



Connecting Women: A Driver for Agricultural Innovation

Policy Brief Germany

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Connecting Women: A Driver for Agricultural Innovation

"Networking is a driver for women-led innovation in agriculture. Let's support this."

Executive Summary

Women play a key role in the sustainable transition of agriculture and in fostering the development of innovative, resilient rural communities. The FLIARA case studies in Germany show that women innovators rely on working/life, economic and learning networks when implementing their innovations in agriculture. Networks are seedbeds for co-creation by diverse stakeholders and women-led innovation. This Policy Brief highlights the need to enhance women's networking opportunities to unlock the full potential of networking for agricultural innovation.

The Challenges and Opportunity

- 🏠 The FLIARA case studies in Germany show that women innovators in agriculture rely on local, regional and national working/life, economic and learning networks when implementing their innovations. Some have proactively established their own events and networks, demonstrating the central importance of these connections to their innovation journeys.
- 🏠 If supported, activities pertaining to working/life, economic and learning networks could lead to more efficient and widespread innovation across rural areas.
- 🏠 Effective networks require consistent coordination and ongoing engagement to maintain their relevance and impact as innovation platforms.



- While temporary project-based networks can address specific challenges, investing in long-term platforms for exchange is the most effective way to foster innovative solutions to emerging challenges.
- The FLIARA study indicates that supporting working/life, economic and learning networks, particularly through activities such as conferences, trainings, or IT platforms, is a promising approach to enhance women-led innovation. This enables knowledge exchange, space for co-innovation, dissemination of innovative solutions as well as organised soft skill training or informal access to peers' lessons learned.

Policy Solutions

To best facilitate women-led innovations in rural areas, it is essential that:

- Regional and local rural or economic development programmes as well as social schemes of public or private organisations include options for the support of existing and the creation of new networks at local, regional and national level.
- Funding goes to networks that either cater strictly to women (e.g., female business founders) or ensure women's participation.

The following pathways can be considered:

- Allocating funds for a network coordinator position, as this aids in sustaining the network.

- Implementing simple funding schemes, such as vouchers connected to advisory services, can facilitate peer exchange on topics like direct marketing.
- Actively promoting networks, e.g., at trade events, and in media engagements. Honouring networking initiatives with awards further boosts recognition and motivates wider participation.
- Highlighting networks in farmers' and women's associations, and implementing information campaigns on agricultural and rural development to increase visibility.

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Supporting Evidence & Good Practices

The **FLIARA project's Community of Practice (CoP)** brings together women rural innovators from across Europe. Feedback from participants of in-person events underscores the value of exchange and networking activities offered. For optimal inclusion, FLIARA also offers a [CoP LinkedIn](#) space and regular online events and webinars to cater to women's schedules.

A [Thünen Institute study](#) shows the lack of networks in Germany is a hindrance to women-led start-ups in rural areas. It also finds that women would like to exchange more with other women when founding agribusinesses. Furthermore, a [Gender Solution study](#) finds women in agri-food feel most empowered, secure and heard in entrepreneurial support formats tailored to them.

In Germany, the following initiatives currently facilitate women's networking in farming:

- The German Farmers' Association (DBV) offers, via the '**Kompass-program**', opportunities to build networks through events and parliamentary meetings
- The German Agricultural Association (DLG) runs the **Female Agri Fellows network**, connecting women leaders in agribusiness.
- The Rural Women's Association (DLV) has federal and regional Chapters that organise events to highlight women in agriculture
- The **Organic Women Network** (BioFrauenNetzwerk) fosters collaboration and visibility of women across the organic farm sector.



Conclusion & Call to Action

Evidence from the FLIARA Project shows that networking at all geographic levels boosts women innovators in agriculture and rural areas. The women particularly value these activities for the ongoing informal support, exchange of practical knowledge, and sense of community they offer. The impact of networking extends even to niche sectors, speeding up innovation, and amplifying the reach of women-led initiatives, making such activities highly deserving of support.

Even modest investments by decision makers in supporting network facilitation can create benefits that grow as more members get involved. Sustained support for women's networking around innovation is vital: it not only strengthens individual and collective capacity but also contributes to the long-term sustainable development of agriculture and rural communities.

Further Reading

FLIARA Deliverable 3.3: Women-led Innovations in Agriculture and Rural Areas - German Case Study Report - Section 4.3 Social Ecosystem (p. 84), July 2024
<https://zenodo.org/records/14045390>

FLIARA – The Role of Ambassadors and Multi-Actor Approach, March 2025
<https://fliara.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/The-Role-of-Ambassadors-and-Multi-Actor-Approach-Anastasia-Oprea.pdf>

Thünen Institute – Study on German farming women's living conditions, 2023
<https://www.studie-frauen-landwirtschaft.de/>

Gender Solution – Results of a Study on Empowering Women Innovators in Agrifood, March 2025
<https://fliara.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Empowering-5Women-Innovators-in-Agrifood-Aleksandra-Nizynska.pdf>

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About FLIARA

The project is on a mission to create a more sustainable future by highlighting the role of women in agriculture and rural areas. FLIARA will boost understanding of the needs and challenges facing women leading innovative environmental and rural development practices in EU farming and rural areas.

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