

## GENDER DIMENSION IN EU AGRICULTURAL POLICY

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**Abstract:** The main input of this paper is an examination of gender mainstreaming in the main agricultural policy documents of selected EU countries by applying a developed qualitative assessment framework based on the most important gender-linked issues. The agriculture sector has significant gender equality gaps due to limited access for women to land rights and productive resources, unpaid work issues, and restrictions in employment and decision-making. Gender has a profound impact on women's and men's roles, access to and ownership of land and other resources, and their ability to make decisions in the agriculture sector. For the EU, integrating a gender perspective in agriculture is crucial for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in the sector, enabling women to participate and benefit from a low-carbon transition in agriculture. Integrating a gender dimension into agriculture policies is also crucial for improving the effectiveness of agriculture programs and policies, which impact food supply security, poverty reduction, and increased resilience to climate change. The primary EU policy document in agriculture is the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). To assess the EU agriculture policies in terms of integration of gender equality principles, the countries with CAP Strategic Implementation Plans for the period 2023-2027 were selected for analysis. These countries include Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden, representing different EU geographical (South, North, East, West) and economic (new EU members and old EU member states) regions. The CAP strategic implementation plans of the selected countries were evaluated through a gender lens to highlight the main aspects that would suggest that the implementation of the plan under assessment would contribute to improving gender equality and reducing gender exclusion in the EU agriculture sector.

**Keywords:** gender equality, CAP, gender dimension, governance, management

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## Introduction

In recent years, women's participation in the agriculture sector in the European Union has been on the rise. However, gender equality and the role of women in agriculture still face numerous challenges (Adinolfi, Capitanio, 2009; Adinolfi et al., 2020). Studies (Kareem and Kareem, 2021; Scow, Nicholas, 2020; Shortall, Marangudakis, 2022) have indicated that farms owned by women are less productive due to limited access to agricultural inputs such as land, capital, labor, and technology. Despite legal and institutional reforms aimed at protecting their rights, women continue to have less secure land ownership compared to men.

Women face barriers in accessing financial services and products such as credit and insurance due to limited ownership of assets, restricted mobility, and social norms. They are often burdened with unpaid care and domestic work, which hinders their involvement in agriculture (De Rosa et al., 2021). Gender divisions and social norms also restrict women's ownership and management of new agricultural technologies (Shortall, Bock, 2015). While digital technologies are widely used in agriculture for advisory services and market information, women in rural areas face constraints in accessing this information. Women are mainly concentrated in the lower, less profitable ends of the agriculture value supply chain and are paid less with poor working conditions. Additionally, women have limited access to decision-making in agriculture (Istemic, 2007; Anastasova-Chopeva, 2019). Despite ambitious policies set by the EU to close the gender gap in all sectors of the economy, including agriculture, gender inequality persists in the EU agriculture sector (Shortall, 2015; Lillemets et al., 2022). The situation in developing countries is worse in case of the gender gap in agriculture and other sectors, though gender equality and empowering of women can provide numerous benefits for the economy (Chen et al., 2022).

Though there are several studies analyzing gender inequality issues in the EU (Aggelopoulos et al., 2009; Bournaris, Chatz Nikolauo, 2011; Oedi-Wieser, 2015; Adinolfi et al., 2020), there are no recent studies dealing with the analysis of the integration of gender dimensions in the EU agriculture policy of EU member states. The paper aims to close this gap and provides an in-depth analysis and comparison of EU member states having CAP Strategic Implementation Plans for the period 2023-2027 from different EU geographical (South, North, East, West) and economic (new EU comers and old EU member states) regions. Therefore, the case study for Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden is developed.

This aims to examine the gender dimension in agriculture policy documents of selected EU member states by applying qualitative methods. The rest of the manuscript is presented as follows: the next section provides a literature review on the subject, followed by a description of data and methods, results of case study and discussion. The last section concludes and provides policy recommendations.

## Literature Review

In the early of 21<sup>st</sup> century they have been reported major changes in the approach of policy-making in the fields of work/family reconciliation, equal opportunities and social policies at the EU level, stemmed from 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s. These are closely interrelated fields with a commitment to promote gender equality. However, such striking socio-cultural shifts have been contested for each policy area (Lewis, 2006). In this study it was demonstrated that while no unequivocally linear policy development can be identified in any of the fields examined, when they are taken together, it can be argued that gender equality has been framed more narrowly and more instrumentally than before. While policy development is bounded on the slipperiness of policy meanings and the way in which this may serve to reshape policy priorities, these issues go beyond the sphere of gender equality (Lewis, 2006; Tian et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022). Gender equality is an apparent but subtly inferred phenomenon that has been dating back in Europe in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but systematically reported during the last decade of analysis (Allwood, 2013). In this study it was argued that the unintended gender consequences of EU development policy are caused not (or at least not only) by the failure to gender mainstream, but by the way in which gender slips off the agenda once other policies intersect with development. In principle, policy coherence for development (PCD) aimed at preventing policies in other areas having a negative impact on development, but although claiming gender as a crosscutting issue. For this there is lack or little evidence that gender is leading the intersections between development and other related areas. Subsequently, gender plays a decisive role of policy analyses if unintended gender consequences are to be avoided.

In the relevant literature among the key-determinants of contemporary EU governance are the evaluation of adopting an effective and coherent policy-making process, as well as the EU's constitutionalized commitment towards gender equality in all its activities (mainly that of Article 8 TFEU). In this context the operational linkages between ex ante and ex post evaluation and the contribution of evaluations to policy learning are crucial, having as common ground the promotion of gender equality (Mergaert and Minto, 2015).

Considering the findings of relevant studies on gender equality there is convergent point that policy instruments research is an essential part of studying EU governance. In this context there is reported a growing interest in processes of (de-)legalization and patterns of instrument choice requires a more process- and context-oriented analysis of selecting the most suited EU's instrument (Ahrens, 2019). Thereafter, the investigation of patterns of instrument choice in soft law policy programs, by examining the life cycle of EU gender equality policy programs from 1982 to 2019 showed that gender equality policy programs offer an in-depth understanding of how the European Commission upgrades and downgrades policy instruments (Ahrens, 2019). It is noteworthy that patterns of

policy instrument choice are not necessarily inflexible once a policy instrument is selected. Contrarily, patterns vary while the instrument is (de-)legalized, implying that gender equality policy programs are explanatory tools of the shifts in the use of legislative instruments and their limitations (Ahrens, 2019).

Among the most crucial issues of social and gender policies at the EU level are the uneven developments and concerns over the EU as not overly beneficial to social progress and gender equality. The EU has developed a range of social policies, with gender equality enjoying a long-standing status as EU's founding value, dating back to the 1957 principle of equal pay for equal work (Plomien, 2018). Nevertheless, sixty years later, social justice objectives and equality between women and men remain contentious. While it is a reality that social and gender themes are revived by the proposal to develop the European pillar of social rights, the exact implementation has to consider the absence of post-Brexit UK (Plomien, 2018). In this historic moment of EU unity they have been examined the ways in which gender can be manifested in the area of foreign policy, an area where the UK has consistently shown some leadership on the integration of gender perspectives in its foreign policy through its international development programs and the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, proposing the evolution of gender equality as a dimension of EU foreign and security policy in the context of EU–UK relations, and the divergences, opportunities and constraints that are crystallized by the Brexit process (Haastrup et al., 2019). In this context it can be alleged the progressive development of social inclusion and gender equality, more as an adjustment to, rather than a transformation of, the (actually) unequal European economy and society (Plomien, 2018).

Indeed, among the most striking cases of gender inequality in the public context is that of European Union (EU)'s Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) through a framework based on feminist institutional theory that highlights the durability in the dynamics of gender relations (Kronsell, 2016). Path dependency has been originated from historic features of military institutions -that is a strict sex division based on "gender war roles"- that has influenced the development of different CSDP bodies. The CSDP is predominately sexed, yet this remains invisible through normalization. The CSDP embodies different types of military masculinities; the developed relationships are important for the reproduction of the gender order through a gendered logic of appropriateness. While women's bodies are perceived out of the CSDP, the construction of femininity in relation to the protector/protected binary is central to it. Women's bodies are absent from the CSDP and they lack agency but are also associated with a protected femininity (Kronsell, 2016).

It cannot be undermined the fact that gender policy of some European countries is far from ensuring equality between men and women. The lack of gender equality between men and women creates risks of lower quality and efficiency in the implementation of

relevant management decisions. Therefore, the problem of formulating and implementing gender policy in the current environment is relevant and needs to be addressed. It is necessary to balance the interests of men and women and establish partnerships between them. To do this, it is necessary to improve the mechanisms for the formation and implementation of the relevant state gender policy, to accentuate gender parity, and to ensure equality of men and women in all spheres of public life (Lukianets-Shakhova et al., 2023).

In response to this gender inequality, it remains vital to underscore the ways in which EU acts as an international organization and simultaneously it implements policies for which national governments have to comply with and include them in their legislative framework. When focusing on selected sectors of contemporary economies it is interesting to mention the relationship between the EU and its member states regarding the construction and the delivery of policies, considering differential levels of power and other actors in the process, as well as the lobby groups, defining those (agricultural) policies and gender equality policies (Shortall and Marangudakis, 2024). In this study it was stressed out the power of key players having strong influence in the agricultural context and weak in the gender context. When approaching these two fields jointly it was shown little scope or interest to advance gender equality measures in agricultural policy (Shortall and Marangudakis, 2024).

Therefore, EU and its approach to gender equality should be prioritized as reference frame and inspiration for the discussion and the decisions among the EU member states (Pachocka et al., 2018). The main direction of EU efforts and legislations is to guarantee gender equality in politics, economy, and society, while defining those good practices to follow. Further considerations are originated from the fact that the lack of EU legislation on women's representation on corporate boards can result in the divergence or the absence of such a regulation at a portion of EU member states, including Poland and Estonia, while hindering the gender equality prospects and opportunities emerged, accordingly (Pachocka et al., 2018). In the relevant literature it is utmost importance the development of a gender mainstreaming strategy in the EU focusing on this strategy foundation by other than gender equality policy goals (Stratigaki, 2005). Gender mainstreaming was originally launched in 1996 aiming at promoting gender equality for all EU policies in alignment with international and European mobilization on women's issues. Such a mainstream policies transformation can be feasible while introducing a perspective of gender equality together with a positive action in political decision-making that mobilized and incentivized gender distribution of political power over policy institutions and technical, human, and financial resources. Subsequently, policy softening and institutional weakening were reported due to counteracting by the EU political and administrative hierarchies (Stratigaki, 2005).

### **Research Methodology and Data**

The aim of the research is to analyse gender dimension in EU agriculture policy. The Common Agricultural Policy documents of selected EU Member States were analysed. The Qualitative Research Method is applied. The countries selected for the study are the countries having CAP Strategic Implementation Plans for the period 2023-2027. The countries analysed are Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden.

In order to assess the policies of the selected countries through a gender lens, it is necessary to highlight the main aspects that would suggest that the implementation of the plan under assessment would contribute to improving gender equality and reducing exclusion. It was therefore assessed whether the documents under consideration have these aspects and issues:

- Gender considerations integration into the policy framework.
- To what extent does the policy address and challenge prevailing gender stereotypes?
- How does the document delineate references to individuals based on gender?
- Does the policy aim to increase awareness of women's rights, confront gender stereotypes, and facilitate equal opportunities?
- To what degree does the policy incorporate gender perspectives?
- If there is a discernible gender dimension within the policy framework?
- Does the policy account for disparities in gender-based compensation?

### **Research Results**

Bellow analysis of The Common Agricultural Policy documents was performed in seven selected EU member states: Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden based on important aspects of increasing gender equality and reducing exclusion.

#### ***Croatia***

Gender considerations are inadequately integrated into the policy framework in Croatia (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2023). Although the importance of gender equality is acknowledged, there is a notable absence of emphasis on women's empowerment within the agricultural sector and rural areas. This policy document fails to challenge gender stereotypes by neglecting to recognize the substantial contributions of women in agriculture and rural settings, as well as to promote their equitable participation in decision-making processes. Mere acknowledgment of the unequal representation of women and men among farm managers does not suffice to demonstrate a commitment to advancing gender equality. The policy falls short in highlighting

objectives aimed at achieving parity in farm management and ownership statistics, thus neglecting to propose measures to address these disparities.

Furthermore, the policy lacks initiatives to raise awareness about women's rights, challenge stereotypes, or foster equal opportunities. Gender mainstreaming, a crucial aspect of agricultural policy and programming, is not actively advocated for. Notably, the document does not mention women's empowerment, overlooks gender property structures, and acknowledges the gender composition of farm managers without articulating goals to achieve gender balance. Moreover, it fails to acknowledge that women in rural areas and the agricultural sector face higher rates of unemployment, engage more frequently in part-time employment, and contribute to the labor force predominantly through unpaid and often invisible work.

Even in infrastructural objectives such as the expansion of childcare facilities, there is a lack of consideration for the caregiving roles typically undertaken by women, with little focus on enabling rural women to engage in (self-)employment opportunities. Similarly, the document neglects to address the barriers faced by women in accessing funding, training, information, mentorship, and networking opportunities, which are often more pronounced or specific to women. The absence of gender analysis or a gender perspective in the Croatian Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plan undermines efforts toward gender equality within the agricultural sector.

It is safe to state that the document is almost completely gender-blind. Gender stereotypes are not mentioned nor challenged.

In the document, women are consistently referred to as "žene" (women) in the Croatian language. Despite the inherent gender sensitivity of the Croatian language, this characteristic is not adequately reflected in the document. Among the 1014 pages, women are mentioned only 17 times, and throughout the text, the language predominantly employs the male version of nouns.

The document lacks initiatives aimed at raising awareness about women's rights, challenging stereotypes, and promoting equal opportunities. Additionally, it indirectly acknowledges that gender equality measures are mandated by the European Union (EU), as evidenced by the following excerpt:

"In accordance with the requirements of the new reformed Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and European Commission (EC) recommendations to member states, it may be necessary or desirable to introduce 'new' selection criteria related to social inclusion and gender equality" (p. 256).

The document outlines conditions for new entrants into agriculture, particularly focusing on the criteria necessary for individuals to be classified as new farmers. While specific interventions targeting young farmers are mentioned, such as "Introducing young farmers" (75.01) and "Payment for young farmers" (30.01), with numerous prerequisites to fulfill, there is a notable absence of concrete strategies aimed at incentivizing young

or new individuals to enter the agricultural sector. Moreover, the document exclusively discusses farmers as the primary entrants into the sector, without acknowledging other potential entrants.

Although the document emphasizes the importance of new farmers and young farmers in the renewal of agriculture and rural areas, it fails to delineate specific measures for attracting new entrants. Notably, gender-specific measures are not mentioned. While there is a commitment to report on the gender distribution of newly established farms in the reporting section, there is a conspicuous lack of explicit measures addressing gender differences in occupations, enterprises, or other gender-related aspects such as pay gaps, pension disparities, or caregiving burdens in rural areas.

This absence of gender-specific measures suggests a pervasive gender-blindness throughout the document, indicating a need for more inclusive and gender-sensitive approaches within agricultural policy frameworks.

### ***Ireland***

In Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 the gender considerations are compartmentalized within this policy (Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, 2023) delineated as a distinct objective (Specific Objective 8, Number 6) with its own targeted solutions. While the policy acknowledges the need for greater inclusion of women in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as agriculture, forestry, and fishing, particularly in leadership and management roles, there is no evident effort to challenge entrenched gender stereotypes beyond this.

Throughout the document, the gender-neutral term "farmer/s" predominates. References to men are sparse, with only one mention of "(young) male farmers" concerning the Young Farmers Scheme. The terms "women" and "females" are specifically invoked in connection with Specific Objective 8, highlighting their treatment as a distinct demographic requiring tailored measures. Notably, terms such as "women farmers" and "female farmers" are used in contexts where targeted efforts to encourage women's involvement in agriculture are delineated. Additionally, references to "female entrepreneurs," "rural female entrepreneurs," and "early-stage female entrepreneurs" underscore initiatives aimed at fostering opportunities for women in agricultural and business development. The term "female relative" is employed in discussions regarding initiatives to facilitate farm succession to women. Pronouns used within the document vary, with instances of "his/her" used in relation to farmers, alongside the more gender-neutral "their," particularly when referencing young farmers and their enterprises.

While the document lacks evidence of raising awareness about women's rights or challenging gender stereotypes, it introduces three measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women. These measures include a higher grant rate for women for investment in farm modernization, funding for women-only Knowledge



Transfer (KT) Groups, and support for gender equality initiatives through European Innovation Partnership schemes (EIPs).

Both pillars of this policy prioritize the encouragement of new entrants to agriculture as part of their focus on enhancing social sustainability. Specifically, three objectives are outlined to facilitate the entry of new individuals into the agricultural sector. It's noteworthy that new and young farmers are treated collectively, although some measures proposed for these groups are also extended to women, who are addressed as a separate demographic.

Objective 1 underscores the importance of supporting family incomes and mitigating income disparities within agri-food systems and between agriculture and other economic sectors. One of the motivations highlighted is to attract new entrants and young farmers, recognizing that low incomes can deter individuals from pursuing careers in agriculture. Objective 7 addresses the challenges posed by an aging farming population and the dwindling number of young farmers, who encounter difficulties in accessing land and financing. Alongside income support initiatives, measures related to land mobility and succession planning are proposed.

Moreover, targeted measures aimed at encouraging new entrants to agriculture are delineated. These include the promotion of generational renewal through the allocation of a portion of direct payments to the Complementary Income Support for Young Farmers scheme, the prioritization of young and new farmers for funding from the National Reserve scheme, supports for establishing farm partnerships, and increased grant aid rates for young farmers through the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme (TAMS).

While the policy acknowledges the gender dimension, recognizing the low representation of women in agriculture and leadership roles, it is not fully integrated into the document and is addressed separately. Three targeted measures related to gender equality are outlined, and readers are directed to complementary measures in Food Vision 2023.

However, gender pay gaps, pension disparities, and gender care gaps are not specifically addressed within the policy framework, highlighting areas where gender considerations could be further developed to promote gender equality within the agricultural sector.

### ***Italy***

In Italy the CAP Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 (Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies, 2023) discusses gender opportunities extensively, mentioning the term "gender opportunities" 69 times. This phrase is predominantly employed to elucidate scenarios wherein there exists a necessity for achieving gender balance and to specifically address issues pertaining to significant disparities in accessing various opportunities. They are mentioned in two Special Objectives:

1. „Attracting and Supporting Young Farmers and Start-ups in Rural Areas (SO7)“:

In the context of attracting and retaining younger demographics in rural locales, a series of interventions is outlined, with a primary emphasis on horizontally applying the principle of equal gender opportunity. Economic measures are proposed to include parameters that directly or indirectly incentivize improved working conditions, with specific attention to women's conditions.

2. „Promoting Jobs, Growth, and Gender Equality in Rural Areas (SO8)“:

The primary objective is to enhance the quality of life in rural regions by augmenting social inclusion processes, improving infrastructure and service quality and accessibility (including digital infrastructure), and fostering entrepreneurship to counteract depopulation. Upholding gender equality principles and expanding employment and income opportunities for women, inherent in the majority of the aforementioned interventions, will be facilitated through appropriate selection criteria.

In addressing issues related to work, gender equality, and broader social inclusion, collaborative efforts with the ESF+ (European Social Fund Plus) will be pursued during the implementation phase, as outlined in the Partnership Agreement. These collaborations may encompass investment in social services, initiatives to promote labor and social integration of migrant workers, dissemination of information regarding job opportunities in agricultural sectors, skills development (including digitalization), educational training at various levels to enhance awareness of sectoral challenges, and initiatives aimed at enhancing employability in agricultural sectors among unemployed individuals.

At the regional level, specific mentions of gender considerations are made in regions such as Tuscany (addressing gender in general) and Umbria (with a specific focus on women).

While the document predominantly emphasizes addressing gender inequality-related issues, there is a notable absence of specific considerations regarding gender stereotypes. Gender disparities, particularly in employment rates, especially prevalent in rural areas, are acknowledged, with an emphasis on promoting equal opportunities as fundamental for achieving integration. Strategies outlined aim to create new business avenues, particularly targeting younger generations and women, by facilitating access to land, credit, and technical assistance, alongside fostering knowledge transfer. Incentives are proposed for establishing and expanding new farms, with specific parameters outlined for younger individuals and women, without age restrictions.

The policy under scrutiny demonstrates a notable lack of consideration for the distinct needs of men and women. It predominantly focuses on enterprises rather than individual workers, often pairing the terms "young" and "women" together. Notably, the only demographic target receiving direct attention is the youth population.

Recognizing generational turnover as a priority, the policy outlines a strategy to attract and support young individuals into agricultural pursuits. This strategy aims to create

fresh entrepreneurial avenues, particularly targeting youth and women, by enhancing access to land, credit, technical assistance, and practical-operational knowledge transfer, utilizing efficient and innovative agricultural models as benchmarks. Acknowledging that access to land poses a significant hurdle for young farmers, the policy underscores the importance of initial investments in land capital, which often present obstacles due to their substantial financial requirements and the challenges associated with accessing credit for inexperienced entrants to the workforce.

In terms of incentivizing the entry of young people and women, national initiatives and tools synergistically complement the interventions outlined by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). For instance, initiatives aimed at fostering youth and female entrepreneurship may involve providing zero-interest mortgages and non-repayable grants, with eligibility criteria targeting individuals under 41 years of age and women without age restrictions.

Gender equality and the enhancement of employment and income opportunities for women are embedded within specific objectives, particularly Objective 8, which seeks to promote employment, growth, gender equality, and social inclusion, including women's engagement in agriculture. However, the policy tends to conflate the interests of women with those of young people, potentially impeding the fulfillment of objectives tailored to address women's specific needs.

Regrettably, the policy overlooks gender pay gaps and pension disparities. Nevertheless, the introduction of social conditionality, linking CAP payments to compliance with European labor laws, represents a significant development. However, social conditionality primarily focuses on migrant workers, without explicitly addressing the needs of female workers. Historically, the CAP has prioritized companies and market relations over individual workers. Nonetheless, the introduction of social conditionality signifies a substantial advancement in policy orientation.

### ***Lithuania***

In the Lithuanian context, the term "woman" derives from the root word "moter", from which all other forms of the word are constructed. Consequently, the term "woman" and its derivatives are mentioned a total of 13 times in the entire 1088-page Lithuanian Strategic plan 2023–2027 for Agriculture and Rural Development of Lithuania (Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania, 2023). Notably, this term recurs in conjunction with the eighth specific objective of the plan, which aims to promote employment, growth, and gender equality, specifically emphasizing women's participation in agriculture, social inclusion, and local development in rural areas, encompassing circular bio-economy and sustainable forestry.

However, upon delving into the implementation details of this objective, gender equality is predominantly addressed in the context of applying the LEADER principles. The document underscores the pivotal role of Local Action Groups (LAGs) in implementing

interventions. To ensure the representation of all interest groups, particularly the socially vulnerable, in LAG decision-making processes, specific requirements are imposed on LAG decision-making bodies. These requirements mandate the inclusion of at least one representative from an organization advocating for equal opportunities for women and men, individuals with disabilities, or any other human rights organization focused on the rights and well-being of vulnerable and/or marginalized groups.

Similarly, the terms "gender equality" and "gender" are mentioned 14 times throughout the document. However, it can be contended that gender-related aspects are inadequately integrated into the policy framework. The policy fails to challenge gender stereotypes, raise awareness about women's rights, or actively promote equal opportunities.

In essence, the document lacks substantive engagement with gender issues and falls short of actively addressing gender disparities or promoting gender equality within its provisions.

The policy extensively discusses measures aimed at augmenting the number of young farmers and new agricultural enterprises, bolstering their economic viability, and identifying obstacles hindering their success. However, conspicuously absent from this discourse is any acknowledgment of gender dynamics. Notably, there is a glaring omission regarding disparities in pay and pension entitlements between genders.

Consequently, it is evident that this policy framework neglects to account for divergences between men and women in the realm of occupations and enterprises.

#### ***The Netherlands***

Throughout the policy, male and female farmers are predominantly referred to using the Dutch male version of the term "farmer(s)," namely 'boer(en)'. Additionally, two gender-neutral terms, namely 'agrariërs' and 'landbouwers', are utilized to describe farmers. The female version of the term "farmer" ('boerin') is mentioned only twice, whereas the male version ('boer') appears 294 times in the The Netherlands National Strategic Plan CAP for 2023-2027 (Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food, 2023). However, there is no explicit clarification within the document indicating that 'boer(en)' encompasses both male and female farmers, which could have easily been addressed. The usage of 'he/she' five times and 'his/her' three times further underscores the gendered language within the policy. Moreover, the word 'women/woman' is mentioned 32 times, whereas 'men/man' is mentioned 463 times, revealing a significant linguistic imbalance that reinforces gender invisibility. Furthermore, the policy assumes a binary gender framework, overlooking non-binary and gender-diverse individuals.

On two occasions, the policy emphasizes that changes within the agricultural sector hinge upon "decisions taken around the kitchen table", with the kitchen table representing informal discussions. While it can be inferred that women participate in these conversations, there is a risk that this phrase reinforces traditional gender roles, portraying women's involvement primarily in informal settings rather than formal

decision-making processes. This perpetuates gender stereotypes regarding labor divisions within agricultural family businesses.

Overall, the representation of female farmers within the policy is minimal, and there is a notable absence of initiatives to raise awareness about women's rights or promote equal opportunities. Instead, the policy tends to reproduce and perpetuate gender stereotypes rather than challenging them.

The policy fails to address gender care gaps, gender pay gaps, or gender pension gaps within rural areas. However, it does feature a comprehensive section focused on attracting new entrants, particularly young farmers, into the agricultural industry under chapter 2.1.S07. This section acknowledges the need for new entrants, including young farmers, to ensure the future viability of the agricultural sector, meet climate and sustainability objectives, and enhance the livability of rural areas. Nevertheless, by categorizing women alongside young farmers under the umbrella term "new entrants," the policy overlooks the distinct needs of non-young women, thus neglecting their contributions to the sector.

The policy highlights concerning statistics: only 16% of farm heirs are female, merely 7% of young farm managers are female (in contrast to the EU average of 30%), and there is a noticeable disparity as young female farmers apply for financial support to purchase farms less frequently than men. However, the policy does not critically analyze or address the underlying reasons behind these unequal statistics. Despite setting a target to increase the percentage of female farmers applying for subsidies to 16%, the proposed measures lack specificity and fail to tackle the structural and systemic nature of gender inequality. Moreover, the policy overlooks the need to investigate the reasons behind the low percentages of female farm heirs and young farm managers.

Although the policy acknowledges the declining share of young farmers in the total number of farm owners over recent years, it fails to incorporate gender considerations in this section. While consultations with young farmers identified the significant challenges they face, there is no mention of whether young female farmers were included in these consultations.

Furthermore, the policy section lacks a gender perspective. It outlines additional income support for young farmers divided into three streams: support for productive investments, additional income support, and establishment support. However, the latter two streams are only temporary, lasting five years, while support for productive investments is long-term.

### ***Spain***

The inclusion of gender mainstreaming as a primary objective in the Common Agricultural Policy (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, 2023), marks a significant milestone for Spain, positioning women's participation in agriculture as a pivotal element in rural community vitality. Objective number 8 underscores the

necessity of women's active presence in rural areas for fostering employment, growth, gender equality, social inclusion, and local development, encompassing circular bioeconomy and sustainable forestry.

To realize this objective, a range of measures have been outlined within the Spanish CAP Strategic Plan. These measures encompass various interventions aimed at supporting women in agriculture and rural entrepreneurship. Out of the 45 interventions financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), 39 incorporate some form of differentiation in favor of women. This differentiation includes specific eligibility conditions, higher aid intensities or unit amounts in certain subsidies, and prioritization of women in grant selection criteria.

Moreover, the Evaluation Plan of the Spanish CAP Strategic Plan includes a thematic evaluation from a gender perspective. This evaluation entails the consideration of impact indicators quantitatively measuring the effects of different interventions on closing the gender gap in the agricultural sector and rural areas.

The comprehensive integration of gender considerations into the Spanish CAP Strategic Plan reflects Spain's pioneering role in promoting gender equality within the CAP framework. The policy actively challenges gender stereotypes by identifying areas with significant disparities between men and women in rural areas and proposing tailored support measures to foster equal opportunities.

Additionally, the policy demonstrates a sensitivity to inclusive language, with efforts made to differentiate between "male farmer" and "female farmer," or alternatively employing gender-neutral language, despite the linguistic complexities inherent in Spanish.

Overall, the Spanish CAP Strategic Plan stands as a testament to Spain's commitment to advancing gender equality in agriculture and rural development, setting a noteworthy example for other member states within the European Union.

The CAP Strategic Plan prioritizes generational renewal within the agricultural sector as one of its fundamental objectives, with Objective number 7 dedicated to "Attracting and supporting young farmers and new farmers and facilitating sustainable business development in rural areas." The identified needs associated with this objective encompass various aspects, including increasing the proportion of young male and female farmers compared to older individuals engaged in agricultural activities, improving the structure of farms owned by young farmers and women, facilitating access to land and credit, enhancing professional qualifications, promoting entrepreneurship, and combating depopulation in rural areas.

A key measure aimed at achieving this objective is the supplementary payment to basic income support for young farmers up to 40 years old. This assistance aims to stimulate generational renewal in the agricultural sector and is provided to individuals newly incorporated as farm heads who meet minimum criteria for agricultural training and/or

qualification. Notably, if the beneficiary is a woman and the owner or co-owner of the farm, the assistance is increased by 15%, reflecting a gender dimension in the policy. Furthermore, other measures planned to encourage the incorporation of young people into the agricultural sector are part of Rural Development interventions, which are designed by the Autonomous Communities (AACC) in Spain. These interventions are tailored to the specific needs of each region, with some AACC implementing positive discrimination criteria towards women in measures such as grants for investments and modernization of farms, irrigation systems, or agricultural diversification.

Despite the emphasis on income support for the agricultural sector, no mention is made in the CAP Strategic Plan regarding gaps in pension benefits between men and women. However, the situational diagnosis for each specific objective of the CAP Strategic Plan lacks a gender perspective in its analysis, primarily due to the limited availability of gender-disaggregated statistics in Spain.

Regarding the use of inclusive language, the synthesis document prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food employs illustrations featuring women farmers engaged in activities directly relevant to the document's content, reflecting a degree of sensitivity towards gender representation within the CAP framework.

### ***Sweden***

Sweden's CAP Strategic Plan (Government offices of Sweden, 2023) predominantly focuses on male farmers as the primary target sector of the population, with limited integration of gender considerations. Gender is not effectively integrated into the policy framework, and it fails to challenge gender stereotypes or actively promote gender equality.

The terms "woman" (kvinna) and "women" (kvinnor) are mentioned a mere 15 times in the 619-page document, indicating a minimal emphasis on gender within the policy discourse. One instance where gender is mentioned is in Specific Objective 8, which aims to promote employment, growth, gender equality, women's participation in agricultural activities, social inclusion, and local development in rural areas, including circular economy and sustainable forestry. However, the operationalization of this objective lacks integration of gender equality and women's participation, with only one mention of these concepts in relation to LEADER principles.

The LEADER section emphasizes principles of sustainable development, equal treatment, non-discrimination, and equality between women and men. However, this mention does not translate into concrete actions or interventions to promote gender equality within the CAP Strategic Plan.

Overall, the policy falls short in raising awareness about women's rights, challenging stereotypes, or promoting equal opportunities for women within the agricultural sector. The policy fails to acknowledge differences between men and women in occupations or enterprises related to its objectives and interventions. There is a notable absence of

gender analysis or considerations within the policy framework, indicating a lack of recognition of the diverse needs, experiences, and roles of men and women within the agricultural sector.

### Discussion

Based on the analysis above it can be argued that the agriculture in Eastern Europe has seen a number of economic and social transitions including gender inequality in agriculture among young farmers as they are more likely to implement innovations and shape the future agricultural activities. It was shown that the demand for advisory services and participation in the Common Agricultural Policy measures were used to compare the activities and perceptions of men and women young farmers. Besides, no significant differences were noticed in participation of support measures and demand for advisory services across the genders (Balezentis et al., 2021). This suggests that, given the differences in the educational background, a positive effect is anticipated if women were more empowered in Lithuanian agriculture. Women's participation in agriculture could increase environmental awareness, propensity to innovate and economic resilience (Balezentis et al., 2021).

However, the women's role in agriculture in a global level of investigation can be considered marginal or negatively related with farm sustainability, at least in some regions of the world. Such women's empowerment is indeed influenced by the existence of social, regulatory, and cultural elements that uniquely define the considered countries. Context-specific policies that prioritize rural-women, youths, and other marginalized groups can enhance climate-smart agriculture (CSA) technologies; adoption and thereby contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals such as gender equality, climate action and zero hunger in developing contexts (Perelli et al., 2024; Kyriakopoulos et al., 2023). Such policies can be further used to assess empowerment impacts of agricultural development interventions in densely populated and fast emerging economies as India and Bangladesh as well as broader changes in rural labor markets (Quisumbing et al., 2022).

Another critical issue that cannot be undermined is the fact of cultural differences which cannot be considered homogeneous. As an example of cultural differences is the encouragement of gender equality in the labor market following the "reconciliation of working and family life" (Stratigaki, 2024). These cultural differences should play a protagonist role in gender equality plans and policies especially due to multiculturalism and immigration. Such plans and policies are actually questioning to what extent future EU enlargements will increase the risk of greater gender inequality in the EU (Kovacević and Šehić, 2015). Finally, more and more claims that integrate gender equality in the EU's external action framework have increased the EU's own accountability for external action, in that the EU's internal standards for the protection of rights and the promotion



of gender equality have become a benchmark for EU action affecting gender equality within the EU and in non-EU countries (Thies, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of the literature suggests the importance of considering gender in policy documents. When approaching the gender equality issue in EU the most reliable sources of information are studying policy frames relating to gender equality in politics found in EU policy documents. In such an investigation it was argued that little attention is paid to a substantive representation of women but when it is, it is mainly carried by gender experts and feminist activists (Meier, 2008). Based on similar research studies it can be concluded that the project of the EU incorporated gender equality as one of its foundational objectives and its institutions have been mandated to integrate gender equality into all of their policy areas, the EU has fallen short of materializing these objectives.

The case study of seven EU member states was developed by employing qualitative methods. The results show that among the countries studied, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, and Spain have a few measures and objectives that address the gender dimension and aim to improve gender equality, but they are far from numerous. By contrast, the policies of Croatia, Lithuania, and Sweden are almost completely gender-blind. In summary, the analysis of the CAP implementation policies of all the selected countries shows that, on the whole, the gender dimension, gender equality, and the reduction of the gender gap are not sufficiently addressed in agriculture policy documents. While there is some mention of the importance of gender equality, there is a lack of concrete measures or indicators that, if implemented and achieved, could reduce the gender gap in the EU agriculture sector.

The better integration of gender dimensions was characteristic for old EU member states (Italy, Spain, Ireland and the Netherlands) in comparison with new EU member states, i.e. Lithuania and Croatia. Therefore, the main policy recommendation is to strengthen gender mainstreaming in agricultural policies of all EU member states and stress the importance of this for new EU member states.

This study has some limitations as only seven EU member states' CAP strategic plans were analyzed. Further research should cover all EU member states and not just CAP Strategic Plans but also other agriculture policy documents. The policy analysis will include experts or other stakeholders from the agriculture sector of EU member states to include their opinion on gender dimension integration in policy documents.

Gender inequality at the EU level is perpetuated through a process in which the EU, as a structure anchored in economic considerations, interfaces with androcentric institutions and member states. This substantially determines the policy instruments, tools and mechanisms within and outside its periphery, rendering 'gender' to be co-

opted, secondary and subdued policy areas. While the discourse on gender equality policy has evolved through 'equal opportunity', 'positive action' and 'gender mainstreaming' approaches, the policies mostly focus on auxiliary benefits such as maternity leave, childcare services and part-time work, aiming to assist women in reconciling their work and life situations (Sinha and Bibhakar, 2023). In this context future research studies should be focused on scrutinizing some existing labour market and family policies together with various EU policy documents, key EIGE reports, press releases and other existing literature that should be the reference points for future analyses. The main challenge here is a better understanding and articulating the extent to which the new female leadership in the EU has prioritized and problematized gender equality with corresponding initiatives and actions, as well as the definition of major challenges it may face in contemporary times in order to meet its objectives (Sinha and Bibhakar, 2023).

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## WYMIAR PŁCI W POLITYCE ROLNEJ UE

**Streszczenie:** Głównym wkładem tego artykułu jest zbadanie kwestii uwzględniania problematyki płci w głównych dokumentach polityki rolnej wybranych krajów UE poprzez zastosowanie opracowanych ram oceny jakościowej opartych na najważniejszych kwestiach związanych z płcią. W sektorze rolnictwa występują znaczne luki w zakresie równości płci ze względu na ograniczony dostęp kobiet do praw do ziemi i zasobów produkcyjnych, problemy związane z nieodpłatną pracą oraz ograniczenia w zatrudnieniu i podejmowaniu decyzji. Płeć ma głęboki wpływ na role kobiet i mężczyzn, dostęp do ziemi i innych zasobów oraz ich własność, a także ich zdolność do podejmowania decyzji w sektorze rolnictwa. Dla UE uwzględnienie perspektywy płci w rolnictwie ma kluczowe znaczenie dla osiągnięcia równości płci i wzmocnienia pozycji kobiet w tym sektorze, umożliwiając kobietom uczestnictwo i czerpanie korzyści z przejścia na gospodarkę niskoemisyjną w rolnictwie. Włączenie wymiaru płci do polityk rolnych ma również kluczowe znaczenie dla poprawy skuteczności programów i polityk rolnych, które wpływają na bezpieczeństwo dostaw żywności, redukcję ubóstwa i zwiększoną odporność na zmianę klimatu. Głównym dokumentem dotyczącym polityki rolnej UE jest Wspólna Polityka Rolna (WPR). Aby ocenić politykę rolną UE pod kątem integracji zasad równości płci, do analizy wybrano kraje posiadające strategiczne plany wdrożenia WPR na lata 2023-2027. Kraje te to: Chorwacja, Irlandia, Włochy, Litwa, Holandia, Hiszpania i Szwecja, reprezentujące różne regiony geograficzne (południe, północ, wschód, zachód) i ekonomiczne (nowi członkowie UE oraz stare państwa członkowskie). Strategiczne plany wdrożenia WPR wybranych krajów zostały poddane ocenie przez pryzmat płci, aby podkreślić główne aspekty, które sugerowałyby, że wdrożenie ocenianego planu przyczyni się do poprawy równości płci i ograniczenia wykluczenia płci w unijnym sektorze rolnym.

**Słowa kluczowe:** równość płci, WPR, wymiar płci, zarządzanie, polityka