

GRASS CEILING

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Norway



Norway

Bridging the Gender Gap in Norwegian Agriculture and Innovation

1.1. Introduction

This practice abstract provides an overview of gender disparities in strategic documents, innovative initiatives, legal position and capital ownership within Norwegian agriculture. While data indicate limited gender differences regarding broader framework conditions and innovative opportunities, significant gender imbalances persist in the most dynamic and successful segments of the agricultural sector. Men continue to dominate in the fastest growing enterprises, top earners, and those with long-term survival rates.

1.2. Key Statistical Findings

1.2.1. Women's involvement in innovative initiatives

While nearly half of those aspiring to innovate are women, only 30 % successfully launch businesses. The gap widens over time, only 19 % of businesses that survive for five years and only 10 % of those thriving are women-led. These entrepreneurial statistics are only available at the national level.

1.2.2. Gender representation in voluntary work and political engagement

Women's participation in fund-raising, volunteer activities and political or campaign work aligns closely with men's, ranging from 6 to 30 %, with a gender difference of less than 1.6 %. Active participation in an organisation, action group or political party was similarly close: 9.8 % for women versus 10.1 % for men over the last year.

Despite these comparable engagement levels, the proportion of women declines significantly as businesses scale and achieve sustained profitability, reinforcing a male-dominated profile in growth-oriented and successful enterprises.

1.2.3. Gender dimension in strategic documents

Norwegian policies promote gender inclusivity through well-structured maternity/paternity leave

D6.8 Practice abstracts – batch n.1 – Norway

regulations and subsidised childcare. Parental leave allows parents to choose between 49 weeks at full salary or 59 weeks at 80 % salary. These provisions support women's ability to balance family life with entrepreneurial ambitions.

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

In 2020, only 16.2 % of farm-based one-person businesses were led by women, with men managing the remaining 83.8 %. Women's informal employment in agriculture was below 10 % in 2018, and by 2016, women farmers were just as likely as men to have income from additional activities related to their farms (60 %). Despite these statistics, women continue to be underrepresented as operators, indicating a male-dominated industry, even though farms often operate as family businesses.

1.3. Conclusion

The data reveal minimal gender differences in societal engagement and innovation support. However, a striking disparity exists in women's long-term participation and growth in business sectors. This suggests a systemic challenge: while women are present at initial stages, they struggle to maintain their positions in scaling and successful ventures. To address this, our Living Lab will capture experiences, analyse insights, and propose targeted solutions to foster equitable support for women innovators, especially those involved in local food innovation in rural areas.

Location: Norway

Contacts:

Rita Moseng Sivertsvik, Ruralis (rita.sivertsvik@ruralis.no)

Mai Løvaas, Oi! Mat og drikke (mai.lovaas@oimat.no)

More info:

www.grassceiling.eu

<https://oimat.no/en/>

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