



EMPOWERING

RURAL

COMMUNITIES

Gender Equality and Innovation in Action

Women-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas: : Lessons from FLIARA Case Studies.

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Why FLIARA case studies?

Rural women's employment opportunities and contributions to innovation have been overshadowed and often marginalized/silenced.

FLIARA responded with!

Deepen the understanding of the pathways to success and the challenges facing female-led sustainability innovation in farming and rural areas.





Research Focus and Methodology

Main research question: How do women promote innovation in rural areas and in farming?

- Inventory of female-led innovations in rural areas and farming (530 cases were collected)
- 20 case studies - 200 women interviewed across 10 European countries
- Conducted in the period January-April 2024
- 20 National Case Study Reports
- 200 Fact Sheets of women-led innovations.
- Comparative analysis among 4 macro regions
- 10 Practice Abstracts

WHY WOMEN INNOVATE IN RURAL SWEDEN AND FINLAND

PRACTICE ABSTRACT 1

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Insights from FLARA's Nordic Baltic region case study comparative analysis show that while economic gain is usually assumed to be the primary reason for embarking upon innovation, this is not the case among women innovators in rural areas. Instead, the most important motivation is the desire to realize an idea—whether it is a new product, a service, or an innovative organizational form. Women are often driven by a strong passion for and belief in their ideas, not least because they see that their idea will help create a more sustainable society. The strong commitment to their ideas helps them overcome any challenges they face.

Identities for innovation can emerge from four different areas:

- Their ideas are often linked to their earlier education or professional experience, which they use to create new career paths.
- In other cases, hobbies are transformed into businesses, particularly for those that use local natural resources.
- Many want to realize their ideas in a specific rural place, which could be where they currently live, or where they or their partner have their roots. The place is thus intimately connected with the innovation, providing specific opportunities as well as place-bound limitations.
- Life changes, such as leaving an unsatisfying job or starting a family, can also function as catalysts for the innovation journey.

It is important to recognize and legitimize the diverse motivations behind innovation, which extend beyond economic measures. Ends must be met, of course, but money by itself is not motivating. Personal development is a powerful motivator and should be acknowledged in the innovation journey of women-led initiatives in farming and in rural areas.

Useful links:

- Realizing an idea based on the place: <https://flara.eu/innovator/emilia-hidingson/>
- When growth just happens: <https://flara.eu/innovator/anne-leena-pelikka/>

Rural Fact Sheet #045
Malia Lab

INNOVATION JOURNEY

Flavia Amato grew up in Guardavalle, a small village in a remote rural area in Calabria, in the South of Italy. After finishing high school, Flavia enrolled in the Academy of Fine Arts in Matera, a town in central Italy. Upon completion, she attended a vocational school of clothing pattern-making and completed a master's degree in artisan tailoring. She then accessed a capacity building programme for young innovators wanting to develop a start-up. As she finished this programme, in 2015 she decided to move to her native village, with her partner, to realize a dream to launch her sustainable and tailoring fashion brand, producing items with natural, ethical and high-quality textiles. Flavia started Malia Lab, in 2016, renovating a space that she inherited from her grandmother.

report their measurements by following the instructions on the website.

INNOVATION IMPACTS

Flavia intervenes environmental, cultural and economic sustainability, by producing clothes made of sustainable textiles that prioritize local, ancient tailoring traditions. Flavia recovered ancient handlooms and in May 2024 opened the textile lab "Origin" in the village's historical centre, where classes are held to teach traditional weaving techniques to tourists and locals. She is also working to recreate the broom supply chain that traditionally existed in the area. Flavia has initiated several collaborations with other local entities and is a member of an association that aims to revitalize the village's economy.

USEFUL LINKS

<https://malialab.com/>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9f8aG7heJ8>

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Key Findings: the Women Interviewed

- Different ages
- Educational background: most of them have tertiary education
- Different family status
- Some inherited the farm/business, some started from scratch



Female-led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas

Innovations

Discover the rural and agricultural innovation in FLIARA's diverse case study countries. Our project identified 200 innovations across Ireland, Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Romania, Italy, Spain, and Finland. Each innovator's journey is captured in a dedicated fact sheet, providing insights into their pioneering contributions to agriculture and rural development. Get acquainted with these remarkable individuals and explore the innovative solutions shaping the future of agriculture and rural areas.

-- Find by country -- -- Find by sustainability dimension -- -- Find by area -- -- Find by type of rural context --

A Womens' Collective Associazione CIRCE Italy Website Learn more	Agnes de Boer EdzemaheerdCow Farm Netherlands Website Learn more	Agnese Rostagno Biula Italy Website Learn more	Allbhe Gerrard Brookfield Farm Ireland Website Learn more

Key Findings: Challenges and Constrains

- Limited access to resources (financial, information, land, training)
- Bureaucratic hurdles
- Balancing family responsibilities
- Poor infrastructure
- Gender stereotyping

*We cannot, we must not forget that **bureaucracy makes every idea even longer..***
(Slovenia, R)

*Women **do not receive targeted support** [in training]*
(Germany, F)

*The main constraint **is money***
(Ireland, F)

*Farming machinery is **calibrated for male builds** and work clothes **are made for males only***
(Italy, F)

*..When I was a girl, my parents **did not allow me to enrol for an agricultural apprenticeship***
(Germany, F)



Key Findings: Impacts

- Economic
- Social
- Environmental
- Cultural

*We have preserved a cultural monument...but certainly also **created new employment opportunities** (Slovenia, F)*



*I believe that **we** [women] here **have gained courage ...the more women there are in Local Councils** (not just one or two), **the more their voice is heard, it changes the context, and the decision making..** (Romania, R)*

*Opening a donkey farm, and educational farm has many meanings... **to value and revive the cultural heritage of a place, while showing that it is possible and beautiful to live here** (Italy, F)*



Conclusions – Policy Recommendations

Promote and support networks

*A good network is important
(Germany, F)*

Need of integrated policies to support cross-sector projects

Targeted programmes

Simplify bureaucracy

*The funds are .. made for people who already have money that they can use and that they can anticipate...and who can do that ...if you don't have collateral?
Nobody
(Italy, F)*

Improve AKIS's work and campaigns

Accessible information on financial support

*Who helps out in case of illness?
(Finland, R)*

Support for illness/maternity leave and childcare services

Access to public land/spaces, food policies, private-public partnerships

*Opportunities of training, which would need to be adequate to the specificities and needs of women, this would help significantly
(Romania, R)*

Training (e.g. organic farming, digital skills, entrepreneurship courses)



**What questions or comments does this arise with
you?
Add them to Slido!**

For more information:

<https://fliara.eu/innovators/>

<https://fliara.eu/deliverables/>





Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas



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