

# GRASS CEILING

## D6.8

Practice abstracts  
batch n.1  
Italy





# Italian women in agriculture: narrowing gender gaps and challenging barriers through multifunctionality and innovation

## 5.1. Introduction

This practice abstract explores the gender dimension in Italian agriculture, highlighting the most relevant facts and trends. It sheds light on small but notable improvements in women's participation, advocating for better data collection and analysis to capture the often-overlooked changes shaping the sector.

## 5.2. Key Statistical Findings

### 5.2.1. Women's legal position and ownership of capital in agriculture

Only 31.5 % of farms in Italy are managed by women, which is regrettably average for Europe. Farms managed by men generate double the standard output compared to those led by women. This discrepancy reflects the male-dominated nature of the Italian agricultural sector, where men typically manage larger farms and employ a higher percentage of the available workforce. Despite their essential contributions, women remain undervalued in this sector.

Women account for less than a third of general farm labour and unpaid family labour. However, the standard output gap between farms managed by men and women has narrowed slightly, with women-led farms experiencing a higher percentage increase in output.

Women have shown particular strength in farm diversification, sustainability, and multifunctionality. For example, women-led farms represent 40.8 % of educational farms and 35 % of agro-tourism farms in Italy. While gender disparities persist, the generational gap in agriculture often takes precedence, with most agricultural land being managed by older individuals. Within generations, agricultural land distribution tends to be more gender-balanced.

## 5.2.2. Women's involvement in innovative initiatives

Significant data gaps hinder a comprehensive understanding of women's involvement in agricultural innovation. Little information is available regarding women's participation in cooperatives, unions, or social innovation initiatives, and data on women-led rural start-ups is scarce. However, the limited data that exists highlights persistent gender disparities alongside some encouraging trends.

For instance, the number of women-run agricultural start-ups doubled between 2019 and 2022, from 9 to 18. Women's overall participation in Local Action Groups (LAGs) remains low at 27.7 %, with few women holding managerial or board positions.

## 5.2.3. Gender dimension in strategic documents

Public policies and their implementation are gradually becoming more gender-inclusive. The Italian CAP Strategic Plan (2023–2027) acknowledges the importance of gender issues and includes measures to support women and young farmers. However, the impact of these measures varies significantly across regions.

Preparatory work for the new European Maritime Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (2021–2027) also underscores the slow integration of women into the traditionally male-dominated fisheries sector, despite recent progress. Recommendations include targeted skill development and support for complementary activities to enhance women's roles in fishing and marina management. Regulatory measures, such as recognising the role of the "helper" in agriculture and ensuring the rights of women employed in small-scale fishing, are also advocated.

More broadly, Legislative Decree No. 105 of 30 June 2022, implementing Directive (EU) 2019/1158, introduces significant reforms, including enhanced parental leave and flexible work arrangements, to support gender equality.

## 5.3. Conclusion

The GRASS CEILING analysis highlights critical data gaps while revealing the resilience and innovation of women in Italian agriculture. Women are carving out niches through diversification and innovation despite persistent gender disparities. A systematic, gender-sensitive approach to implementing existing policies and strategies is essential to address these inequalities. Italian rural women deserve not only recognition but also an active role in decision-making and leadership, ensuring they have a place at the table rather than just a foot in the door.

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