

Women and innovation in the Spanish agricultural sector: Key findings from the European GRASS CEILING Project

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1. INTRODUCTION & OBJETIVE

- **European Project GRASS CEILING: "Gender Equality in Rural and Agricultural Innovation Systems"**
- **Female farmers and livestock breeders in the depopulated northern regions of Spain: Aragón, Asturias, and Castilla y León**
- **Low female participation in the primary sector (28.6% of farm holders in Spain are women; 21.4% in Aragón, 23% in Castilla y León)**
- **Support measures that go beyond mere intentions, addressing the real needs of women and tackling the structural inequalities present in the sector**
- **Objective: to carry out a comparative analysis of the factors that influence innovative decisions made by women and men in the agricultural sector, serving as a basis for the development of agricultural policies with a genuine gender perspective**



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2. THE GRASS CEILING PROJECT



- 1 Women's role in the future of agriculture, rural economies, and communities across EU
- 2 Understanding gender norms, drivers, and barriers to women-led innovations in farming and rural communities
- 3 Rural women Innovator Living Labs
- 4 Benchmarking farming and rural development policies, and legal frameworks for land transfer regarding EU Gender Equality Strategy & Social Rights Policy
- 5 Co-creation of recommendations and tools for policy and knowledge and innovation systems that boost women's role in the sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas

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Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation

Project management and coordination



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2. THE GRASS CEILING PROJECT

THE LIVING LABS:

Collaborative spaces where diverse stakeholders work together to co-create solutions to societal challenges



THE SPANISH LIVING LAB:

- 8 women farmers. Male farmers, public administration, associative organizations, academia, local action groups (LAGs), innovation entities
- Three regions on the depopulated northeast of Spain



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2. METHODOLOGY



Structured interviews:

1. Opinion on the type of innovation implemented on their farm
2. Motivations for innovating
3. Who or what inspires them to innovate
4. Support agents they rely on
5. Personal, professional, and sectoral barriers
6. Support measures



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3. RESULTS

The Grass Ceiling–Spain project defines innovation in the agricultural sector as a change in any area (economic, environmental, and/or social) aimed at improvement, adapting to new demands, and seeking solutions. The goal is to generate value to enhance people’s well-being by meeting needs, ensuring the sustainable profitability of farms, and placing significant importance on alliances and cooperation. This does not mean breaking away from the past and tradition, but rather progressing and adapting to the present and the future.



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3. RESULTS

1. TYPE OF INNOVATION

Similarities:

- Improvements in production processes (machinery, digital tools)
- New crops (rotation, sustainability)

Differences:

- Women emphasize social innovation (visibility, networking, training, information)

2. REASONS FOR INNOVATING

Similarities:

- Higher economic return
- Cost reduction
- Compliance with regulations

Differences:

- Women also highlight: improved efficiency, time-saving, well-being, and sustainability
- Greater sensitivity to sustainability among women

3. SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

Differences:

- Women: inspired by EU countries, peers, family, and local environment
- Men: inspired by technical magazines, advisors, and their own ideas
- Men show more *individualism*, women more *collaborative spirit*



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3. RESULTS

4. SUPPORT AGENTS

Similarities:

- Family and partner
- Technical staff from professional associations and cooperatives
- Both feel *lack of support* from public technical services

Differences:

- Men value peer-to-peer support from other entrepreneurs

5. BARRIERS (PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL, SECTORAL)

Similarities:

- Economic concerns (fear of failure), more intense among men

Differences:

- Women face added barriers:
- Lack of time
- Social resistance
- Poor telecom infrastructure
- Bureaucracy, inadequate regulations
- Lack of tailored advice



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3. RESULTS

6. SUPPORT MEASURES

Shared demands:

- Stronger public support
- Training in digitalization (needs-based)
- Greater visibility of rural work
- Mutual support networks
- Shared domestic responsibilities & work-life balance support
- Improved living conditions in rural areas
- Stronger role for cooperatives and associations



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3. RESULTS

STAKEHOLDER OPINIONS

- Women face a *disadvantaged starting point* in the sector → targeted support remains essential
- Women are *more motivated and determined* to innovate and adopt digital tools
- Women (especially younger ones) have *higher levels of agricultural training*
- Women are more engaged in *activity diversification, social dimensions, and new approaches*



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3. RESULTS

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| SOCIAL DRIVERS | 23,0% |
| Increasing demographic evolution concentrated in large cities | 2,7% |
| Rural demographic characterization: depopulation and aging | 11,8% |
| Changing societal values towards attachment to rural areas | 4,3% |
| New preferences in food consumption | 4,1% |
| TECHNOLOGICAL DRIVERS | 12,9% |
| Digitalization | 4,0% |
| Connectivity | 5,7% |
| Biotechnology | 3,2% |
| ENVIRONMENTAL DRIVERS | 12,2% |
| Climate change | 7,4% |
| Availability of natural resources | 4,8% |
| ECONOMIC DRIVERS | 21,2% |
| International geopolitical situation | 5,1% |
| Globalization and economic growth | 5,1% |
| Changes in the structure of the agri-food sector | 5,0% |
| Financial investments | 5,9% |
| POLITICAL AND REGULATORY DRIVERS | 30,8% |
| Rural development policy | 7,0% |
| CAP and food strategies | 13,7% |
| Other policies affecting rural areas | 10,1% |

Key Role of CAP. The most influential factor is the development and implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Demographic and Service Challenges. Depopulation, aging population, and lack of basic services in rural areas significantly affect women's farms.

Regulatory and Policy Tensions. Other rural policies often conflict with agricultural priorities, creating additional barriers.

Social and Economic Pressures. Social factors (like gender roles and community dynamics) have nearly the same weight as economic ones in shaping farm decisions.



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3. RESULTS

The future leans towards:

- **Modernization and Digitalization**
- **Sustainability and New Practices**
- **Reform of Public Support Policies**



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4. CONCLUSIONS

- Use of Living Labs as a participatory research method
- Innovation shows similarities and differences between women and men
- Need for gender-sensitive strategies to support women's participation
- Next steps: analyze barriers and propose policy recommendations



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GRASS CEILING

THANK YOU VERY MUCH

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