



Local is beautiful

Recommendations to policymakers and civil society organisations to mitigate the negative impacts of Green Deal policies

July 2023



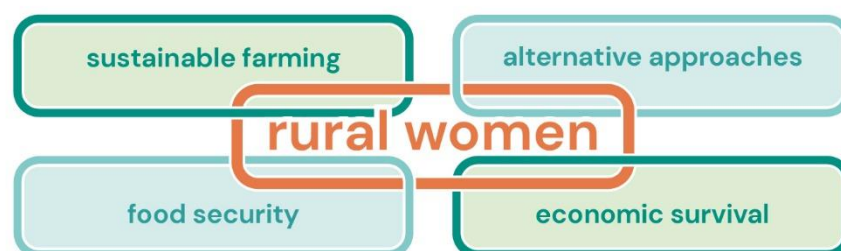
Gender+ inclusive agricultural policies and civil society practices for and with small farmers

Agriculture and rural areas are central to the European Green Deal. With the growing food crisis, environmentally sustainable and gender+ inclusive small-scale farming has the potential to play a prominent role in food security, as well as in soil regeneration, reduction of land degradation, mitigation of disasters, and the preservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity. The majority of the 10 million farms in the EU are small farms, only 30% of which are managed by women. There is an increasing amount of literature establishing a link between gender and sustainability, especially regarding sustainable farming practices: women farmers are more often involved in alternative and environmentally friendly approaches.

Yet, existing EU policies fall short of supporting environmentally sustainable, gender inclusive small farming, thereby strengthening existing vulnerabilities and missing opportunities to reach Green Deal objectives. Scientific literature indicates that to move future EU Common Agricultural Policy and other climate and rural policies towards a socially transformative, gender and ecologically-just direction, the push for gender equality will need to come from progressive farmers and civil society.

Findings from ACCTING¹

Many governments do not have a coherent and systematic agriculture policy to improve domestic food security and nutrition. This creates significant insecurity and vulnerability among small farmers. Besides, high agricultural costs and economic and production uncertainty serve as major hindrances for change. Some interviews show that small farmers are in debilitating situations, suffer from lack of public (and social) support and are being pushed out of agricultural production. To compensate for the lack of public support, results from ACCTING highlights how some small farmers are engaged in cooperation practices, purchasing together and sharing tools and equipment for sustainable farming that they would not be able to afford individually. However, the competition with large agricultural mastodons remains an unequal struggle. Further research by ACCTING implicitly addresses the links between gender (+) equality, food security, and nutrition. We can conclude that women fulfil significant roles and responsibilities to ensure food security and nutrition and to enable behavioural change for themselves, their children, and their families, even in the most limited and challenging conditions.



Below are some of the findings and narratives from ACCTING that reveal how women try to overcome gender inequalities in the food system:

- Growing food in their gardens, farms, or community gardens not only to generate income but also to promote food safety and provide access to food or food products of higher quality.

In a narrative, from an ecofeminist activist involved in the environmental struggles in Aegean Turkey, there is a reflection about the lack of support for small farmers in Turkey: *“The transition to corporate farming in our region worries me a lot. Much of the support offered today is inefficient at transferring income to small-scale farmers because the government supports corporate agriculture and industrial farming.*

¹ Zorell, C., & Strid, S. (eds.) (2023). D3.2 ACCTING Report on first cycle experimental studies. Confidential report delivered to the European Commission 28 April 2023. 281 pages.

Companies have been merging small plots of land to form large apple orchards, which is also worrying.” Her narrative also reveals the relationship between unsustainable agriculture, food insecurity, and wildlife: “Whereas the garden used to be full of colourful wildflowers, now we see fewer species such as St. John’s wort. It has also become more challenging to encounter wildlife. We used to see roe deer cubs in our field occasionally. We don’t see them much anymore. They probably go deeper into the forests to find food.”

- Preparing food sources for the entire year, especially winter, by drying, canning, and pickling vegetables. A 30-year-old micro-entrepreneur in the food sector, highlights cooperation to make up for the lack of resources and support for small companies in the sector: *“We are four. All young people. Our farm produces galettes, corn chips, and various kinds of flour, crisps and biscuits. (...) We believe much more in cooperation than in competition. For example, we make our maize galettes production equipment available for all the farms in the area that cannot afford to buy a production plant for their small production. Only through cooperation can small and micro companies in our sector withstand competition with large multinationals.”*
- Undertaking responsible waste-management.
- Relying on intimate relations and social networks, receiving support from their mothers or grandmothers in administering the food of the household, but also in the promotion of healthy eating habits within the family and especially among young children.
- Receiving support from their girl children to take care of the housework and cooking while the mothers work in the field (which creates concerns regarding the exploitation of children, especially of girls).
- Leading or partaking in activism to protect their livelihoods (their gardens, forests and the ecological balance of the area) for their survival and self-sustainability.

Recommendations

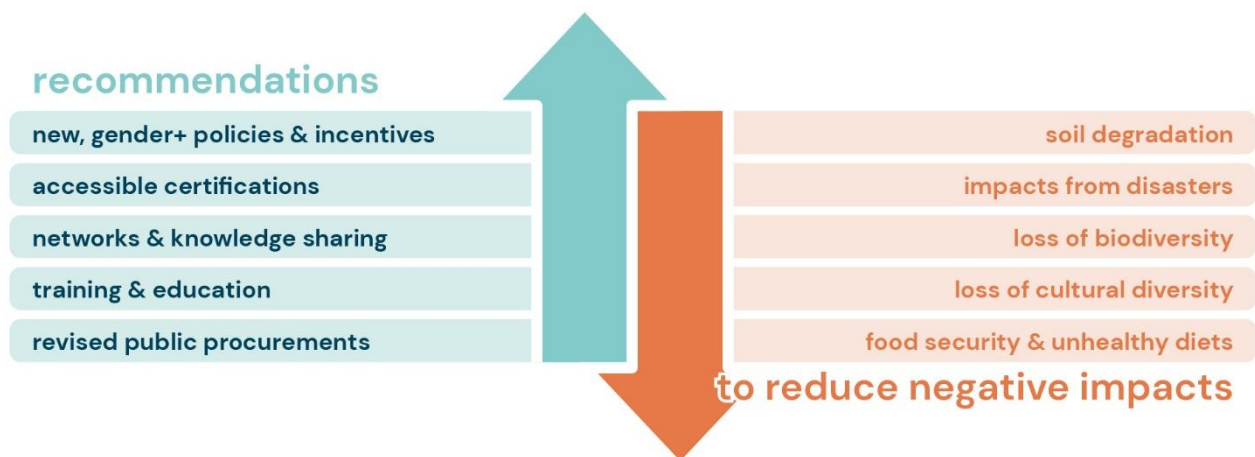
Recommendations for policymakers

New policies are needed at all levels of governance (local, regional, national and EU) to support the gender+ inclusive implementation of the European Green Deal, regarding rural areas in general and small farming in particular. We call on all policy makers to:

- 1. Provide incentives** (such as announcing new awards and making existing ones accessible) for environmentally sustainable and gender+ inclusive small farming practices and initiatives such as waste management, composting, and soil regeneration to enable a bottom-up transformation.
- 2. Design more financially and technologically accessible alternatives to certification systems** (including organic certification), such as 'participatory guarantee systems' that operate at the local level in order to enable fair access to certification for new farmers, women, and other vulnerable groups.
- 3. Create gender+ inclusive public spaces** through participatory urban planning and design, enabling environmentally sustainable small farms and women's food cooperatives to sell their produce at the local level.
- 4. Establish regulations that require public procurement** (school canteens, hospitals, public offices, employee canteens, etc) to prioritise products from local farmers and particularly women, BIPOC (black, indigenous and people of colour) and indigenous-led farms and food-cooperatives. This would help in restoring a fairer competition with industrial producers that are not required to integrate social and environmental costs.
- 5. Support farmers' right to seeds** and their capacity to grow food to feed themselves and other people adequately, particularly in line with Article 14 of the Convention of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on rural women's rights to seeds, as they play a **key role in local and global food systems and food security**.
- 6. Develop gender+ inclusive mechanisms for networking, knowledge-sharing and collaboration** between policymakers, experts, civil society organisations, and small farmers; and reform the current institutional structures (such as farming advisory systems) to have gender+ inclusive participatory governance.

7. Create **gender+ inclusive education and training programs** for small farmers that weave together local, indigenous, gender+ experiences and wisdom with scientific research towards the development of environmentally sustainable, fair, and healthier farming and food systems.

8. Promote **gender+ inclusive agroecological farming practices** that prioritise local supply chains, traditional local knowledge, intergenerational exchange, protecting wildlife habitat and water quality through sustainable agricultural practices free of synthetic pesticides and chemical fertilisers, while paying attention to gender, cultural and racial diversity.



Recommendations for civil society organisations

These recommendations are based on our narrative research, and on the mapping of the better stories of those civil society organisations that are making a positive impact in this field. We call on all civil society organisations, cooperatives (both producer- and consumer-led), professional associations (particularly of agricultural and forest engineers) and trade unions to develop closer collaboration and networking with small farmers to:

1. Co-create policy and action proposals for **environmentally sustainable, fair, and gender+ inclusive local food systems**.
2. Raise public awareness about the significance of **local, seasonal food consumption for human, animal and planetary health**, and co-create tools and processes for **more environmentally sustainable, fair, and gender+ inclusive practices in small farming**.
3. Support small farmers in **reaching consumers without intermediaries**, for economic and environmental sustainability, addressing the significance of **short supply chains** for mitigating the climate crisis.
4. Adopt a gender+ perspective, make the **local knowledge and wisdom of small farmers (particularly women, BIPOC, migrant and indigenous)** regarding sustainable food systems, biodiversity, soil regeneration and multispecies survival **visible and accessible** for the public, as well as for policymakers. This could be achieved by **archiving and making visible better stories** of environmentally sustainable and gender+ inclusive small farming practices and initiatives, and through collaborative publishing, training, outreach, lobbying, and dissemination activities.
5. Create **local, regional, national and international networks** among (particularly women, BIPOC, migrant, and indigenous) small farmers and farmers' associations and cooperatives engaged in environmentally sustainable farming practices.

networks & collaboration to enable behavioural change



Better Stories

In ACCTING, we look for inspiring bottom-up initiatives as Better Stories, a concept borrowed from Dina Georgis² to refer promising practices that can instil ideas for how to advance individual and collective behavioural change as envisioned by the Green Deal.



HUNGARY

Bayaerdo³ (“Forest of the Witches”)

This is an inspiring case of building gender+ solidarities that simultaneously address gender and ethnic exclusion, as well as poverty and unemployment. This organisation consists of a network of volunteers assisting Roma women in a rural village in selling their local produce (mostly mushrooms and berries) with a zero-waste policy in packaging and distribution. Through cooperation, Roma women take pioneer roles in strengthening their deprived societies, increasing their access to healthy and sustainable food, and developing sustainable business skills.



UNITED STATES

Sister Land Farms⁴

This was a queer-owned, worker-run farm cooperative/school that provides food for the food banks, supports farmers (especially queer and indigenous), and partners with tribal youth for their educational activities. What is most inspiring in their practice is that as an organisation run by queer, indigenous, worker groups, they aim to reflect their experiences of marginalisation into farming practices to “elevate the disenfranchised and historically ignored” and to tackle racism, poverty, gender-based discrimination and the climate crisis in a spirit of “collectivism and community.”



BRAZIL

Mulher - Women'S Movement of The Xingu Indigenous Reservation Association⁵

The campaign carried out by ATIX Mulher during the pandemic in 2020 for food and agricultural tools for the 16 ethnic groups of the indigenous reservation is an example of ensuring women's emancipation and empowerment within traditional structures of indigenous communities in central Brazil.

² Georgis, D. (2013). *The better story: Queer affects from the Middle East*. Suny Press.

³ <https://www.bayaerdo.hu/>

⁴ <https://www.sisterlandfarms.com/farm-school>

⁵ <https://www.equatorinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/ATIX-Case-Study-English-r3.pdf>



TURKEY

Kadiköy Cooperative⁶

A consumer cooperative that supports local and regional food production and transforms consumer consumption behaviour and habits in a highly densely populated neighbourhood of Istanbul. Developing trust and caring relationships and knowledge exchange among the producers, stakeholders, and consumers in an alternative food network that replaces third-party certification with participatory guaranteed systems, this co-op supports small local producers who cannot access conventional markets to sell their organic and pesticide-free products without certification. Urban consumers also access a wide diversity of local products and contribute to the social sustainability of various regional/rural areas and the debate around organic certification.

Other inspiring Better Stories to look at:

- LA KUMPANIA (Italy)
<https://www.lakumpania.it/>
- TERRAS DE CASCAIS (Lands Of Cascais, Portugal)
<https://ambiente.cascais.pt/pt/terrasdecascais/terras-cascais>
- KILOMBO (Spain), Kilombo. Ecosistemes econòmics i culturals per al bon viure
<https://lafundicio.net/>

⁶ https://www.facebook.com/KadikoyKoop/?locale=tr_TR

Policy areas

These recommendations are linked to the following policy areas:

- European Green Deal policy area: [“Farm to Work Strategy: For a Fair, Healthy and Environmentally Friendly Food System](#)
- [The New CAP \(Common Agricultural Policy, 2023–2027\)](#)
- [The EU Small Farmers Scheme \(2017\)](#)
- [Action Plan for Organic Production in the EU \(2021\)](#)

About ACCTING

ACCTING is an EU-funded project aiming to understand the impact of Green Deal policies on vulnerable groups, prevent inequalities, and produce knowledge and innovations to advance behavioural change at individual and collective levels.

Running until May 2025 and based on two research cycles, ACCTING mobilises research experimentation and innovation to promote an inclusive and socially just European Green Deal, focusing on the inequalities produced by its policies.

Find out more about the project and discover more factsheets at <https://accting.eu>

Follow us on social media!

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