



GRASS CEILING

The Foresight on the future of women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas

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What is foresight?



Foresight studies are meant to **envision, explore and anticipate** the future



The **term 'foresight'** refers to a 'systematic, participatory, future-intelligence-gathering and medium-to-long-term vision-building process aimed at enabling present-day decisions and mobilising joint actions' (European Commission, 2020).



Action-oriented, or *strategic*, foresight can assist decision-making in thinking ahead strategically and future-proofing policies, especially when they deal with **complex problems**

(Major et al., 2001; Vervoort et al., 2015).



Provide **systematic knowledge** about **potentially significant trends and developments** in the social, environmental, political, economic, and technological spheres relevant for the issue at stake (Habegger, 2010).



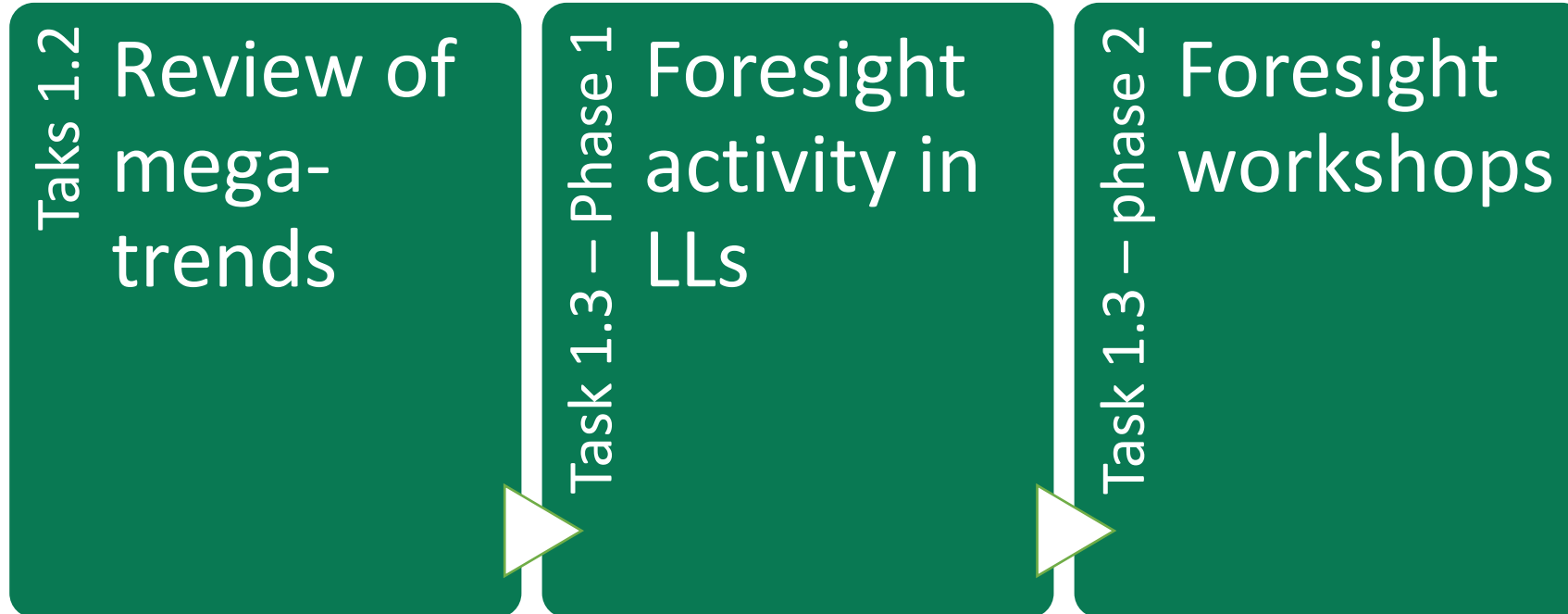
Scenarios



- ‘Futures’, ‘foresight’, and ‘scenarios’ are often used interchangeably in policy documents
- Scenarios are one such **method of exploring the future** (Perez-Soba and Maas, 2015)
- Different types of scenarios, according to the purpose, methods and content: they are stories, images, or numbers describing what plausible futures might look like
- **Exploratory scenarios** describe uncertainty and answer questions on *what could happen* in a given context
- **Normative scenarios** answer questions on *what should be*



The foresight process



Understanding women's role in the future of agriculture and rural areas

- **Desk-based meta-analysis** of 15 existing foresight studies with global and European scope, for assessing integration of gender aspects, identifying key drivers, and developing methodology for further steps
- **Significant gap in addressing gender issues in foresight studies so far**
 - In some of the reviewed sources, gender inequality target are included (SCAR, 2021), or account of gender implications of other drivers (H2020 RURALIZATION; H2020 Polirural)
 - Need to integrate gender considerations in foresight studies on farming and rural areas
 - Preliminary list of mega-trends potentially relevant for the future of women in farming and rural areas



Drivers of change, trends, mega-trends



- **Drivers of change:** in complex dynamic systems, the driving forces behind the trends, influencing and determining the direction of change
- A **trend** is ‘**the direction in which something is developing or changing**’ and is ‘more or less predictable depending on the *inertia* of the system, the degree of dependence of a future state from the past’
- **Mega-trends** are defined as ‘**long-term driving forces that are observable now and will most likely have significant influence on the future**’

(Bisoffi, 2019; European Commission, 2020)



Mega-trends



Worsening
resource scarcity

Climate change
and environmental
degradation

Changing nature of
work

Accelerating
technological
change and
hyperconnectivity

Continuing
urbanisation

Increasing
demographic
imbalances

Growing
consumption

Shifting health
challenges

Increasing
significance of
migration

Shifting global
social values

Diversification of
education and
learning



Engaging Living Labs in future-thinking

Personas, or the women entrepreneurs

LIVING LAB IN THE SPOTLIGHT

EWE – Empowering Women Entrepreneur (Croatia)

Context: women entrepreneurs from three different rural areas in Croatia. The coastal area has relatively high-quality resources for agricultural production, good infrastructure, and developed tourism. The mountainous rural area has modest agricultural resources, small-scale farms, and low population density. The continental area has a developed agricultural production and transport infrastructure that connects it with Zagreb, where demand for ecologically valuable products is high. The activities developed by the women entrepreneurs are diverse, e.g., production and processing of fruits and vegetables, livestock farming, teaching, tourist accommodation, production of wool items.

Main Drivers

Migration (outgoing, exodus)

Rural development policies

Changing age structure of rural population (aging)

Present Struggles

Migration is a problem caused by the abandonment of rural areas. Global migration reduces labour shortages.

Inhabitants of rural areas recognise that EU rural policy contributes to rural entrepreneurship and sustainable rural development.

In Croatia, the aging of the rural population has been intensified by the abolition of borders with EU countries. Many young people, more open to change than old people, leave the countryside.

Future visions and challenges

The mockery for the 'new' is passing. Access to knowledge, information and new technologies will have the biggest impact on women's entrepreneurship.

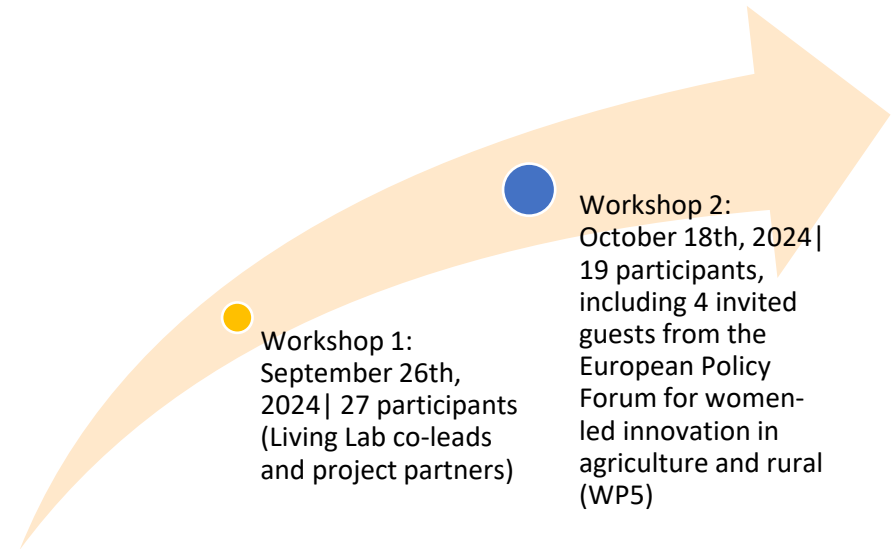
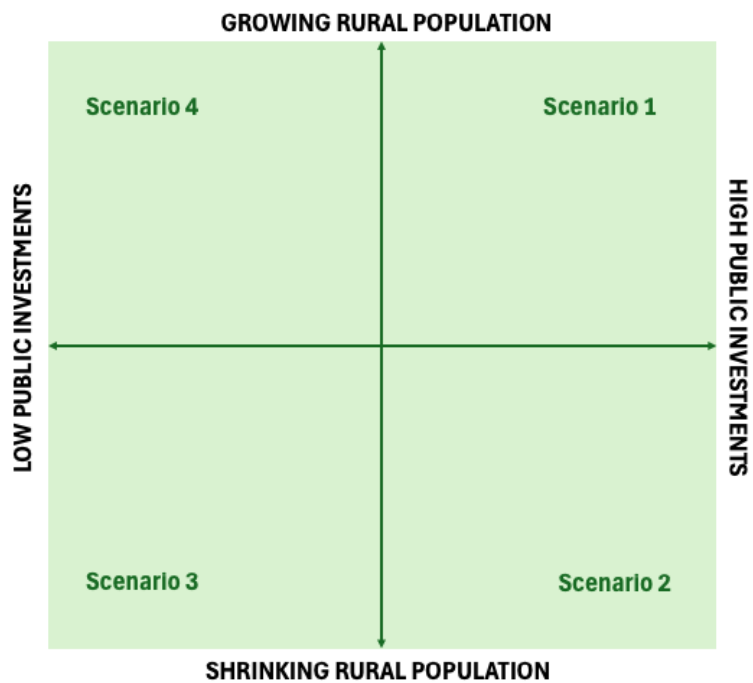
Advisory services and scientists play a role: research should be connected with entrepreneurs through cooperation.

EU policies will work in a positive sense. The state and local administrators should support local agricultural production by organizing purchasing centres where small producers could sell their surplus products.

Awareness should be raised through media campaigns about the importance of women in entrepreneurship; projects where women gather, collaborate and network should be promoted.



Online workshops



Workshop 1:
 September 26th,
 2024 | 27 participants
 (Living Lab co-leads
 and project partners)

Workshop 2:
 October 18th, 2024 |
 19 participants,
 including 4 invited
 guests from the
 European Policy
 Forum for women-
 led innovation in
 agriculture and rural
 (WP5)

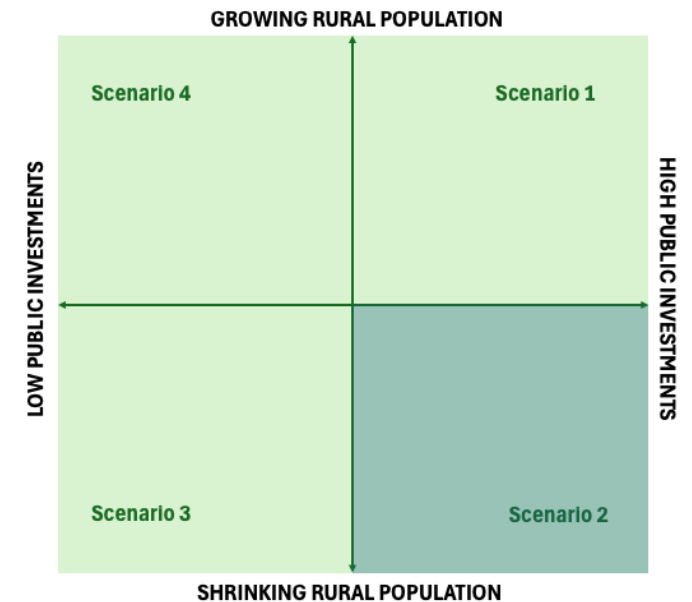


Scenario narratives (revision ongoing of draft D1.2)



Rural Renaissance...for the few

By 2040, high public investments and a thriving economy have created new opportunities for growth and innovation in rural areas. This has benefited professionals like Sofia, who enjoy rural living while relying on remote work, as well as farmers like Joanna, Rosa, and Silvia, who gain from public farm support and access to digital markets. However, the declining rural population has weakened social bonds and diminished community life. A combination of CAP subsidies and public investments is helping modernise the sector and keep it competitive, even as rural populations decline, but labour shortages put the long-term sustainability of agriculture at risk. In addition, climate change continues to threaten rural livelihoods, calling for further adaptation effort, beyond boosting renewable energy production and crop diversification.



ENABLERS



BARRIERS

Gaps in digital, financial, and business literacy for scaling businesses.

Environmental constraints like droughts threatening rural businesses.

Persistent gender norms and limited childcare options hindering work-life balance.

Tourism pressures leading to housing strains in rural areas.

Business culture undervaluing small rural initiatives.

Missing investments in infrastructure (e.g., connectivity, travel, and ferry services).

Degraded farming and processing facilities (e.g., drinking troughs, slaughterhouses).

Changes in governance affecting local grazing and resource management.

Economic constraints reducing demand for quality rural products.

Increasing care needs of an ageing population vs. reduced healthcare services.

Care burdens disproportionately affecting women's work-life balance.

Shrinking user base for rural services due to depopulation.

Labour shortages making it hard to sustain and expand businesses.

Agricultural policy limitations failing to address women-specific needs.

Generational change delays hampering innovation in rural sectors.

Funding and resource constraints limiting farm sustainability and business expansion.

Welfare service gaps creating economic and social burdens for families.

Fragmented rural communities lacking shared values and cohesion.

Lack of policy measures explicitly addressing women-led farming and innovation.

Shortages in affordable social housing and childcare services

Preliminary conclusions



- The most recurring one is the pink: social;
- The domains 5 categories can be linked to policies domains and emerges that they are not exclusively linked the the agricultural sector;
- There is a need to address the emerging issues with a transversal approach and not driven by specific sector requirements.



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**Thanks for your attention!
Questions?**

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