

Empowering Women Innovators in Agrifood

Aleksandra Niżyńska, 27.03.2025



Insights based on the research made for EIT Food



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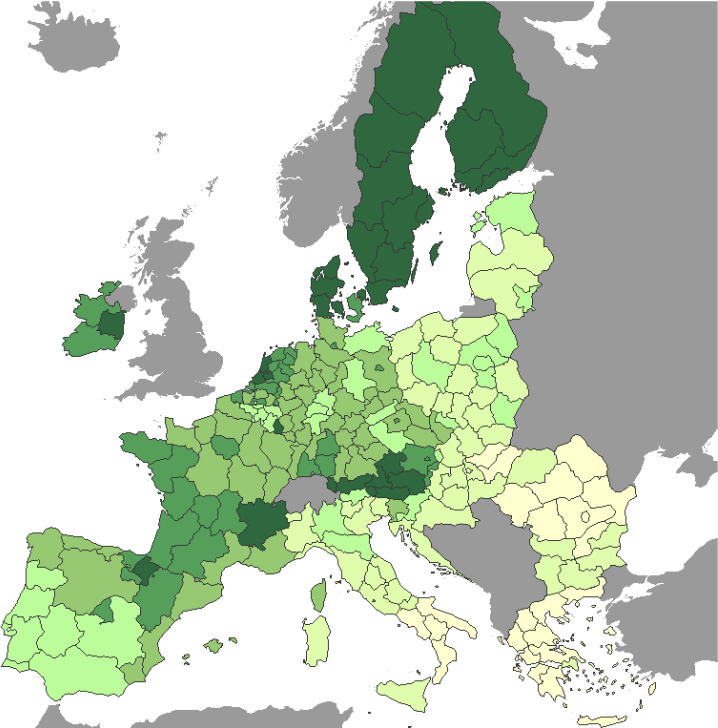
Analysis of entrepreneurial and agrifood landscape for women in 15 CEE countries (134 programmes analysed)

14 Interviews with experts from **Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.**

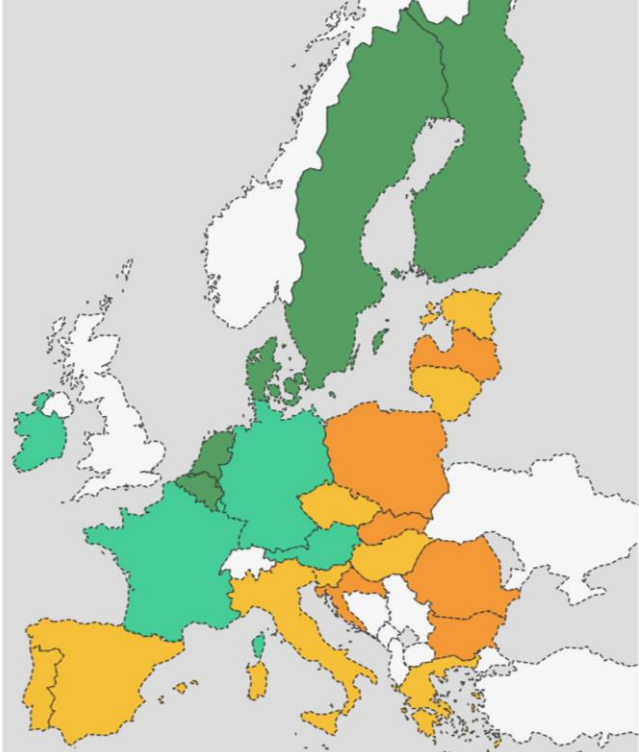


EU regions with higher levels of gender equality are also more innovative

Female Achievement Index



European Innovation Scoreboard



Women in European agrifood innovation ecosystem

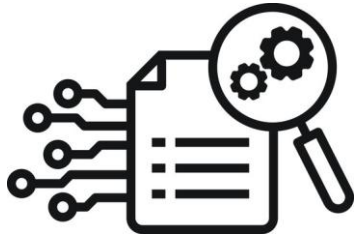
The **share of farm managers that are women** increased from 26.4 % in 2005 to **31.6 % in 2020**. The gender imbalance among farmers is particularly strong in the Netherlands; only one in every twenty farmers (5.6 %) was female in 2020. Female farmers were also relatively uncommon in Malta (10.8 % of all farmers), Germany (10.8 %), Denmark (10.9 %) and Ireland (11.4 %). There was a closer gender balance in Latvia and Lithuania (with 44.8 % and 44.9 % shares respectively of farmers that were female). (*Eurostat 2020*)

The percentage of **total funding going to deep tech startups with women founders** in Europe stands at only **11.4%**. At the seed stage, women-led startups secure only 15% of funding, while men-led startups take the remaining 85% (*EIT 2024*)

Exclusively women founded agtech firms made up around 3% of global agtech VC deal activity. Those with at least one women founder – 18%. In terms of value, **all-female founded startups made up 0.7% of activity** (16.5% in case of diverse teams) (*Pitch Book 2024*)



Existing gaps in support for female entrepreneurship in agrifood sector



DATA

Evidence-based policy design needs data to be able to create relevant support programmes and to assess the impact they make. **The latest EU-wide gender disaggregated data on rural employment are from 2020** and national statistics offices in CEE countries are not providing gender segregated data.



POLICY-MAKING

Despite general objectives regarding gender equality in CAP 2023–2027, it is hard to set any KPIs due to lack of information on current situation. **Policy makers are often scared of not being able to achieve the ambitious targets they have set** and in the case of women entrepreneurial activity in agrifood, without existing benchmarks it is hard even to assess the level of the women's willingness to start a business.



FUNDING

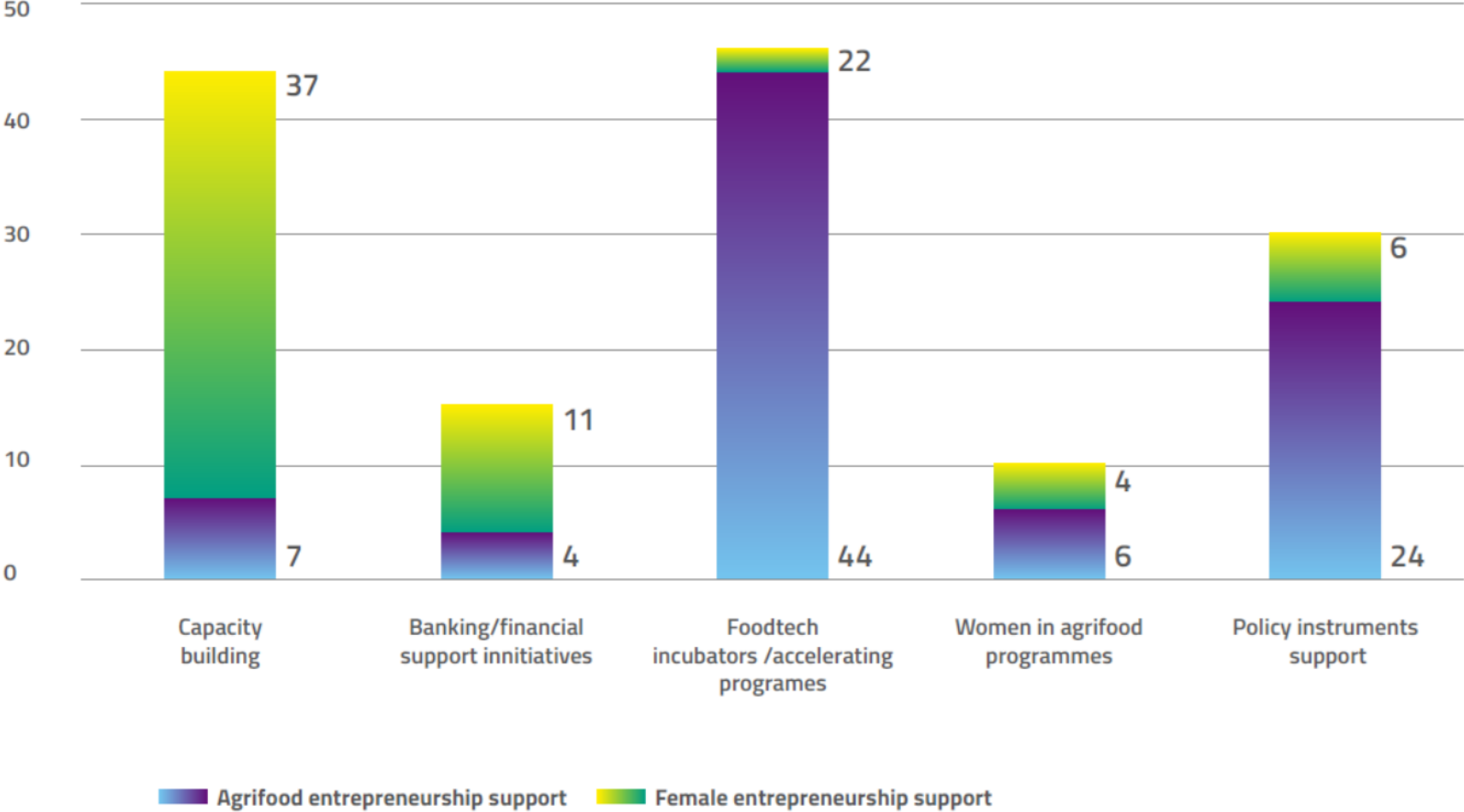
Investment in foodtech and agritech is considered much less profitable and much riskier than investment in mobile apps or fintech. Foodtech innovation requires specialised laboratories, sophisticated ingredients and multilayer certification processes. At the same time **investors are much less prone to invest in women led startups.**



MARKET CONNECTION

While many successful female entrepreneurship programmes in agrifood have a great impact in improving business skills and creating a participant journey, it is important not to leave out the focus on the product's journey to its market. Since **agrifood is dealing with physical products and services, they tend to become 'valuable' only when they come off the production line.**

Type of programmes offered to women and agrifood entrepreneurs in Central and Eastern Europe



„There are many entrepreneurial support programmes out there, but they often aren't specifically designed for women.

In our experience, women feel more secure and heard in communities tailored to them.

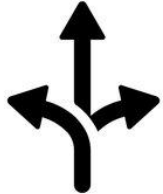
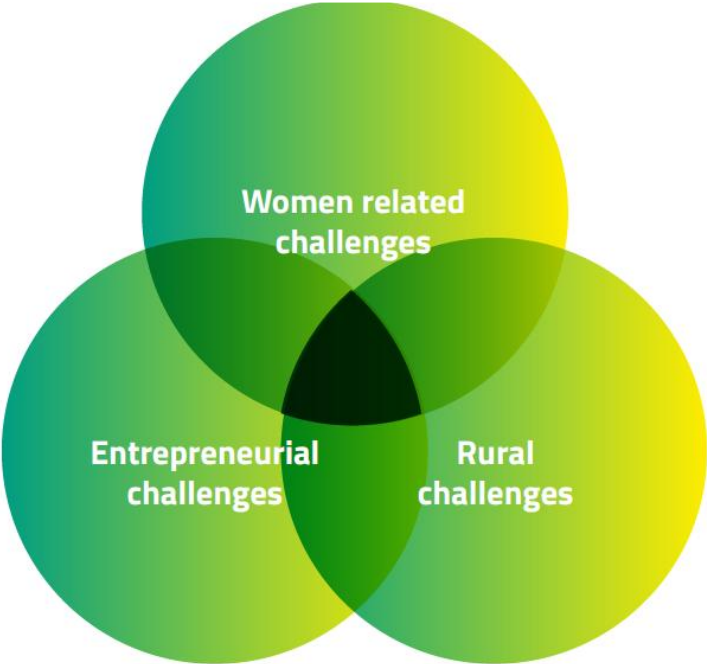
Many existing programmes are great, but they might not feel like the perfect fit for women.”

Interviewee



Supporting female entrepreneurs in agrifood

Success factors of female entrepreneurship support programmes in agrifood sector



FLEXIBILITY



MENTORING



Child Care



FUNDING



Alumni

Contact



info@gendersolution.com



<https://www.gendersolution.com>

