Women in Farming

SWIFT
Supporting Women-led Innovations in Farming and rural Territories

Lessons and recommendations for policymakers on the Common Agricultural Policy from the SWIFT project

Understanding the problem

29%
of farms, most of them small- and medium scale, are managed by women

12%
of them receive income support subsidies

Area-based payments favour larger farms, so women and gender-diverse people receive fewer subsidies and face greater barriers to land, resources, and financing. Attitudes toward women in farming remain complex in both rural and urban areas. Women also perform much of the essential but unpaid care work at home or on family farms, including food production and preparation. Additionally, they hold fewer and less influential leadership roles in rural and agricultural policy spaces, both in State and European institutions and in farmers' organisations.

Although some gender elements have been introduced into agricultural policy, these measures are often optional or limited to data collection and monitoring. At the Member State level, limited understanding of farmers' realities, especially the informal and precarious status of many women farmers, results in policy design and implementation that is often inadequate and sometimes harmful.

At the European level, the CAP rarely mentions gender, and its gender-mainstreaming objectives are poorly defined, with flawed indicators that weaken monitoring and are unlikely to produce gender-equitable outcomes.

While initiatives like the Women in Farming Platform are likely well-intentioned, they focus on farmer exchange rather than supporting women's participation in established policy-making spaces. The creation of multiple political spaces, often accessible only in English and at personal cost, adds mental and physical burdens for an already marginalised group. This approach excludes many typical women farmers before the process even begins.

Read more: Where Are the Women Farmers? The Gendered Effects of the European Union's Common Agricultural Policy 2023–2027

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What can be done?

On CAP

- Promoting institutional incentives, such as linking funding eligibility to demonstrated gender outcomes
- Create dedicated gender focal points and budget allocations within CAP implementation bodies.
- Gender equality should be a distinct CAP objective that Member States must address, rather than being diluted within other Specific Objectives.
- Evaluation plans for Member States' national strategic plans must include impact indicators assessing the equitable distribution of subsidies by gender. Any indicator measuring farms or individuals benefiting from payments must be supported by gender-disaggregated data.
- Shift from granting decoupled payments based on farm size and introduce strong degressivity with a strict cap on all CAP payments per active farmer and per farm.
- Reduce dependency on subsidies by implementing effective transition plans based on the Common Market Organisation (CMO) Regulation. Ensure all farmers receive fair payment for their products, with prices above production costs, efficient intervention prices, and organised public stockholding for strategic products.

Read more: Towards a gender-transformative CAP (SWIFT Policy Brief).

On Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB)

Gender-responsive budgeting means an entity (e.g., state, municipality, organisation) uses its financial resources and funding policies (taxes, fundraising, etc.) to reduce social inequalities and achieve gender equality.

GRB should be implemented at every stage of the budget cycle: design, approval, implementation, and monitoring. An intersectional approach is needed to understand how multiple systems of oppression create complex, interdependent inequalities that must be addressed at both EU and national levels.

EU Level

- Establish mandatory ex ante gender impact assessments for all CAP interventions.
- Mandate gender-specific objectives and indicators in CAP Strategic Plans, with measurable targets for women's and gender-diverse people's participation and access to funding.
- Monitor the distribution of CAP payments by gender and identify disparities. Data should be collected from all Member States.
- Mandatory adjustment must be established where shortfalls are identified.
- Improve the Common Market Organisation regulation to guarantee prices above production costs, ensure efficient intervention prices, and organise public stock holding.

National level

- Conduct mandatory ex-ante gender impact assessments for all CAP interventions before approving budget allocations.
- Collect and publish gender disaggregated data on CAP beneficiaries, payments, land ownership, farm management and access to investment support.
- Define gender-specific objectives and indicators within CAP Strategic Plans, with measurable targets for women's and gender-diverse people's participation and access to funding.
- Allocate dedicated funding to measures supporting women and gender diverse people in rural areas.
- Monitor the distribution of CAP payments by gender and identify disparities.
- Evaluate the gender impact of CAP spending through regular reviews and adjust allocations where inequalities persist.

Read more: SWIFT Report on Gender Responsive Budgeting. : https://l1nq.com/5dsn19i

Adopting the right tools

The SWIFT project has compiled resources, stories, and tools for those seeking to understand and improve the daily realities of farmers across Europe, especially women. This advocacy-support tool aims to contribute to the transformation of future agri-food systems: read more at https://feministagroecology.com/.

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