

MODULE ONE



WOMEN IN AGRI-FOOD

Supplementary Material



VERSION

ENGLISH



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Module One – Women in Agri-Food

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1. Learning outcomes

Module 1 aims to address the challenges and barriers experienced by women in a farming sector currently dominated by men. It will also provide participants with the soft skills required for women to become entrepreneurs and opportunities to start their own agri-food business.

On successful completion of this module the learner will be able to gain an understanding of:

- Barriers for women in agri-food sector and how to overcome them
- Main challenges faced by woman entrepreneurs
- Specific skills on becoming a woman entrepreneur
- How to start up your own agri-food business

2. Introduction

2.1 General information. Why AWARE?

Over the past decades, the Agri-Food sector was a male dominating sector with over 70% of the activity across Europe conducted by men. In recent years the number of woman enterprises has increased slightly, from an average of 12% in 2000-2009 to 14% in 2010-2019. Data provided by the European Commission highlight that only 4.2% of woman farmers are under the age of 35 in contrast to just 29.2% of men. In addition, these women face more difficulties than men in access to finance, training, networking, and mentors to establish their business (1).

Thus, the project will focus on supporting the growth of women by developing specific training and mentorship resources that target their needs.

The project also aims to provide access to entrepreneurial training and develop an understanding around business mentor(s) and their value on the journey of Agri-Food business. To achieve these important goals the project will develop five main outputs:

- **Curriculum** for an online training course “Start your own Food Business” designed specifically for women in the Agri Food Sector
- **Module content** for the training course with embedded digital badge for participants that complete the course; the project will address and underline the challenges women face in the Agri-food sector, promote soft skills and business model approaches, highlight the role of mentor for business growth, provide specific food sector skills about nutrition, labelling and packaging;
- **Research Report** will investigate the added value mentoring currently provides to women entrepreneurs and how it can be applied across Europe in the Agri-Food sector;

- **Digital Infographic booklet** that will provide women entrepreneurs with support and key resources specific to their needs in the Agri-Food sector;
- **Promotional Video** that will encapsulate the positive experiences of real-life Mentors and Mentees across in the Agri-Food sector.

2.2. Farming and Agri-food Sector – Gender Analysis

Eurostat data show that around 30% of the farms across the EU are managed by women, with the highest share in Latvia and Lithuania (45%) and the lowest (5-6%) in the Netherlands and Malta (1).

Women in rural areas of the EU make up below 50% of the total rural population, they represent 45% of the economically active population, and about 40% of them work on family farms. According to this, their participation through informal rural economy might not be statistically recognized.

However, in comparison to a decade ago, the share of woman farmers is slowly growing, mostly thanks to the expansion of the EU in 2004, with the countries in the East tending to have more woman-owned farms than those in the West (2).

General structure of farms conducted by woman:

AGE: Europe's farming sector is dominated by an older population. Just 4.2% of woman farmers are under the age of 35, while 42% of women working in agriculture are over 65;

DATA ACCURACY: the women employment rate in agriculture might be underestimated due to the role of women play as supports to family business run by men (family labour represents 76% of the total labour force in agriculture-Eurostat: 2017) thus their presence and role are not accurately reflected in statistics (3);

SIZE OF THE BUSINESS: woman farmers are running mainly small business, rather than male farms., on average 5.84 ha compared with 12.88 ha owned by male farm holders. For most countries, woman land ownership represents less than 30 percent of total ownership. However, this has significant variation across the world, without a strict continental pattern. Overall, we see the highest rates of woman ownership in Europe, however Botswana and Malawi both have ownership shares greater than 30 percent (4).

MANAGEMENT OF TIME: women are more involved than men in supporting the family (kids, grandparents, relatives, etc..). Only 14% of people that work in agriculture is doing that as a full-time job (5).

In May 2019 the Policy Department for Citizens' Right and Constitutional Affairs has published a study about the professional status of rural women in EU. The study gives an overview of the professional status of rural women in the EU, as well as their employment situation and position in the labour market in rural areas in most relevant Member States (6).

The countries with the highest rates of woman participation in employment are Finland, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands. Women's employment rates are increasing from year to year. However, despite the increase, women's employment rates remain low, the difference in employment rates between men and women account for an average of 20%. The highest differences are presented in Italy, Spain and Greece (7).

2.2. Objectives

This module will address:

- The challenges and barriers experienced by women in a male dominated agri-food sector and how to overcome them (e.g., gender bias; lack of access to land; limited finance opportunities; lack of flexibility in working conditions; lack of networks and mentors)
- Soft skills development (e.g. communication, networking, time management, empowerment)
- Opportunities for women (from developing your idea to starting your business)

3. Module sessions

Woman startups are performing well but underfunded. Furthermore, gender segregation leads to male-dominated fields. ESCP Executive Education recently held a virtual roundtable to discuss how to boost women in industry, combat societal bias, and address the unique challenges faced by women in business. More women in management than ever before – but still not enough at a senior level.

Main barriers for women in the agri-food business are:

- lack of access to land,
- limited financing opportunities
- gender bias
- offering less suitable working conditions
- it may be harder for them to keep the work-life balance (8)

Women's presence in management has increased since 1980, but there are industries such as healthcare and education where women are overrepresented compared to others. Gender segregation in occupations is reflected also in the STEM sector, and this is where there could be consequences for the future if something is not done about this. STEM industries are among the fastest growing in the world, yet nearly three million jobs in STEM worldwide went unfulfilled last year – a sector with the least woman representation (9).

In Europe, women account for 17% of ICT specialists. There's a huge and costly supply-demand mismatch. The research shows that it starts at an early age and has nothing to do

with a person ability. Instead, girls and young women tend to self-select out. Boosting young women's self-confidence and sense of self-efficacy is very important and needs to be nurtured. We need to see more gender-smart finance investing. The paucity of VC capital that goes to women-owned businesses is pretty demoralising; and needs to be turned around. There's a real disconnection between education, employment, and leadership. We've made these great gains in terms of women's education but that isn't translating into women's leadership (10).

Session 1: Barriers for women in agri-food sector (11)

➤ **Gender Bias**

Women are often challenged to find a compromise between economic and other social activities, like taking care of their families. They often work informally which does not appear in statistics and most of their time is unpaid. Also, a lot of woman work is not officially registered. This problem is even more obvious in rural areas where hidden unemployment and seasonal work is prominent. Rural areas are lacking adequate public services related to childcare, health and social care for the elderly and women-centred services such as medical specialties. This weakens their presence in decision-making business.

Another gender bias is represented by the career opportunity. This is not just related to their education. One of the European studies shows that even when rural women are more educated, they still have less employment opportunities compared to both, men in rural areas and women in urban areas.

Even innovation can influence gender bias. Required increase in labor burdens may have a negative effect, even if incomes increase. On the other side labor-saving technologies may benefit women even if they do not improve production or incomes. Such technologies reduce women's time to do domestic work and may also give them more opportunities for other activities. Those choices are empowering especially if they have not been available in the past.

✓ **Lack of access to land**

Women farmers have significantly less access to, control over, and ownership of land and other productive assets compared to their male counterparts.

However, the number of farms run by women is continuously growing. The Eurostat data suggest that despite huge differences among Member States, an average of 30% of farms across the EU are managed by women. Woman entrepreneurs represent only one third of self-employed people in the EU and women farmers represent 30% of total EU farm managers. They tend to have smaller farms.

Countries with the highest share of women as farm managers are Latvia and Lithuania (45%), followed by Romania, Estonia, Italy, Austria, Portugal and Poland - all above the European

average. In four member states the proportion of farm managers who were woman was 10% or below (Germany, Denmark, Malta and The Netherlands).

It is essential to integrate the gender mainstreaming in the national and European agriculture policies. “Women’s economic empowerment boosts productivity, increases economic diversification and income equality in addition to other positive development outcomes,” - from publications by United Nations Women

✓ **Limited finance opportunities**

Agriculture is strictly connected to the loan market. Starting or developing a business always requires upfront capital, conducting a farm is no exception to this. One of the obstacles women face when entering the profession is their limited access to the loans. And if women manage to get them, they are often smaller than loans granted to men. Among the reasons for this imbalance is the fact that women are less likely to have a bank account.

Another significant factor is that woman often lack collateral. Before granting the loan, the bank usually asks for a collateral and a common form of it, especially in the agricultural sector, is land. And there is a gender inequality when it comes to agricultural landowners. Women farmers have significantly less access to, control over, and ownership of land and other productive assets compared to their male counterparts. It is estimated that if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30% and raise total agricultural outputs.

There is a constant need for woman investors, this makes a huge difference in the level of empathy and advice they are given. Currently there is only 20% investors are woman.

However, the number of farms run by women is continuously growing. The Eurostat data suggest that despite huge differences among Member States, an average of 30% of farms across the EU are managed by women. Women take more calculated risks than men, yet it is still difficult for them to access loans. Women’s ideas for innovation are as marketable as men’s, but they are not recognised by predominantly male stakeholders

✓ **Balancing responsibilities**

Women often have to find a compromise between economic and social activities (such as cultural, leisure or charitable ones). Childcare and domestic work are not paid, but yet there are significant gender gaps in time spent on those activities. 16.9% of women in the European Union in 2019 reported that they were not seeking employment because of care responsibilities.

Every working person periodically faces an issue of work – life balance. For some it is easy to stay away from work during their free time, but others tend to work extra hours. This may cause additional stress, intensify family tensions or even ruin your health. That’s why keeping the balance between these two areas is so essential.

When it comes to woman in farming, keeping that balance is even more challenging. They need to take care of children even though working on a farm is a full-time activity. In addition, women also want to have free time for themselves. But it is worth to notice the unique opportunity many self-employed (and especially farmers) mothers can have – spending time with their children, teaching them, sharing the knowledge, and building the bond.

The amount of time spent by women and men in the EU on activities other than economic ones, shows big differences. A wide gender gap still exists in the time spent on caring and educating children (or even grandchildren), cooking and housework. Across the European Union, it is women who mostly perform these activities. Men are, however, more likely than women to participate in sport, cultural or leisure activities on a regular basis.

✓ ***Lack of effective support structure***

The pool of women who can mentor and advise their fellow entrepreneurs is consequently smaller. This makes it harder for enterprising women to learn from their peers and get help from those who have ‘done that’. More about mentors will be learnt from Module 3.

Women have to work a lot harder to build their network. However, more women-focused networking events and clubs have been developed in recent years. Woman leaders are also finding one another online, through Facebook groups, Instagram, and other platforms.

The support structure is often costly, causing women to postpone launching their own companies.

The absence of proper support, cooperation, and back-up for women by their own family members and the outside world forces them to drop the idea of excelling in the enterprise field.

Woman’s founded companies are currently less likely to succeed, amid male led startups being highly recognized and successful. There is a need to expand and create facilities and training possibilities to give women entrepreneurs new knowledge.

Session 2: Skills development

Entrepreneurship key competence is a combination of skills, knowledge and attitudes. By acquiring this competence and developing it throughout their lives, women boost their self-confidence, which can enable them to move away from traditional jobs and lifestyle, increase their own and their families’ incomes and contribute to the well-being of society

➤ ***Communication skills***

Communication skills are a set of activities that make a quality public performance. Communication is very important both in the business and in private life. The ability to

Speak, write and articulate messages is crucial in understanding other people clearly and successfully.

Successful communication helps us better understand people and situations. It helps us build trust and respect, create conditions for sharing creative ideas and solving problems. Strong communication skills are about conveying information to others in a simple and unambiguous way. Good communication is also about understanding instructions, acquiring new skills, making requests, and asking questions.

Many women tend to underestimate their abilities and qualifications – as a result, they pass up opportunities to apply for leadership roles. But it's important to recognize one's skills and traits – and embrace them. Being a great woman leader starts by embracing one's potential.

➤ **Networking**

Networking can be defined as a socioeconomic business activity. It is a group consisting of entrepreneurs who meet to form business relationships and to recognize, create, or act upon business opportunities, share information, seek potential partners for ventures and look for new opportunities.

Networking in business is one of the best resources for a professional success. A good network can provide job leads, possibilities for advancement, opportunities for personal improvement and support from similar people.

Track any events like symposiums, panel discussions, award ceremonies, exhibitions happening in your town, so that you could attend and come face-to-face with the nature of the industry and also get to meet important people.

It is not easy for women to search for the correct and useful network for their business that can benefit their business in a great way. Women usually find it hard to socialize and to build networks with the people of the market in which they are working too.

➤ **Time management**

It is one of the biggest challenges for woman entrepreneurs to manage it which is often the most difficult task for them.

Due to extreme work pressure, it becomes so difficult for them to balance their work-life and family life. Creating a family/social calendar might help.

Have a main plan for everything, a mental plan if some things go wrong, and a disaster plan for any unforeseen events.

Multitasking requires much time and little, and often non effective, work. Instead use time blocking technique when you concentrate on one task only within a certain period.

Using calendar app, apps for some recurring expenses, specific apps for workers or contractors (search iTunes or google store).

Take breaks, socialise with others, and build new relationships.

For many of us, it takes more than superpowers to ask for help or, even better, to delegate with confidence. Talk to your family, consider service support (e.g., housecleaning or dog walking), hire a part-time assistant if you don't have a big team.

✓ ***Self-confidence and empowerment skills***

Fear of failure is a major concern of women who start their own businesses, spurred in part by lower perceptions of their entrepreneurial abilities than their more confident male peers.

Training to become more resilient: Part of this journey typically includes goal setting, an essential component of launching a business. Setting attainable, realistic goals helps people feel in control of their situation.

As the European Institute for Gender Equality defines, empowerment is a process by which women gain power and control over their own lives and acquire the ability to make strategic choices.

Women's empowerment has five components: women's sense of self-worth, their ability to influence the direction of social change and three rights: to determine choices, to have access to opportunities and resources and to have power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home.

Amongst the important tools of empowering women and girls to claim their rights are: education, training, awareness raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, control over resources. These all are supposed to give women abilities to take actions, to transform all the structures that still reinforce gender discrimination.

When it comes to empowerment in farming, it's important to understand the connection between women empowerment, food security and agricultural growth. It measures the roles and extent of women's engagement in the agriculture sector in four domains: (1) decisions about agricultural production, (2) access to and decision-making power over productive resources, (3) control over use of income, (4) leadership in the community.

Session 3: How to start agri-food business

✓ ***Multifunctional agriculture***

Multifunctionality in agriculture is an umbrella term used to indicate companies that combine their agricultural production and environment with services to society. It refers

to the numerous benefits that agricultural policies may provide for a country or region. Generally speaking, multifunctionality refers to the *non-trade* benefits of agriculture: environmental protection, landscape preservation, rural employment, and food security.

In the past, farm business was mainly related to commodities (e.g., raw milk) production. However, recently a new agriculture structure was developed across the Europe when more farmers started to produce final consumer goods (e.g., cheese) and provide services (e.g., cheese production courses).

Be a farmer means carrying out different activities, which requires knowledge and experience. To create an innovative business, farmers have to consider new crops and cultivars, better animals, and alternative technologies to increase productivity, diversify production, reduce risk - and to increase profits.

One of the key points for a successful business in agri-food sector is being able to target a specific market for its products. Be market-oriented means also to be able to take risks and be open to new markets. Farmers need to be able to identify opportunities and seize them, focus on maintaining their traditional ways of life, but not let them to be a barrier for the innovation.

Businesses must be clear about type of product your company will be able to supply and identify the potential market (12).

✓ **Role of women in multifunctional farming**

Multifunctional agriculture is the reconnection of agriculture to society.

In 2015, Pieter Seunek and Bettina B. Bock, from the Rural Sociology Group of Wageningen University, have published a paper about the role of women in the development of multifunctional farming. They recognize that women are central to the development of multifunctional entrepreneurship in agriculture and make a great contribution to the survival of the family farms in the rural area of EU. Woman farmers showed to be more active in the development of “multifunctional entrepreneurship”.

Whereas the men focus on farming and stay at the farm (and consider themselves as being farmers), the women leave the farm to participate and interact with a wide range of networks within and beyond agriculture (and consider themselves as being entrepreneurs).

In the conclusion the study stated that women are particularly equipped to cross the boundaries of the agricultural domain as they could often return to their prior jobs outside agriculture.

Women’s role in multifunctional farms may be to:

- Facilitate the introduction of new identities and practices onto the farm;
- Provide access to new networks and learning environments;

- Initiate a negotiation process between production and multifunctionally-oriented thoughts and actions within the family.

Below, we will give an overview of the most common opportunities for multifunctional farming (13).

✓ **Business plan**

BP is a document formalizing the strategy that the company intends to adopt, the objectives pursued and the actions to be taken over a given time frame. It is also a planning document that explains the company's development trajectories.

Business plans are important documents used for the external and internal audience of the enterprise. Small companies with a low technological input, such as farm and food related business, face many barriers to implement BP. Traditions and high costs are two common barriers for a BP development. Most of the agricultural entrepreneurs often don't think of themselves as business managers despite having and sharing with other sectors the same issues and concerns. However, the BP is one of the requirements to access funds and loans, from both, public and private bodies.

Business plan, in fact, is used to attract investment before a company has established. Ideally, the plan should be reviewed and updated periodically to see if goals have been met, changed and evolved. Sometimes, a new business plan is created for an established business that has decided to move in a new direction, or to a multifunctional activity.

The length and contents of the business plan varies greatly from business-to-business, but the key parts of any business plan are:

- *Executive summary*: this section is a summary of the problem you are solving for customers, your solution, the target market, the team, and financial forecast highlights.
- *Products and services*: the enterprise can outline the products and services it will offer, and may also include pricing, product lifespan, and benefits to the consumer.
- *Market analysis and sales plan*: an outline of main clients and how you are going to reach them. This part of the BP it will also describe the expected consumer demand for the forecasted product. Outline your marketing plan, your sales plan, and the other logistics involved in running your business.
- *Financial plan*: in order to attract investors, the company should include its financial plan consisting of any future projections. This includes costs related to staffing, development, manufacturing, marketing, and any other expenses related to business.
- *Human Resources plan*: this is a description of key staff (14).

➤ **Opportunities for women**

If you have vacant land suitable for farming, starting an agriculture farm can be a profitable business. You can produce items and/or provide services.

You can run a successful restaurant, serving dishes prepared with ingredients straight from your farm. Many people would appreciate the opportunity to eat fresh, healthy food while being surrounded by calm and green village landscapes. You can expand your offer and provide accommodation or rent a reception hall/conference rooms for business events.

An organic farm in greenhouse business has a high potential to grow and succeed because the demand for organically grown farm products is constantly increasing. Organic farm greenhouse business was normally done on small, family-run farms, but because of high market demand, people are investing in land for organic farming. This is a great solution for organic producers, giving them complete control over climate, irrigation, organic fertilization and equipment management.

If you have land or can lease it, you can grow flowers, dry them, and sell them to craft stores and hobbyists. You can also sell fresh flowers to the florists.

Scientific research from nine countries (UK, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Croatia, Slovenia, and Ireland) identified two general development trends in agritourism:

- the contemporary presence of traditional farming activity and small hospitality business with the realization of one or more of the activities presented in the slide. Due to the business size, the agritourism is run mostly by farm family members or with the support of some employees.
- on the other hand, there is evidence of progressive separation from agricultural activities where the agritourist firm is penetrating the (local/regional/national/international) tourist market, by offering a product in line with the traditional touristic business-like (15).

Examples of businesses and multifunctional farms

1. **Nad Warta: a guest house;** <https://www.poland-vacations.com/173/agrotourism-en.html>; www.nadwarta.com
2. **Hiša Franko:** <https://www.hisafranko.com/en/> - a good example of the farm-to-table restaurants. Farm restaurants have a great opportunity for both, actually growing vegetables and raising livestock themselves, and supply their own ingredients for their kitchens. That allows owners to control everything: from soil fertilizers to sustainable practices. The farm-to-table restaurant trend is part of a larger movement of eating as locally as possible, taking advantage of seasonally available fruits and vegetables and focusing on the environmental and cultural impacts of farming.
3. **The Bee Garden Experience:** <https://handpickedgreece.com/workshop/bee-garden-experience/> - an educational farm providing workshops and seminars about bees and honey making/harvesting on the island of Crete or in Western Mani in the Peloponnese. The Educational Farms Network is offering the general public an

opportunity to learn and experience the farmer's work in direct contact with the daily rhythm of the farm. The Educational Farms can be helpful for teachers organizing school trips. The didactic programs take the form of demonstrations, workshops and exercises. Both children and adults can learn the origin of the food and understand the link between agricultural products and food. The visit on an educational farm can last just a few hours or can be organized as a multi-day stay in a farm with accommodation.

4. **Valleriana Cooperative:** <https://coop-valleriana.wixsite.com/coop-valleriana> Social Farming activity involves and promotes young, disadvantaged people of being integrated in a living context, where their personal capabilities may be valued and enhanced.

Social farms play an important role for the society and has been adopted by several countries as a form of social service to the community. Although the number of social farms is increasing in every country, they generally account for less than 1% of all farm businesses. Social farming practices in Europe share similarities in being closely related to traditional rural economy activities and taking place on the farm, there are also many differences between countries given their history, approaches and social behavior. Approaches may vary, but there are essentially three main ones (16):

- an **institutional approach**, with the prevalence of public/ health institutions (this approach is dominant in Germany, France, Ireland and Slovenia)
- a **private** approach based on therapeutic farms (this approach is dominant in the Netherlands and Flanders in Belgium)
- a **mixed approach based on social cooperatives** and private farms (this approach is dominant in Italy).

Several case-studies were presented as an output of the Erasmus project called SOFI: <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/d98693f5-a9cb-4a61-9228-4d96635c05b4/sofi-book-small-size-for-web.pdf>

4. Case studies

Additional examples:

- Sarah Alder <https://kitchentitbits.co.uk/contact/>
- Julia Brightman <https://www.cremebrewlait.co.uk/>
- Magdalena from Malinówka <http://malinowka.pl/>
- Elena Salviucci <https://www.cantinacampotondo.it/>
- Aisling Roache <https://velvetcloud.ie/>

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