



Special targeted support for atypical rural SMEs

Policy Brief Finland

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"Horse business is not a target for public subsidies. There is also a grey area between a farm and a horse farm"

"The activities are so innovative there were no existing guidelines on how to implement it in practice" •

"Still normal that woman takes care of small children, time away from developing the business, balancing between family and work challenging"

Executive Summary

In the FLIARA interviews and Community of Practice -events (CoP), female entrepreneurs from farming and rural sector emphasized that women are often engaged in SME operations that are relatively small scale and/or do not represent average rural operations, that are better recognized in regulations or CAP subsidy options. Such are, for example, horse stable farms, gathering based enterprises (berries, mushrooms, herbs) or nature and farming based tourism and wellbeing enterprises. This kind of exceptional small-scale rural and farming economies easily fall in between in different economic subsidy schemes and regulations, which are aimed at more traditional operations. For example, horse business is not in the core of food production but rather horse-based services and therefore horse farms also receive less CAP subsidies than many other animal farms even if they contribute to biodiversity and vitality of the rural areas.

In addition, these kinds of exceptional rural SME economies are often seasonal and bound to natural harvest seasons or annually and seasonally varying weather conditions, and because of this, their needs of additional or seasonal workforce is hard to anticipate. These kinds of often small-scale rural operations would benefit flexible and simplified hiring procedures of fixed term seasonal and short-term temporary work force.

The Challenge

- 🏠 Women led rural enterprises represent often quite atypical business ideas compared to traditional farming operations that are better covered by subsidies and regulations.
- 🏠 Women led rural businesses are often small, sole or family based, enterprises
- 🏠 Women led rural businesses are often bound to natural seasons (e.g. wild herbs or berries) or weather conditions (e.g. out-door tourism, wellbeing or therapy programs) and need of workforce is hard to anticipate.

Policy Solutions

CAP and rural policy schemes should be revised

- 🏠 CAP and rural policies should cover better alternative utilization of farms and animals for non-traditional business schemes, such as green care activities, recreation and tourism.
- 🏠 CAP and rural policies should recognise better atypical, but also smaller scale or part-time rural enterprises.

Simplify hiring procedures for temporary employees

- 🏠 Small-scale, and often season and weather bound, rural operations should have flexible and simplified hiring procedures for fixed term or short-term temporary work force.
- 🏠 Due to, for example, family arrangements, also rural female seasonal workforce would benefit easier short term or part-time, even ad hoc, employment opportunities when mutual widow appears with entrepreneurs for temporary employment.

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Supporting Evidence & Best Practices

In the FLIARA interviews in Finland, but also in interviews in other partner countries and in the Community of Practice -events (CoP), female entrepreneurs from farming and rural sector emphasized that women are often engaged in atypical SME operations that are not well recognized and supported in rural policies. The need for renewing agricultural and rural policy schemes is evident if aim is to support women empowerment in rural areas and economies.


Conclusion & Call to Action

Women have had and still have essential, remarkable and innovative role in rural economies and culture in general. However, releasing the full and exceptional potentials of rural women for future necessitates revising rural policies to take into account different needs and starting points of innovative female rural enterprises compared to traditional male dominated rural economies. Empowering rural women in sustainable innovations strengthens agricultural and rural overall resilience and fosters inclusive and gender balanced progress.

CALL TO ACTION:

- 🏠 Policymakers should widen the scope of subsidized rural economies to atypical farm related economies compared to traditional farming operations.
- 🏠 Policymakers should recognize better the need for flexibility in hiring a seasonal, temporary and part-time workforce.



-  Policymakers should recognize better the needs of small and often sole, or family scale rural operations which often drop out, for example subsidy schemes due to too small size of operations.

By revising the rural policy strategies to cover better exceptional and innovative women led rural solutions, we can amplify women's contributions for future and support meaningful and sustainable change in rural communities.

Further Reading

[Innovators - FLIARA Project](#)

[Ambassadors - FLIARA Project](#)

<https://en.isokummun.com/>

<https://palosaarenporotila.fi/>

[FARM ESCAPE – ESCAPE ROOM EXPERIENCE IN THE RANCH - Farm Escape](#)

[Ruska Laukka - Suomenhevospalvelut Kuusamossa](#)

[Yrttiaika](#)

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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Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas

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