

# 7

## The Common Agricultural Policy and Gender Equality

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Maria Wimer grew up on a family farm in Germany and dreamt of becoming a farmer. Yet it was clear that her older brother was going to inherit the farm, as has been the practice throughout Europe. This left Maria with two options: she could marry a farmer, to gain access to land and engage in farming; or she could train to become a farmer, lease land and start her own farm. The two options by no means yield the same outcomes. If Maria chose to marry a farmer, marriage would give her both a job and a husband – she would be a *Bäuerin*. As such, her duties and rights would be fundamentally different from that of a *Bauer*. She most likely would be in charge of all the housework, childcare and much of the paperwork relating to the farm. She would engage in farming by doing jobs typically reserved for women and considered ‘ancillary’. Her dual role as spouse and farmer tasked with jobs considered secondary would leave her with few rights. She would have had no occupational status, no right to the income produced from the farm. If she were to divorce, in most jurisdictions she would have no right to the assets of the farm, despite having participated in securing these through her labour. Before 1995, she would have had no independent right to a pension either.

We know from the book Maria wrote that she chose the second path: she studied to become a farmer.<sup>1</sup> She wanted to become a *Landwirtin* (land manager) rather than a *Bäuerin* (farmer’s wife). We do not know whether she ever succeeded in this goal, but if she did, she most likely encountered considerable resistance. Margarete Schmitt (1997) has documented the struggles of women like Maria wanting to be *Landwirtinnen*. Land owners often refused to lease land to them, women training to become farmers often experienced longer probationary periods in apprenticeships, and their supervisors focused on women’s physical strength when assessing their ability to farm. Maria’s chances of remaining a *Landwirtin* would be greater if she did not marry. Half of the women in Schmitt’s sample of female land managers were single; when men entered their lives they tended to take over farm management. Women then adopted more traditional roles; even

when they remained the designated managers, men ostensibly helped out with farm work, but not with housework. Typically, women's equality strategies crumbled once they had children. *Landwirtinnen* then built their own enclaves and developed new talents: growing berries, keeping goats, marketing cheese, tending vegetable gardens and, last but not least, running the household and caring for children.

Maria Wimer and women like her run up against a deeply institutionalised gender regime in European agriculture. The family farm with its profoundly patriarchal gender order remains its core building block, long supported by public policies, including the European Union (EU)'s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The CAP encompasses both market-making and a structural policy, engaging in both regulatory and redistributive tasks. Because of this dual character, the EU sooner resembles an acting state in the agricultural sector than in other sectors (Majone 1996). Given the large volume of resources dedicated to the CAP, added to the fact that feminists have long thought of the state as implicated in the reproduction of masculine domination, it is particularly important to examine the relationship between the EU's gender equality policy and the CAP. This chapter argues that, by making the family farm the centre of its policies, the CAP has been complicit in reproducing masculine domination in agriculture, making feminist interventions particularly difficult and restricting them to rural development activities in a complementary services sector.

The CAP was created in the 1960s for the purpose of stabilising rural incomes and modernising farming. Its main mechanisms for accomplishing these goals included the organisation of agricultural markets and rural development policies (Roederer-Rynning 2010). Because of its focus on helping states achieve income equivalences between urban and rural areas in its early years, the CAP served as a key component of the European *agricultural welfare state* (Rieger 1995). Since the 1980s, the policy has come under attack in international trade negotiations for distorting prices in international agricultural markets. The EU has responded to this challenge by agreeing to phase out price supports gradually, providing subsidies through direct payments to farmers instead. This allows it to liberalise agricultural markets while continuing to address rural welfare goals as well as newly added *rural sustainability* goals. Liberalising the CAP has meant transforming the European agricultural welfare state into a regime of environmental liberalism (Prügl 2004). My consideration of gender in the CAP probes gender rules in the transition from the agricultural welfare state of the 1960s and 1970s to the regime of environmental liberalism emerging since the 1980s.

In analysing gender politics in the CAP, this chapter relates feminist agency to these two regimes. They encompass rules constructing agricultural markets, welfare mechanisms and development strategies. They (re)produce gender through property rights, divisions of labour, and by constituting the identities of market actors in agriculture. Feminist strategies – such as

lobbying for legal change or gender mainstreaming – operate in the context of, and respond to, these regimes. The equal rights strategy of the 1970s and 1980s sought to change the rules of the agricultural welfare state, with its patriarchal understanding of the farm family and the gendered identities of ‘the farmer’ and ‘the spouse’. Embedded in the new regime of environmental liberalism, the contemporary gender mainstreaming strategy has the potential to change rural gender divisions of labour and to constitute rural entrepreneurship in newly gendered ways.

My argument stands in the tradition of the extensive feminist literature on European gender regimes (Duncan 1996b; Kofman and Sales 1996; Lewis 1992; Sainsbury 1994; Schunter-Kleemann 1992b). In its origins, this literature focused almost exclusively on national practices. However, increasingly, it has taken into consideration the influences of the EU. Scholars have probed the EU’s employment policies as a distinct type of gender regime (von Wahl 2005) and they have explored the influences of EU policies on local gender regimes (Pascall and Lewis 2004). Here I propose yet another approach by suggesting that gender regimes in systems of multi-level governance can usefully be identified along functional issue areas. Thus the gender regime in agriculture is likely to differ from the gender regime shaping other policy areas, such as science or industry. My argument also draws on constructivist approaches that have explored the EU as a rule-making enterprise – both in the sense of making laws and regulations and in regard to changing European society (Fligstein 2008; Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 1998; Shaw 2000). This approach has been particularly useful for understanding gender politics in the EU (Locher and Prügl 2009).

In what follows, I first outline the contours of the gendered agricultural welfare state under the CAP and the contemporary transition to a new regime of environmental liberalism with new gender orders. Secondly, I probe feminist agency in the context of these changing regimes. I then explore the politics around the formulation and implementation of Directive 86/613/EEC on the equal treatment of women in self-employment, including agriculture, and juxtapose them against current efforts to mainstream gender in this sector. Finally, I illustrate how these regimes circumscribe feminist agency, and how the meaning of gender equality changes in different regime contexts.

## **1. From the agricultural welfare state to liberal environmentalism**

The CAP is frequently described as embodying a compromise between German and French interests. Whereas French agriculture was highly competitive, the German farming sector was relatively inefficient. Thus the French favoured a liberalisation of trade in agricultural products in order to create a European market for their agricultural surpluses. In contrast, the

Germans opposed agricultural liberalisation but were interested in liberalising trade in industrial products, where they were highly competitive. The compromise – a liberalisation of industry and a common market in agriculture, with relatively high fixed prices – met agrarian interests in both countries and responded to industrial interests in the construction of the common market (Moravcsik 1998). Concurrently, the CAP also institutionalised patriarchal interests represented with little contention by all states party to the negotiations.

A core element of agricultural policies at both the national and Community levels was the commitment to preserving the family farm. Documents from the 1958 Stresa conference formulating basic CAP principles convey a broad agreement among European Economic Community (EEC) member states to maintain family farming as the basic organising principle of a modernised agricultural sector.<sup>2</sup> Family farms combine several characteristics. First, farms and the associated land are family-owned, passed down for generations, with preference typically assigned to male heirs; second, family members provide the bulk of farm labour, with male farmers typically controlling the labour of their female spouses.<sup>3</sup> Third, the household and the business comprise one unit, production and reproduction are spatially and organisationally joined. In 1989, almost three-fourth of all farms in the EU were family farms; in 2005 family labour accounted for over 80 per cent of the volume of labour provided in the EU-27.<sup>4</sup>

A patriarchal gender order according the farmer control over his wife's labour, male control over property, and assigned household/business managerial power to men thus was a key element of the agricultural model institutionalised via the CAP; it was celebrated in rhetoric in the post-World War II era, often juxtaposed against communist policies that created large industrial-style farms. It is fair to suggest that the unpaid, unrecognised labour of women farmers made possible the post-war restructuring of European farming parallel to the preservation of family farming. Agricultural economists note that the integration of household labour and resources with the farm's labour and resources provides unique flexibility and constitutes a highly efficient regulatory system with low transaction costs. The low value attached to women's labour, including the classification of household labour as non-productive, moreover facilitated an extensive system of labour exploitation, including self-exploitation (Vogel and Wiesinger 2003).

As in the industrial sector, patriarchal rules within the family were reinforced through government policies. By accepting the definition of farmers as male, the agricultural welfare state's price mechanism distributed income primarily to men.<sup>5</sup> In addition, EU member states developed social insurance schemes (health insurance, accident and disability insurance, old age insurance) that complemented the Union's price mechanism to secure the welfare of farming families. Under this patriarchal gender order, states treated women quite differently within these schemes. These features of the

European agricultural welfare state became a target of attacks due to feminist activism of the 1980s, in ways outlined below.

Family farming has changed its meaning as globalisation has replaced modernisation as the rationale for agricultural policy-making (McMichael 1997). Under pressure from its trading partners at the World Trade Organization (WTO), the EU initiated steps phasing out price supports, thereby dismantling the agricultural welfare state created through the CAP. At the same time, pressures from farmer organisations and environmental groups have counteracted liberalisation. In international trade negotiations, the EU has acknowledged that price supports distort international agricultural markets while insisting that continued subsidies are justified in the agricultural sector for social, ecological and cultural reasons. In order to reduce the trade-distorting effects of the common market organisation, the EU has been gradually replacing price subsidies with direct payments to farmers.<sup>6</sup> It uses these new types of subsidisation to pursue a broader range of goals, like farm welfare, environmental preservation, and rural development.

These policies have become part of a new 'European model of agriculture'. The model rests on the contention that agriculture differs fundamentally from other economic sectors, in that it not only creates private goods for exchange on the market (namely food and fibre) but also provides a series of public goods, that is, externalities the market does not reward: it shapes the rural landscape, offers environmental benefits (land conservation, natural resource management, preservation of biodiversity) and contributes to the socio-economic viability of rural areas. In this way farming is becoming 'multi-functional' (Maier and Shobayashi 2001).

*Multifunctionality* is a crucial element in the emergence of a new regulatory regime in European agriculture, namely liberal environmentalism. It combines a commitment to free trade with state intervention to counteract trade-related detrimental environmental and welfare effects. Thus the EU's first steps towards liberalising agricultural trade during the WTO Uruguay Round of negotiations were linked to the adoption of a set of *agri-environmental* regulations (Wilson and Wilson 2001: 107–108, 194–198), which sought to channel agricultural practices into more sustainable paths. They could then be framed as providing public as well as private goods and warranting government subsidies.<sup>7</sup>

Along with trade liberalisation, the EU embraced an expanded policy of rural development as the second pillar of its agricultural policy. In 2005 it established a new European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to help accomplish three goals: increase the competitiveness of European agriculture; improve the rural environment; and enhance the quality of rural life while diversifying the rural economy (Council 2005). Mainstreamed throughout the text of the rural development regulation setting up the fund is the requirement to advance equality between women and men. Thus the fund's goals encompass neoliberal agendas for increasing

competitiveness but also include environmental, rural welfare and gender equality objectives.

How did feminists press their agendas and how have their strategies changed in the context of the agricultural welfare state and liberal environmentalism? How do regulatory contexts circumscribe the effectiveness of feminist strategies? How have they changed the meaning of gender equality?

## 2. Feminists target the agricultural welfare state

By the time multiple United Nations (UN) women's conferences had galvanised the international women's movement in the 1970s and 1980s, the European agricultural welfare state was well entrenched. The EU responded to the new international discourse on women's equality with a series of equality directives guaranteeing equal pay, women's equal rights and equal treatment in the workplace and in social security (see Table 7.1; see articles by Locher, Hubert and Stratigaki in this volume). These rights were progressively implemented in the non-agricultural sector, but the issue was complicated in agriculture, so the equal rights agenda hardly impacted the sector.

This was not due to a lack of feminist effort. Starting in 1975, the Commission's Women's Information Service financed regular meetings of women farmers; the Commission's first Action Programme on Equal Opportunity (AP 1982–1985) included a priority focus on self-employment and women in agriculture. In this context, the COPA<sup>8</sup> Women's Committee initiated its first EU-wide inquiry into the legal status of women on family farms in the early 1980s. The survey found that member states did not discriminate between male and female farm heads, but there were very few women running farms. Instead, most were 'farmers' wives' whose work was unacknowledged: they

*Table 7.1* EU actions improving the legal status of women in agriculture

1982	Grado Seminar
1986	Council passes Directive 86/613/EEC on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood
1994	Commission Report on the Implementation of the Directive
1989–2007	Five EP Reports and Resolutions
2010	EP and Council pass new Directive 2010/41/EU on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Directive 86/613/EEC

typically received neither pay nor independent social security protection. If they divorced or if their husbands died, they lost not only their jobs, but also access to pension benefits accumulated by their husbands. Furthermore, farmers' wives frequently had no entitlement to compensation resulting from an inability to work due to sickness, accident or maternity – all standard provisions for women working outside agriculture. The study also found differences in training, with women rarely taking technical courses in farm work, and massive differences in women's access to farming organisations and cooperatives. Their labour was clearly not accorded the same value as that of male farmers, nor was their status equal to that of heads of households or enterprises (Sousi-Roubi and von Prondzynski 1983).<sup>9</sup>

The survey kicked off a series of activities that ultimately culminated in a very weak EU directive on the equal treatment of women in self-employment, including agriculture. The first was a seminar in Grado, Italy, in November 1982, organised by COPA and a Brussels-based policy think-tank with support from the Commission. The seminar discussed the results of the survey and concluded that it was necessary to write a separate directive for women in self-employment and agriculture (Commission 1988: 1–2). In the years following, rural women's organisations and 'femocrats' pursued this legal strategy to change the situation of women farmers in the context of the agricultural welfare state.

Participants in the Grado seminar suggested that the solution to improving women's status in agriculture lay in changing what it means to be a woman farmer by redefining her status and, with that, her identity. The seminar called for an EC directive addressing the occupational status of 'women farmers' with regard to property rights, tax legislation, social security, access to vocational training, farming organisations, cooperatives and relief services. The seminar received support in this demand from the European Parliament (EP). Simone Martin, a Liberal MEP from France charged by the EP's Committee of Inquiry into the Situation of Women in Europe to report on women in family businesses, attended this seminar. Her report to the EP emphasised the importance of legally recognising women's work in the household and in family enterprises, bemoaned that too many tax and social security provisions were tied to the status of the head of enterprise and recommended that all family members working in a family business be given the status of partner. Her report also took up the issues of social security, maternity leave, vocational training, access to professional organisations and cooperatives and relief services.

With support from female MEPs and input from women farmers' organisations, the Commission developed a draft proposal for a directive in 1984 that closely reflected the demands first formulated at Grado. The draft stressed the importance of granting women farmers occupational status as either partners or employees (rather than simple marital status as wives or housewives). Only occupational status would secure recognition of their contribution to

family income and entitlements to social security (Commission 1984). The draft directive also included language addressing most of the other concerns discussed at the seminar.

In its reading of the proposal, the EP noted that it had previously called for a directive, voting to support the Commission proposal while seeking to strengthen certain provisions; it added language that guaranteed recognition of the spouse's work with regard to rights of succession, further requiring organisations and cooperatives to change their statutes to allow spouses to participate.<sup>10</sup> It also broadened the conditions that would allow for replacement of their services. In addition to adopting the Commission proposal, the EP passed a resolution expressing hope that the directive would eliminate discrimination against women in self-employment and agriculture, afford them preferential rights to inheritance, independent incomes and independent treatment for tax and social security purposes (European Parliament 1984).

Despite this groundswell of support, the Council (initially under the Dutch, then under the British presidency) radically watered down the draft directive.<sup>11</sup> It reformulated provisions to recognise women farmers' professional status in a way that made them meaningless: 'Member States shall undertake to examine under what conditions recognition of the work of the spouses [...] may be encouraged and, in light of such examination, consider any appropriate steps for encouraging such recognition' (Council 1986: Article 7). Gone were references to granting equal status or acknowledging the work of women farmers in the form of cash payments or allocations of profit shares. Gone was the idea of recognising their work through an entry in the register of trade organisations. Instead, governments reserved the right to take action on this issue or not. Similarly fuzzy language replaced provisions about maternity protection. The Council further weakened provisions regarding social security, substituting the reference to 'independent entitlements' with wording that called for voluntary contribution schemes for spouses, and only if they were not protected 'under the self-employed worker's social security scheme' (their husbands' insurance). In other words, derived rights were not considered a problem. Finally, the Council directive made no reference to eliminating unequal treatment in the tax code, securing female access to professional organisations or equal access to training, all of which had appeared in the Commission draft. The EP proposal to add language on inheritance rights was likewise ignored.

Not surprisingly, the directive changed little. In a 1994 review of its application, governments reported that 'it had not been necessary for them to amend or adapt their national legislation in order to implement the Directive' (Commission 1994: 6). Nothing had changed with regard to the occupational status of women farmers: 'By and large the Member States felt that there was no need for new initiatives to encourage such recognition' (Commission 1994: 6). Social security rights, for the most part, were still derived rights or rights based on costly private insurance schemes.



Only regarding maternity protection did the report find signs of movement: some states now granted allowances, but provision of genuine relief services remained the exception. The first draft of the review had included critical comments from non-governmental organisations, reiterating that the work of spouses needed to be recognised. The Commission decided to strike these comments. Furthermore, the fact that a junior sub-contracted expert, rather than a regular civil servant, was charged with writing the report may indicate the lack of importance the Commission attached to the directive.<sup>12</sup>

The EP and the COPA Women's Committee reacted to these unsatisfactory outcomes with continued activism, keeping alive demands for equal status and equal treatment while demanding a strengthening of the directive. In 1989 the EP passed a resolution calling to amend the directive so that spouses would be defined as 'joint partners' in a family business, enjoying 'the same rights to full social protection' as female employees. It also called for the promotion of training for farmers' wives, public information and government enforcement services (European Parliament 1988). The delayed review of the impact of the 1986 directive generated critique and new attention. The EP Committee on the Status of Women issued a report on the situation of women in agriculture in 1993, which led to a 1994 resolution calling for recognition of work done by spouses. In the context of CAP reform, the EP now demanded that vocational training measures include 'farm management courses, agri-tourism, organic farming, diversification of activities' and new technologies (European Parliament 1993). The report and the resolution were accompanied by a study from the EP's Directorate-General for Research, providing an extensive overview of the status of women farmers in Europe, of succession practices and discrimination in social welfare policies (Subhan and Angelidis 1993/1994). In 1997 the EP passed yet another resolution, calling for an amended directive to include compulsory registration of assisting spouses and reiterating the list of demands included in the original 1984 draft (European Parliament 1997: 186). It took up the issue again, in a 2003 resolution on women in rural areas in light of CAP reform (compare European Parliament 2003), as well as in a 2008 resolution that emphasised the relevance of gender mainstreaming (GM) and rural development (European Parliament 2008).

In a 1993 strategy session of experts at the Commission, participants had concluded that the chances of reviving the original proposal were very poor. Seventeen years later, following continued agitation from the EP, the EU passed a new directive, but with different emphases than those discussed at Grado. While the original directive was seen as an extension of equality legislation, the revision was framed as an instrument for job creation under the EU's Lisbon agenda. The agenda's ambitious employment goals came to include the boosting of female employment and, thus, female entrepreneurship; it puts considerable emphasis on reconciling work with family responsibilities. The new directive reflects these priorities: it

considerably strengthens the original directive by adding definitions of direct and indirect discrimination and various forms of harassment. It goes beyond equal treatment, to allow for positive action enabling the member states to counteract the dearth of female self-employment. It further gives existing equality bodies competence on the issue, ensuring proactive initiatives and closer supervision of implementation. Most importantly, it strengthens provisions on maternity leave by obliging member states to set up systems that entitle self-employed and assisting spouses to maternity protection (European Parliament and Council 2010).

The directive addresses many weaknesses in the old directive, as identified by the Network of Legal Experts on the Application of Community Law on Equal Treatment between Men and Women. Yet, like the old directive, the new one stops short of legally recognising the status of assisting spouses, including women farmers. Indeed, the language recognising the economic contributions of assisting spouses dropped out of the picture. New social security entitlements may implicitly provide such recognition. However, as the experts noted, this is not enough. Formal recognition and adequate remuneration for the work of assisting spouses is desirable (Network of Legal Experts n.d.: 6). The EU's Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men had gone even further, recommending the compulsory registration of assisting spouses and raising the issue of non-equality in ownership. It argued that non-recognition restricts spouses to the informal economy, considered a form of indirect gender discrimination (Advisory Committee n.d.). The closest the directive comes to recognising the work of spouses is to require that the conditions for establishing a company between spouses should be no more restrictive than the conditions between other persons.

The gendered rules that inform the agricultural welfare state are reflected in the reluctance to recognise the work of assisting spouses. Women's demand for equal partner status contradicts a farming order that construes female labour as merely complementary, distributes welfare benefits through prices paid to male heads of household and seeks to enlarge farms – as such, it dislikes the idea of splitting up farm property, for example in case of divorce or split successions. Guaranteeing women equal status would threaten this order. Given real occupational standing, women might demand regularised income or profit shares, equitable welfare benefits, equal property and succession rights. They would become equal partners in a business, rather than serving as cheap flexible labourers in someone else's business.

However, the fact that the new directive triggered no resistance among agricultural organisations (at least at the European level) also signals a shift in gender relations. This shift no doubt relates to the overall decline in family-based agriculture; as small farms die, the average farm size continues to grow, with contracted labour increasingly replacing family labour on

European farms. The shift also pertains to rural women pursuing their own equality strategies and generating their own income either through off-farm jobs or by pursuing new entrepreneurial opportunities on the farm. As spouses find new income-generating options, securing their ongoing labour for the farm requires more equitable arrangements. Independent entitlements to social security and maternity protection are possible arrangements benefiting not only women farmers whose labour supports the agricultural enterprise, but also persons finding new entrepreneurial opportunities in the service sectors of a more diversified rural economy. Feminist interventions into this re-organised countryside have shifted from legal strategies to mainstreaming gender into all types of rural policies.

### 3. Gender mainstreaming and liberal environmentalism

When the EU adopted gender mainstreaming in the aftermath of the 1995 UN Beijing Women's Conference (see Table 7.2), the agricultural welfare state was already being replaced by a regime of liberal environmentalism. In this context, EU 'femocrats' shifted their focus from female farm labour to 'rural women' more broadly, that is, to those living in the countryside. Gender mainstreaming resonated better in rural development programmes than in regulatory discourses on welfare or market regulation. Clearly, the new regime has influenced feminist strategy. What have been the results of this strategy so far? How has the meaning of equality changed in the context of new economic politics targeting the countryside?

In the 1990s the Commission funded several studies on rural women and on women in agriculture that started with the ideal of a diversified rural

*Table 7.2* EU actions to implement gender mainstreaming in rural development

1996	Commission communication on integrating a gender perspective into all EU policies and actions
1996	Council resolution on gender mainstreaming equal opportunities for men and women into the European structural funds
2002	Agricultural Council conclusion on incorporating a gender perspective into its work
2005	Rural development regulation includes mandate to promote equality and to ensure non-discrimination using the tools of gender mainstreaming
2003 and 2007	Two EP resolutions demanding gender mainstreaming in structural funds and rural development
2010	Directive 2010/41/EU requires gender mainstreaming when formulating and implementing rules pertaining to women and men in self-employment

economy, signalling a shift in its approach to gender issues. A 1994 study funded by the Commission's Directorate-General (DG) on Relays and Information Networks compiled information on rural women's work, finding substantially lower activity rates and considerably higher unemployment rates than witnessed among men, coupled with heavy concentrations in low-skilled or unskilled occupations. It recommended that governments generate more accurate, comparative statistics and that gender be mainstreamed into research and rural policy initiatives, and it suggested a range of measures to support women's economic participation. Among these were the promotion of self-employment and independent legal status, together with a revision of Directive 86/613/EC. Anticipating the theme of diversification, the report also identified opportunities for women in the tourism and leisure industries; it listed the efforts of various rural associations to create employment by producing and marketing traditional hand-crafted products, agro-tourism, rural tourism, personal and community services, or cultural activities (see Bock 2001; Braithwaite 1994: 26). Employment and self-employment in the service industries seemed to hold the promise for 'rural women', including women on farms.

A 1998 comparative study funded by DG Agriculture (Overbeek et al. 1998) focused more narrowly on female farmers and, within the new regime, explicitly concerned itself with comparing rural women's economic activity in diversified and non-diversified areas. The study found that more labour-intensive agriculture (for example organic farming) created job opportunities for women farmers without improving their working conditions in Greece, while creating paid employment in food processing industries.<sup>13</sup> In other regions, ongoing modernisation and intensification of farming produced contradictory outcomes for women. It led to a decline in women's agricultural employment in Northern Italy, for example, without compensating them via access to industrial jobs outside of agriculture. Such processes improved both women's levels of employment and working conditions in agriculture in a highly diversified region of the Netherlands, however. The study concluded that 'in diversified areas farm women already contribute to diminish [*sic*] the vulnerability for changes in agricultural policies, because they work outside [...] or work on farms with productions less dependent on EU-income policies' (Overbeek et al. 1998: 205). Indeed, women's activity rates were higher in diversified regions, while men's rates did not seem affected by diversification. The authors again recommended recognising the occupational status of women farmers, along with increased opportunities for paid services in rural areas (for example childcare), seeking balance in the demand and supply of labour qualifications, and more serious mainstreaming of gender considerations via EU regional and structural funds.

Both of these studies redefined the problem of gender equality in agriculture as one encompassing rural areas as a whole. They described women's status as affected not only by their status on the farm but also by their

employment status off the farm or outside farming, as well as by the degree to which an economy was diversified. Under the new European model, women's roles no longer seemed limited to flexible farm labour. Instead, they were taking advantage of income streams created through the commodification of the rural landscape, most importantly tourism, and the professionalisation of traditionally unpaid services. By joining the rural workforce in the service industries, women assisted in cushioning the negative impacts of agricultural liberalisation.

Introduction of a new model was paralleled by a shift in feminist strategy within the EU. Calls for gender mainstreaming centred primarily on rural development policies and programmes; they tended to construct women as workers in services reserving agriculture for men. The Commission's 1996 communication on gender mainstreaming included a section on self-employed women and spouses of the self-employed. It emphasised women's fitness for service work and painted gender roles on the farm as complementary by declaring that spouses of farmers are directly implicated in the development of farm tourism and local services (Commission 1996). Thus gender mainstreaming was deemed significant in the agricultural sector.

As the Council of Ministers and the EP incorporated gender mainstreaming into their own procedures, they similarly stressed the central role of women in diversifying the rural economy, as well as the complementarity of female service work to male agriculture. In May 2002, the Agricultural Council, under the Spanish presidency, adopted a conclusion 'incorporating the gender perspective' into its work (Council of Agricultural Ministers 2002).<sup>14</sup> The conclusion excised all references to granting women working on farms a 'genuine farmer status', although this proposal was included in the Spanish presidency's information note to the Employment and Social Policy Council (Spanish Presidency 2002). In fact, the Agricultural Council's conclusions did not contain a single reference to women's agricultural labour, but rather constructed rural women's activity as 'diversified' labour; the Council further linked their role in the rural economy to their empowerment. The Council recognised the need to

continue promoting the integration of women into the various sectors covered by new sources of employment as part of integrated rural development, such as new information technologies, tele-working, local services, rural tourism, leisure services, services providing childcare and care for dependants, and the promotion of environment-friendly activities (Council of Agricultural Ministers 2002: 7).

In June 2003, the EP followed with a resolution on women in rural areas that welcomed the action of the Agricultural Council, then called on the member states to implement gender mainstreaming in agricultural and rural development policy (European Parliament 2003, 2008). While the EP resolution

again brought up the issue of professional status for spouses, it especially noted the role of women in strengthening the CAP's second pillar – that is, rural development – appealing for mainstreaming in the structural funds and rural development initiatives. The emphasis fell on mainstreaming rural development programmes. The idea of changing the gender order on the farm faded into the background.

Indeed, the structural funds became one of the first domains where gender mainstreaming was applied, as mandated by a 1996 Council resolution. EU rural development policies in the past had been funded through the 'guidance' section of the European Agricultural Guarantee and Guidance Fund (EAGGF); since 2007 resources have been funnelled through the EAFRD. The monies distributed through these funds must respond to national and sub-regional development plans negotiated with the Commission and have been disbursed to governments, enabling them to pursue measures set out in those plans. In addition, the EU has long run a few 'community initiatives' directly implemented by the Commission, allowing it to explore new, experimental approaches to further common goals. The LEADER programme constitutes one such initiative with regard to rural development. Run as an experimental programme since 1991,<sup>15</sup> it appears as a separate 'axis' in the 2005 rural development regulation that set up the EAFRD.

Despite explicit, high-level commitment, implementation of gender mainstreaming in relation to the structural funds has been uneven and often met resistance, particularly in the EAGGF:

In spite of the clear policy commitment on the application of gender equality to *all* policy areas and programmes, certain areas of the Structural Funds have been protected from 'interference', most notably the more 'technical' areas of the EAGGF (such as [...] milk quotas, early retirement schemes) (Braithwaite 2000: 7; emphasis in original).

In other words, gender mainstreaming was hard to apply in rural development arenas associated with the agricultural welfare regime and agricultural modernisation. These domains nonetheless accounted for the bulk of rural development activities throughout the 2000–2006 budget phase. An evaluation of the later period confirms this observation: although gender mainstreaming was mandated, most programmes lacked sex-disaggregated statistics, analysis of inequalities, and gender impact assessments. Most interventions targeted 'the farm'; since women manage only one in five farms in Europe, most infusions neglect them. This was true for agricultural investments, marketing programmes, and also for agri-environmental measures in less favoured areas (Bandarra Jazra 2002). Some programmes clearly *disadvantage* women: 'Gender imbalances might even increase when, for instance, as indicated in a measure to encourage young farmers to take over or improve farms, it is explicitly foreseen that less than 6 per cent of the beneficiaries will be women' (Commission 2002: 8). Case in point: the 2003 mid-term

evaluation on rural development asked two questions involving gender – as to the number of young farmers supported, and to gender ratios among people benefiting from assistance. It found that ‘in most cases fewer women benefited’ from aid to young farmers setting up, though in some cases aid made ‘a positive contribution to the number of female entrants to farming’ (Commission 2004: 46).

While the EU refused to incorporate feminist goals into its agricultural modernisation agenda under the regime of the agricultural welfare state, it did allow for such goals in its focus on rural diversification efforts early on. Mary Braithwaite (2000: 7) observed in her evaluation that, in DG Agriculture and Rural Development, ‘it has not yet been possible to take equality issues beyond the most “soft” of areas (training, agro-tourism, crafts, [...])’ – inferring that gender equality concerns got marginalised into areas of non-agricultural development. The Commission’s 2002 communication on gender mainstreaming in the structural funds confirmed this tendency, suggesting that ‘measures which might have a positive impact on gender equality mainly cover areas such as diversification, training, new employment opportunities and setting up small enterprises in rural tourism, producing and selling regional products, childcare’ (Commission 2002: 8). A booklet produced by the Commission on Women Active in Rural Development affirmed this understanding: women are helped by the development of new economic sectors ‘such as telecommunications, local services, tourism and leisure services, and environmental improvement’ (European Commission 2000: 11). Governmental interventions should target vocational and personal training and help women to set up businesses:

By entering into self-employment and setting up small businesses women can be at the forefront of innovation and diversification in rural areas, for example by developing agri-tourism activities, artisanal food and drinks production, craft enterprises, telecommunication and caring services. Women often have the added advantage of an awareness and knowledge of local needs, and special interpersonal and communication skills (European Commission 2000: 13).

Rural women were being reconstructed in this narrative, transformed from farming assistants into rural entrepreneurs and service providers. They were even identified as having skills that uniquely qualified them for such positions. The booklet emphasised the need to bring these women into rural decision-making structures, seeking not only their economic but also their political empowerment in this manner. While the booklet alerted the reader to the problem of women’s status on farms, interventions no longer targeted this issue.

Many gaps persist regarding the implementation of gender mainstreaming in EU rural development efforts, not least because implementation remains in the hands of member states.<sup>16</sup> But, before it got absorbed into the

EAFRD, the Commission exercised considerable control over mainstreaming implementation in the LEADER programme, a small slice of the EU's rural development efforts. LEADER employs a participatory approach that involves creating locally based public-private partnerships ('Local Action Groups' or LAGs). These are empowered to implement innovative, area-based development strategies. The LEADER focus on diversification has provided openings for the reconfiguration of rural gender relations. The LEADER I evaluation found a high level of participation, considerable diversification, albeit mostly through the development of tourism, the creation of new enterprises, and interesting innovations in the processing and marketing of agricultural products. Though the evaluators bemoaned a dearth of record-keeping with regard to gender, women held a large number of jobs created through the programme. The high number of projects focusing on tourism apparently facilitated this: almost twice as many new jobs in tourism went to women as men (Commission 1999b: 11).

The second phase of the programme continued this record. Although tourism was somewhat less prominent (still accounting for 30 to 50 per cent of the budgets submitted by groups), women held about half the jobs created or otherwise safeguarded through the programme (European Commission, DG Agriculture 2003: 206, 209). There was considerable local variation regarding outcomes, however; 64 per cent of jobs created through LEADER II in Ireland went to women, for example, but only 21 per cent in Germany. Women's participation in the LAGs was higher in the Nordic states and in areas designated as 'Objective 1' (covering the European periphery such as Eastern Germany) than in those designated 'Objective 5b' (disadvantaged rural areas). The mid-term evaluation of the last LEADER+ phase of the programme found that women, on average, were underrepresented in the LAGs, accounting for about 30 per cent of members. Again there was considerable variation, some LAGs enlisting no women (including Fens Leap, Saarland, and Valencia), contrasting with up to 60 per cent of the LAG in Herfordshire (European Commission 2006: X, 98).

Overall, data from the first two programme phases point to some success regarding job creation, but benefits for women differed by locale, reflecting the impact of communal politics and local gender rules. Similarly, LEADER apparently makes participation possible in certain contexts but not in others: while LEADER has produced jobs for women, their employment often reproduces traditional divisions of labour. Men predominate in jobs created through small and medium-size enterprises, crafts and services, as well as in domains valorising agricultural products. Women dominate in tourism, where many jobs are part-time (European Commission, DG Agriculture 2003: 11).

In sum, an emerging regime of environmental liberalism has shifted the focus from female farmers to women residing in the countryside. Gender mainstreaming finds particular resonance in development programmes



concerned with diversifying rural incomes. While women seem to benefit when gender factors are included in rural development policies, the practice cements the segregation of rural labour markets: men dominate agriculture, women prevail in the service industries. Most public support still flows into a masculinised agricultural sector (regulated by welfare state principles, albeit in a modified fashion), while governments seek to satisfy women's desire for independence by steering them into off-farm occupations or diversifying on-farm activities. In other words, gender mainstreaming has ended in defeat when it comes to women's rights and entitlements in agriculture per se. In adapting to an environmental liberalism regime, feminists have been sidelined into rural development efforts focusing on economic diversification. There is potential for female economic empowerment in this area, but the danger of reproducing hierarchical divisions of labour and affirming identities that codify masculine domination persists.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Feminist activism has long been embedded in and circumscribed by socio-economic structures. My aim here was to show that regulatory regimes in the agricultural sector constitute one such structure. I have treated the sector not as purely economic and external to society, but as one institutionalised through market, welfare, and rural development policies. Feminist strategies fared very differently under the agricultural welfare state than they have under a regime of liberal environmentalism.

Since the 1980s, the equal rights strategy has sought to gain women farmers' equal status by legal means, with limited success. The patriarchal family, asserting male control over the means of production, family labour and income, constituting the original foundation of the European agricultural welfare state, has conflicted with equal status demands for women farmers for decades. While the equal rights strategy has shifted discourses and altered policies in some places, it has failed to undermine the larger structure of male dominance. The new directive passed in July 2010 signals some movement in this direction, acknowledging the need for equal welfare rights and seeking to make it easier for spouses to establish joint companies. Like the earlier directive, however, the new one stops short of mandating equal status for assisting spouses.

While mainstreaming was conceptualised as a tool to attack unspoken commitments and implicit gender assumptions in 'institutions' like the agricultural welfare state, it has been sidelined to date, unable to shake up the patriarchal foundations and structures that comprise the agricultural welfare regime. It has evinced some success in integrating gender considerations into rural development policies that now serve as the 'second pillar' of the CAP. In this way it has opened up avenues for women's empowerment not existing under an agriculture-oriented paradigm. Still, gender divisions of

labour are reproduced in new ways within a paradigm of diversifying rural incomes: men remain farmers, while women move out of agriculture. For certain women, this has provided on-farm business opportunities; others have found highly valued jobs in the off-farm service sector. Service jobs are nonetheless notoriously low paid; thus the creation of a feminised rural services sector entails promise but also risks the creation a new feminised, low-wage workforce.

This study raises questions concerning our need for better explorations of the relationship between feminist strategy and structural context. The EU shares competence for rural development policies with national and sub-national authorities; indeed, local authorities bear primary responsibility for implementing these policies. Accordingly, the question of whether and how gender mainstreaming is being implemented in the EU cannot be satisfactorily answered by probing activities only in Brussels. Future studies need to explore the dynamics of implementation in local contexts in order to capture the mechanisms in place that prevent implementation, co-opt or otherwise sidetrack feminist strategies. They also could help to identify conditions that must be in place in order to ensure that gender mainstreaming actually achieves the goal of gender equality that it set out to accomplish.

### Discussion questions

- What kinds of policies did feminists primarily pursue under the agricultural welfare state?
- What kinds of policies have feminists subsequently pursued under environmental liberalism?
- If socio-economic regimes, such as the agricultural welfare state and liberal environmentalism, circumscribe feminist activism – as argued in this article – can you speculate on the mechanisms involved in such processes?

### Notes

1. This anecdote is based on Wimer's public, critical reflections on her own life history, later published as Wimer (1988).
2. *Conférence Agricole des États membres de la Communauté Économique Européenne*. Recueil des Documents, Stresa, 3–12 July 1958.
3. Family farms of this type developed parallel to Fordism as industrial employment opportunities led to an accelerated exodus of agricultural labour. Through mechanisation and modernisation, farmers increasingly substituted capital for hired labour but also drew more on their wives' flexible labour. As farm women lost access to independent income from processing agricultural products and direct marketing, their labour was integrated into the specialised farm businesses of their husbands.
4. Hill's figures (1993) did not include very small part-time farms and large farms that operated with hired labour. The 2005 figure is from *Agriculture in the European Union 2007*.

5. The EU guaranteed the prices of the food processing industry, and farmers benefited to the extent that industry paid higher prices for commodities.
6. In addition, the EU has committed to reducing export subsidies and to 'tariffication', in other words, to the conversion of export subsidies and quotas into tariffs. This would make European subsidies more transparent and de-link them from the vagaries of the world market.
7. According to Wilson and Wilson (2001: 221), EU environmental policies have been more effective in maintaining farmers' incomes than in changing environmental practices.
8. Committee of Agricultural Organizations in the European Community – the European umbrella of national farmers' organisations.
9. In 1988, *Women of Europe* published an update including information on the new member states Spain and Portugal. Written by the COPA Women's Committee secretariat, that account included surprisingly strong language, declaring that the aim of women working on farms was 'to be fully-fledged farmers in their own right' (Commission 1988: 5). I doubt that all the member organisations of the Committee subscribed to such a radical position. Feminist discourse in Germany, for example, did not see a contradiction between gender divisions of labour and gender equality; the Deutscher Landarbeiter Verband (the German organisation represented on the Committee) tends to stress the professionalisation of home economics over making women farmers.
10. Note that the Economic and Social Committee, in its opinion on the proposal, was more circumspect about having the state mandate what the professional organisations should put in their statutes. See Economic and Social Committee (1984).
11. Proponents of the directive had waited for the Dutch presidency of the Council, hoping it would be sympathetic to the proposal (European Parliament 1988: 8).
12. Nathalie Wuiame, CESEP (who authored the report on implementation of the directive), telephone interview with the author, 22 January 2004.
13. In contrast, in Norway (not an EU member state) the more diversified economy, supporting extensive, environmentally sensitive forms of agriculture, also spawned tourist enterprises run by women farmers.
14. The Council adopting the conclusion included six female agricultural ministers: Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck (Belgium); Vera Dua (Flemish Minister for the Environment and Agriculture); Mariann Fischer Boel (Denmark), who became the Commissioner for Agriculture in November 2004; Renate Künast (Germany); Margareta Winberg (Sweden) as Minister of Agriculture and Equal Opportunities; and Margaret Beckett (UK).
15. LEADER I (1991 to 1994) was continued in LEADER II (1994 to 1999) and in LEADER+ (2000 to 2006).
16. For an exploration of the implementation of gender mainstreaming in Germany, see Prügl (2009).