



Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan and Gender Equality

Policy Brief

Ireland

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The place of women in Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan 2023-27 and recommendations for the future

Executive Summary

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2023-2027 saw for the first time a direct focus on women in farming and rural areas. In its objectives, specific Objective 8 references enhancing the position of women in farming and accelerating the social inclusion of rural women. FLIARA analysis did not identify a strong and direct focus on supporting women-led innovation in CAP Strategic Plans (CSPs). Despite specific Objective 8, greater attention to these issues appears needed in Member States (Murtagh et al. 2024). However, Ireland's CSP 2023-2027 was one CSP that did include measures focused on addressing the issue of improving women's participation in farming. In this policy brief, based on the evidence and learnings emerging from the FLIARA project, we reflect on the measures taken. We also argue that this represents a first step. There is still room for future improvements to improve gender equality in relation to the position of women in farming and rural areas. We have also two separate policy briefs on AKIS and Generational Renewal (see Further Reading) where further specific CAP related issues are also assessed.

The Challenge

- 🏠 Ireland has a low share of women as farm-holders, or legal owners of the family farm, with the majority being overwhelmingly male. Data from 2023 shows that 13.2% of farm holders were female while 86.8% were male. Figures differ slightly depending on the farm type, but women farm holders are at their highest in mixed field crops at 22.9% and lowest in dairying at 7.2% (CSO, 2023).

- 📍 The numbers of smaller farms held by women is also notable. Of all 17,519 farms held by women, 34% or 5,979 of these were under 10 hectares (CSO, 2023).
- 📍 CSO (2020) data shows that 75,113 of the 278,600 farm workers in Ireland were women, representing 27% of the total workforce. This indicates that over 58,000 women are active in Irish farming without recognition or official holder status.
- 📍 The SWOT analysis carried out for Ireland's CSP 2023-2027 identified the low share of women in farming as a weakness and highlighted a perception of farming as a male occupation. It also pointed to increasing opportunities for women in agriculture as an opportunity. More broadly, a wider benefit of women's increased participation in farming highlighted was women tend to be more likely to drive change and consider alternative farm enterprise options (DAFM, no date).

Policy Solutions

Include specific selection criteria relating to women in a greater range of CAP interventions in both Pillar I and Pillar II or equivalent policy frameworks in the planned National and Regional Partnership Plans 2028-2034

- 📍 One example of how women are prioritised for support in Ireland's CSP 2023-2027 is through the On-Farm Capital Investment Scheme (TAMS III). This provides grants to farmers to support increased farm efficiency and competitiveness. A higher grant rate (60%) is available to women.
- 📍 However, Spain's CSP goes a lot further. Gender balance is included through specific criteria, such as giving priority to women-led projects in a large number of interventions. This is seen in 39 of 45 interventions under CAP Pillar II in 17 regional Managing Authorities (see Best Practices).
- 📍 Under Pillar I of Spain's CSP gender balance is also given specific attention. This is through the 15% higher direct payment rate for women under the Complementary Income Support for Young Farmers who own or co-own farms (EU CAP Network, 2025).
- 📍 Some focus on women can be identified in the LEADER Programme 2023-2027 Operating Rules. Under the Enterprise Development sub-theme, it is noted that increased focus should be placed on supporting female entrepreneurs. Local Action Group (LAG) decision making bodies must aim to ensure balanced gender representation (DRCD, 2024).
- 📍 However again in the Spanish context we see stronger measures taken. Gender balance in the decision-making bodies of the LAGs is a requirement in some regions. There are also criteria used to incentivise gender balance in project applicants. Examples of criteria include women-led applications or organisations that have an equality plan are eligible for a higher percentage of co-funding (EU CAP Network, 2025).

Further improve recording of gender data for CAP interventions

- 📍 Ireland's CSP 2023-2027 has improved gender data collection. Data collected for a number of CSP interventions are split by gender. This includes TAMS and young farmers setting up support.
- 📍 Better data is essential to understanding gender differences in beneficiaries of supports and to assist the design of future interventions. Given the current context, it seems logical that gender disaggregated data should be collected and published for all CAP interventions implemented in Ireland.

Better evaluate the impact of CAP interventions on gender equality

- 📍 Robust and targeted evidence collection and analysis is crucial to underpinning and shaping evidence based future policy. Targeted, in-depth policy assessments of the impact of CAP on gender equality would yield important practical lessons. For example, the EU CAP Network features a range of gender impact evaluations of different aspects of previous

CAP implementation, such as Rural Development Programmes in other EU countries (e.g. RegioPlus Consulting, 2022; L&R Social Research, 2021).

- 💡 Ireland's CSP 2023-2027 included specific actions targeting women and to improve gender equality, such as the provision for women-only knowledge transfer groups depending on local need and the gender balance theme part of European Innovation Partnerships (EIP). These should be subject to dedicated evaluation to assess their impact and identify areas for future improvement.
- 💡 Wider gender equality impact evaluation is also called for, such as for example of the wider EIP-AGRI programme, the LEADER programme, the Knowledge Transfer Programme and the Organic Farming Scheme. These schemes have considerable potential to impact women-led rural and farm innovation. This makes understanding their current impact and future areas for improvement very important.

Review eligibility criteria for supports with a gender equality lens

- 💡 In light of the position of women in farming, it is important to monitor and adapt the appropriateness of the criteria for scheme eligibility with a gender equality lens.
- 💡 Women need formal status on farms and farms of a certain size to qualify for the Women Farmer On-Farm Capital Investment Scheme. To qualify you must be on the DAFM Corporate Customer Management (CCM) system and be identified here as female. Or you must own or have leasehold title to the site the development is proposed. A minimum of 5 hectares declared under the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) or the Basic Income Support is also a general requirement (DAFM, 2025).
- 💡 In relation to Spain's CSP, the Complementary Income Support for Young Farmers allows for co-ownership of farms to qualify for the 15% higher direct payment rate (EU CAP Network, 2025).
- 💡 An agricultural qualification is needed to qualify for the Complementary Income Support for Young Farmers. A recognised agricultural education under the National Framework of Qualifications is required to qualify for this scheme (CAP Network Ireland, no date). While women taking agricultural qualifications has increased in recent years, this is also a potential barrier to eligibility for support for young women farmers changing their career route and without agricultural education.

Implement gender budgeting into the CSP, as well as wider agri-food and rural policy contexts

- 💡 Gender budgeting is a key tool that facilitates gender mainstreaming (see Best Practices). It allows for the integration of gender considerations into budgeting and can be used to assess existing measures or new proposals for the impact on gender equality (OECD, 2023).
- 💡 Gender budgeting is a growing practice. Ireland's current approach to gender budgeting sits alongside the wider approach of equality budgeting (DPER, 2021). Putting a legal basis in place for gender budgeting has been called for more widely. The Oireachtas Joint Committee on Gender Equality recommended the introduction of legislation providing a statutory framework for gender equality budgeting (Joint Committee on Gender Equality, 2022). The Programme for Government also includes a commitment to advance gender budgeting.

Supporting Evidence & Best Practices













FLIARA women-led innovation in farming case study evidence points to the importance of the support system that is in place for women in farming. However, the need for greater levels of support to build on the farm resources and develop their innovation is also noted. The need for supports is found in early stages of women-led farm innovation, but also the need for greater financial grant support for business development in later stages as well.

More widely also, women did raise the issue of a bureaucratic and time burden when it comes to grant application processes generally. The slow nature of the process, i.e. the time between funding application and receipt of funds, is also noted as an issue. The challenge of raising match funding was also identified. Conditions and complex requirements attached to obtaining grants, such as LEADER and TAMS, were also raised.

A frustration with applying for support is also expressed in the farm case study evidence. What might be described as ‘funding fatigue’ is seen in FLIARA case studies. Case study evidence identified that some women are not applying for supports because of bureaucracy and being discouraged from previous experiences. Rather than spending time working to access the grants that are intended to support them, women innovators can feel their time is better spent on their farm business itself.

Gender budgeting: The use of gender budgeting is growing. According to a review by the OECD (2023) the method is increasingly used in OECD countries, particularly in more recent years with 23 countries introducing gender budgeting in 2022. Generally, it has a legal basis and is led by the central budget authority in the country. Different methods are used to practice gender budgeting and often many different tools are used at different stages of a budget cycle. The OECD also publishes a Gender Budgeting Index comparing how countries implement the practice across different dimensions. This provides information on potential international good practices to learn from. According to the 2022 Index, Canada, Austria, Iceland, Korea, Mexico, Spain and Sweden received advanced scores (OECD, 2023).







Spain’s CSP: According to analysis from the EU CAP Network (2025) a range of Spain’s Managing Authorities (MAs) of CSP 2023-2027 included gender balance in the selection criteria for the following interventions:

-  Aid for investments in modernisation and/or improvement of agricultural holdings (15 MAs)
-  Establishment of young farmers (14 MAs)
-  LEADER (13 MAs)
-  Knowledge transfer and training, and information activities (12 MAs)
-  Aid for investments in the processing, marketing, and/or development of agri-food products (10 MAs)
-  Aid for productive investments in agricultural holdings linked to contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation, efficient use of natural resources, and animal welfare (8 MAs)
-  Advisory services (8 MAs)
-  Agri-environmental commitments on agricultural land for integrated production; sustainable crops; promotion and sustainable management of pastures; beekeeping for biodiversity; and maintenance or improvement of habitats and traditional agricultural activities that preserve biodiversity (2 MAs)
-  Agri-environmental management commitments in organic farming (2 MAs)
-  Commitments for the conservation of genetic resources (2 MAs)
-  Aid for areas with natural or other specific constraints (2 MAs)
-  Payments for specific handicaps resulting from the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the Natura 2000 Network (2 MAs)

Conclusion & Call to Action

Ireland's CSP 2023-2027 includes actions that represent a starting point for national CAP policy towards improving women's participation in the farming sector. There is a need however to reflect on the scope of the current measures and the needs they are responding to.

Call to action



-  Integrate a more systematic focus on women's position in farming and rural areas into Ireland's next Ireland's CSP.
-  Include specific selection criteria relating to women in a greater range of CAP interventions in Ireland's next CSP
-  Improve gender data on CAP intervention beneficiaries as well as wider gender impact evaluations of specific programmes and measures.
-  Conduct a national evaluation of the impact of CAP 2023-2027 interventions on gender equality.
-  Review eligibility criteria for supports with a gender equality lens and then make necessary adaptations to the appropriateness of the criteria for scheme eligibility.
-  Implement gender budgeting into the CSP, as well as wider agri-food and rural policy contexts.

Further Reading

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Ireland Policy Briefs

Find the following Policy Briefs published in D5.1 Policy Booklet and Policy Briefs (Kang et al. eds., 2025):

-  Building a Gender Inclusive AKIS in Ireland
-  The Gender Gap in Generational Renewal

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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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Female-Led Innovation in Agriculture and Rural Areas

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