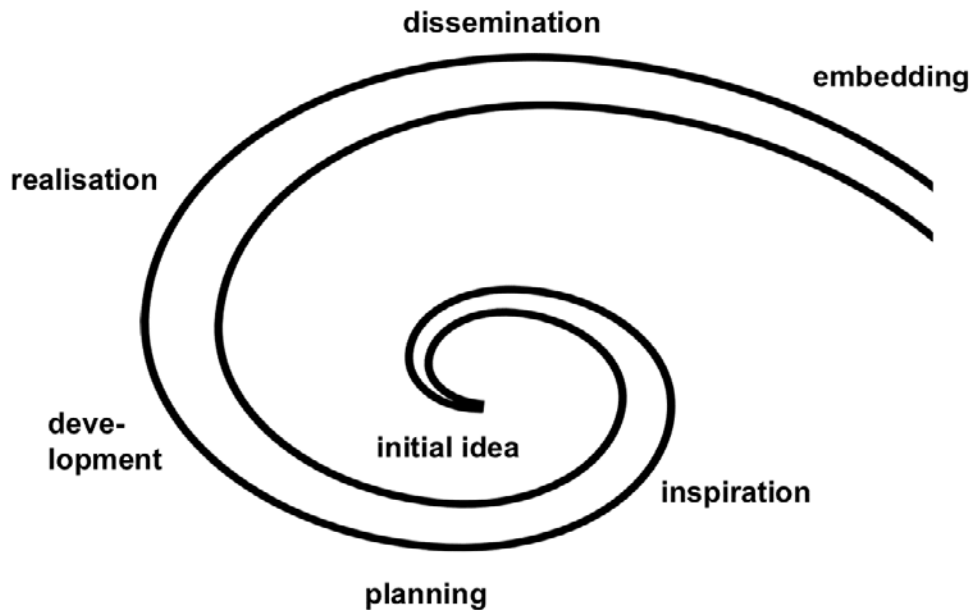
Table 3. Spiral of Innovation: Women-led innovations

Name and Affiliation	Project Presented	Project Details	Country
Marije van Santen	SWIFT: Supporting Women-led Innovations in Farming and rural Territories	A Horizon Europe Project advancing gender equality and providing new insights into agricultural women-led innovation. SWIFT project link .	Netherlands
Louise Weir (University of Galway)	FLIARA: Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas	A Horizon Europe Project, which will combine future studies, case study methods and policy benchmarking, FLIARA will examine the innovative practice of women in farming and in agriculture. FLIARA project link	Ireland
Branwen Miles (Copa-Cogeca)	Grass Ceiling	The Grass Ceiling Horizon Europe Project will increase women-led socio-ecological innovations in farming, the rural economy, and in rural communities. Grass Ceiling project link	Wales
Lidia Moroń-Morawska	Malopolska Group of Food Producers	This EIP-AGRI Operational Group is developing an innovative product: honey with increased viscosity that can be shaped into candy form.	Poland
Helena Golden	Farmer/Rural Entrepreneur: Heritage and Craft	Helena Golden (The Willow Woman) is a skilled Irish artisan basket maker, specialising in traditional handwoven baskets. Helena Golden: Willow Woman	Ireland
Maria Elf	Artisan Food Industry	Maria Elf is a Rural Entrepreneur and Artisan Food Producer, who produces artisan foods such as marmalade, lemonade, and sauerkraut. She also runs a catering and food events business.	Sweden
Lina Noreikite-Rimkiene	NGO Pociūnėliai Community	Alongside other women in her village, Lina started a social activity which produces herbal and dessert teas, spices, and many other products.	Lithuania

Source: European Commission



Figure 4. Spiral of Innovation and Innovative Women



Source: Wielinga et al., 2008

1. How did this project perform in this stage of the Spiral? What worked well? What were the challenges?
2. What are the experiences of other participants of the group in their own project at this stage of the spiral?"

Utilising the Spiral of Innovation System, the workshop arranged an active setup within the room, dividing it into individual stations. Seven innovative women were stationed at each stage, each discussing their project and how they achieved their goals based on the Spiral's platform. This configuration provided the workshop participants with an opportunity to gain an insight into how the different women advanced their innovations, using the Spiral of Innovation as a guiding canvas. The participants worked in subgroups and moved around the room to gain maximum insight into the various projects on display. At each stage, the innovative women engaged with their audience by discussing two pivotal questions.

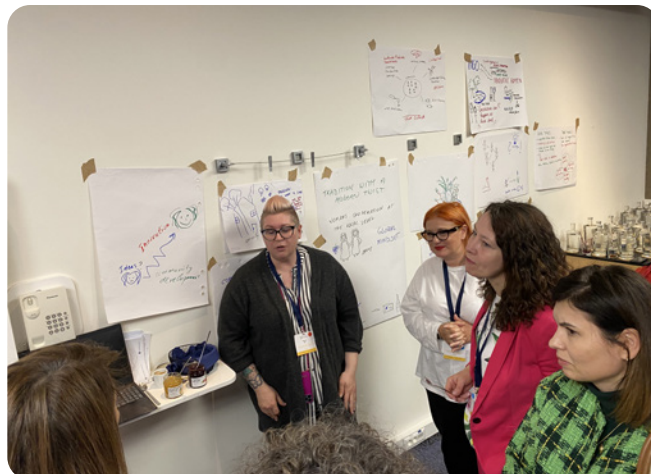


2.2.3. Emerging messages from the Spiral of Innovation session

As participants moved between stations and engaged in discussions about the different innovations on display alongside the Spiral of Innovation stages, distinct messages and significances emerged:

- > **Focus on innovation and short supply chains:** Some innovators discussed the need to develop and optimise business models for short supply chains. These can offer direct market access to innovators, increasing viability and stability. This issue arises in the Development, Realisation, and Embedding stages of the Spiral of Innovation.
- > **Product development challenges:** Group discussion revolved around challenges in developing and promoting a product, such as limited funding and requirements around improved machinery and prototypes. Such issues became apparent in most stages of the Spiral of Innovation, but were very pronounced at the development and realisation stages.
- > **Seeking external funding and support:** Overcoming funding challenges was highlighted by some innovators, with participants suggesting the possibility of LEADER funding, but also alternative funding sources, such as crowdfunding platforms like 'Go Fund Me'. Aligning these issues to the Spiral of Innovations resulted in several stages coming into the discussion, such as the planning, development, realisation, and embedding stages.
- > **Benefits and impacts:** One of the groups discussed various factors around measuring the success and impact of their project, including environmental impact, consumer satisfaction, and added value to their farm and the local economy. Having an impact on both the farm and the wider rural area was important to most, if not all participants, and hugely relevant to the dissemination and embedding steps in the Spiral of Innovation.
- > **Collaboration and knowledge transfer:** Learning from other innovators and good practice examples was imperative to all participants, with one Polish participant who sought assistance in Estonia around product development. Collaboration and knowledge transfer occur at all stages of the Spiral of Innovation, but according to the discussion, are highly significant in the initial idea, inspiration, and planning stages.

Overall, the learning from the Spiral of Innovation session revealed groups and individuals who had taken innovations from initial ideas right through to the embedding stage. Most, if not all participants underlined their ability to engage with the innovation process, and overcome challenges through collaboration and cooperation, funding, and an emphasis on product superiority and client approval. Most sought financial viability as a reward for their innovation process, but more importantly they all pursued an improved viability, lifestyle, well-being, and future for their farm or their rural community.



2.3. Day 1: Take home messages

At the end of a day of collaboration, networking, learning and knowledge transfer, two key learnings began to emerge:

1. Empowerment of women in agriculture and rural areas

Women play vital roles in agriculture and rural areas, going beyond labour input and deeper into leaders and innovators. Nonetheless, the **narrative and perception** need to change to allow women to engage at a higher and more **managerial level** in all areas of agriculture, including farming. This shift in thinking and practice will promote gender equality, while also enhancing the economic viability of farms and rural communities.

2. Challenges and opportunities

Limited access to finance arose as a key challenge to women attempting to innovate both on and off-farms, which in turn impacts the viability and sustainability of farms and rural areas. Consequently, the need for funding for sole traders, as well as community projects driven by women, required additional consideration. The **balancing act between economic pursuits and family responsibilities** was also highlighted as a key challenge, with additional support structures needed to enable and empower women to engage to a much greater extent in innovative practices.

"Every woman's success should be an inspiration to another. We are strongest when we cheer each other on and we rise up when we lift others."

(Anonymous Quote: Day 1)



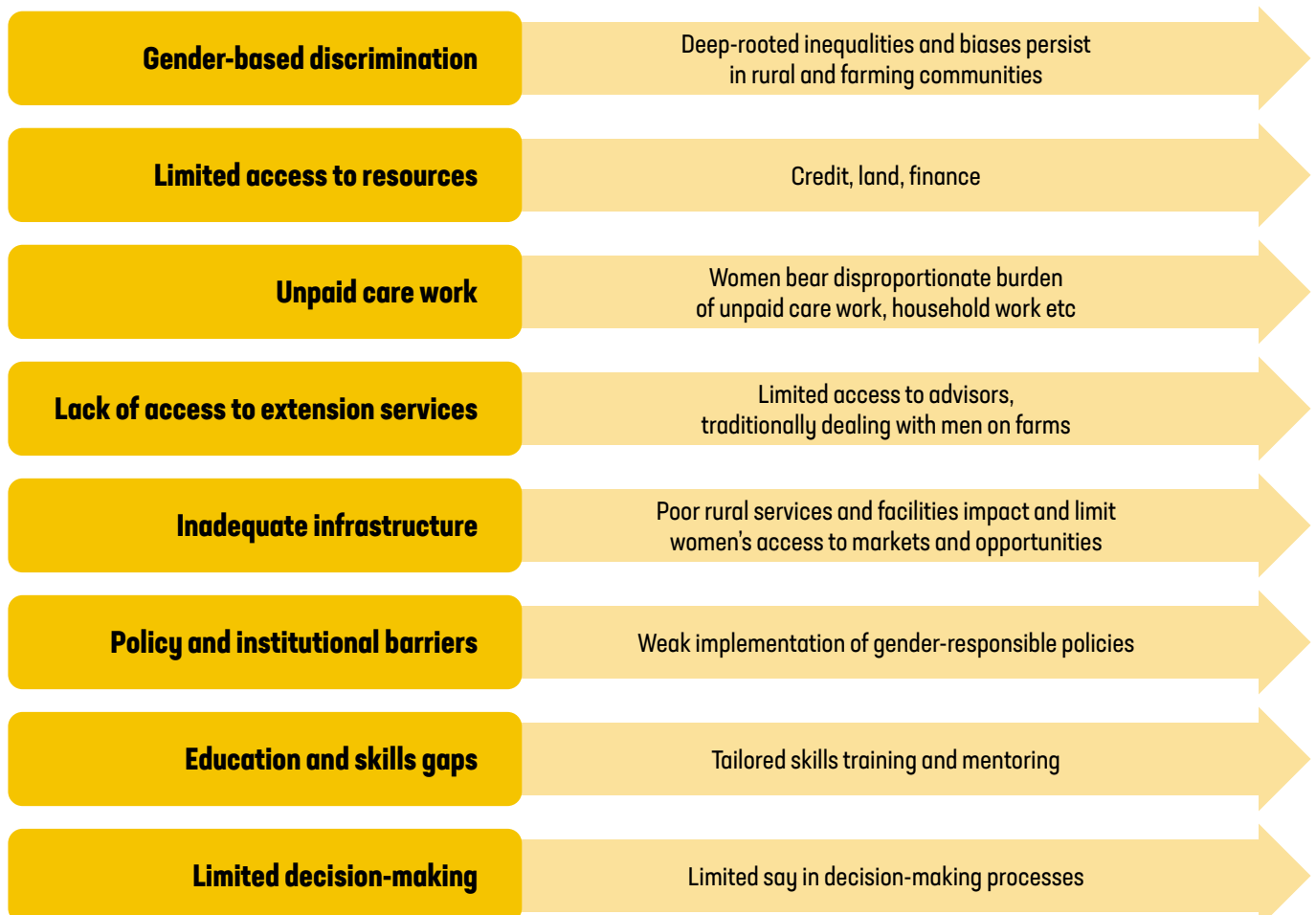
2.4. Day 2: Pathway to success

2.4.1. Setting the scene



Developing a **'pathway to success'**, commenced on day 2 with an exploration of the challenges facing rural and farm women. In setting the scene, Associate Professor Maura Farrell underlined key challenges, presenting them in the graphic (Figure 5), while also identifying the negative outcomes of disregarding such challenges. These include limited economic opportunities, issues around **food security, gender inequality, depopulation and out-migration, community disengagement, and missed innovation opportunities**. To overcome the challenges and grasp the opportunities, Maura outlined a pathway to potential success, which included universal public services investment into essential services, such as childcare and rural transport; continued EU and improved national policy and support; and a campaign of recognition and visibility and representation in the decision-making process. The longer-term advantage to supporting women-led innovations will not only be seen on farms but also in the broader rural economic viability of communities.

Figure 5. Challenges facing rural and agricultural women



Source: European Commission



2.4.2. World café: analysing opportunities and challenges

The World café on Day 2 continued with an exploration of the challenges and opportunities encountered by women innovators on farms and in rural areas. After dividing the group into four or five participants per table, three pivotal questions were posed, with the groups intermingling for each question.

Figure 6. World café questions

1. What are the main challenges and how can we overcome the challenges faced by rural and farming women as they attempt to lead innovation in farming and rural areas?
2. What support mechanisms or resources are available to rural and farming women as they engage in on-farm and off-farm innovations?
3. How can mentorship and networking play a role in fostering women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas?

Source: European Commission



2.4.3. Plenary session: world café feedback

Table 4. World café feedback

Feedback Theme	Discussion
Changing Perception of Farming and Farmers	There is an accepted requirement to change societies' perceptions of farming, specifically regarding ' <i>pigeonholes, stereotypes, and gender bias</i> '. To redefine farming as a modern and appreciated profession, social media could potentially play a key role. These platforms could be used to portray farmers, both male and female, as individuals who care and contribute sustainably to food production, a positive environmental ethos, and rural development.
Importance of Involvement and Networking	Networking and engagement within agricultural communities, and amongst farmers, especially women, were outlined as imperative for advancing innovation and addressing familiar challenges. Within networks, sharing knowledge, accessing resources, and creating partnership are identified as successful ways to empower women in agriculture and promote sustainable farming practices.
Access to Finance and Resources	Access to finance and to women-tailored financial products is identified as a key element in driving business growth and innovation. Mentorship, support networks and confidence-building programmes are in turn considered to be essential facets to overcoming challenges related to accessing funding and resources.
Mentorship and Support Systems	Mentorship programmes and support networks are viewed as essential for women in farming and rural areas to build confidence, resilience, and the skills necessary for innovation and leadership. The type of support needs to be tailored rather than generic, particularly as the issues and challenges around farming and rural can be quite different to what is required for urban-based female led businesses.
Allow for Diverse Innovation	Rural and farming women have a strong ability to 'think outside the box' and in doing so, they can initiate diverse and creative initiatives. These can be small- or large-scale, but all relevant within a farm or rural setting. Such diversity and scale need to be considered, and, in turn, supported.
Sustainable Development	Rural and farming women play a significant role in environmental protection and organic farming. This can be further enhanced if women are given an opportunity to manage and own land. As such, issues around access to land and inheritance and succession are key to engaging women in farming and benefiting from their dedication to environmental protection.
Changing Language and Stereotypes	Changing language and challenging stereotypes associated with farming is imperative for rural and farm women to gain respect and self-confidence. This can be achieved through visibility, good practice dissemination, and equality campaigns.

Source: European Commission

Overall, the key messages from the World Café highlight the **multi-layered approach** needed to empower women in farming and in rural areas, including changes in perception, access to resources, mentorship, community building, and challenging **ingrained stereotypes and biases**.



2.5. Closing remarks



The closing remarks were provided to the group by **Magdalena Mach**, Policy Officer at the European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, Rural Areas and Networks Unit. Magdalena congratulated the participants for their enthusiasm, passion, and engagement over the two days. She eloquently highlighted the untapped potential that lies in rural and farm women stressing their capacity for innovation, which can impact both the viability of family farms as well as the sustainability of rural regions. Magdalena also articulated the essential nature of establishing a **community of mentors** to support women striving to innovate and diversity at both farm and rural level. She also underlined that such support is imperative in empowering women to explore innovation and entrepreneurial opportunities. Finally, she emphasised that the **sisterhood demonstrated throughout the one and a half days** of the workshop was not simply a concept, but a concrete realism in rural communities and on family farms. In turn, this bond between women is vigorously contributing to the resilience and viability of rural areas.

2.6. Final takeaway points

Over a day and a half, a wonderfully inspiring group of people, largely consisting of women, gathered in Krakow, Poland, to listen, debate and consider messages, examples, and inspirations around women-led innovations in agriculture and rural areas. Some women wanted to share real-life examples, while others called for mentorship and funding to be put in place to advance women-led rural and farm innovations. In all, most women agreed on the following key workshop messages:

- > **empowering rural and farm women** to engage in innovation and entrepreneurship will impact gender equality and the long-term viability of rural areas and the future of farming
- > **to encourage young women to engage in farming and rural businesses** as viable and long-term careers
- > **female farmers face various challenges** including limited access to finance, stereotypes, and balancing economic pursuits with family responsibilities. To advance innovation in rural areas, these issues need to be given thoughtful consideration not only at the EU level, but within each nation-state
- > **addressing challenges** requires access to women-tailored funding, resources, technologies and services, confidence-building measures, mentorship programmes, and support networks tailored to the specific needs of women in agriculture and in rural areas
- > **networking and collaboration** amongst the farming community need to become more inclusive as drivers of change and potentially part of the solution to problems in farming
- > **societal perceptions and stereotypes** associated with women in farming continue to exist and continue to promote gender biases and discrimination. Positive examples of the rural and farm innovations led by women need to become part of the narrative around agriculture and rural business so they can be acknowledged for their work in a modern, respected rural and farming community



2.6.1. Workshop management and organising team

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3. References

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