



Local Support to Women Innovators

Policy Brief Italy

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Local Support to Women Innovators

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"Local authorities supporting women-led innovation projects can improve the quality of life in rural communities."

Executive Summary

Local authorities, LAGs and local communities can support women-led innovation projects in different ways, thus contributing to improving the quality of life in rural communities. Public spaces and public land could be rented/made available to facilitate the creation of innovative projects led by women. In addition, local services may be ensured by civil society/private – public partnerships and by funding/supporting the creation of multifunctional shops and agri-kindergartnes. With the support of local authorities and local LAGs, women leading farms and business could also gain recognition within their local community, thus enhancing social cohesion and boosting gender equality.

The Challenge

- 🏠 Women starting from scratch have difficult in accessing lands and/or may need spaces where they can implement their innovative projects.
- 🏠 Rural areas throughout Italy are still dominated by patriarchal social norms: women managing farms or rural businesses are looked at with scepticism and are often not supported by their local community, especially if they start a business from scratch.
- 🏠 The provision of services, such as childcare, could help women not to be
- 🏠 Local authorities often have public land or spaces which they do not use, and which also generate maintenance costs.
- 🏠 Especially in rural villages and remote rural areas, it is difficult to maintain services.
- 🏠 The reduction of services contributes to the depopulation of rural areas.



burdened by the need to reconcile daily life with business commitments

LAGs often do not have specific programmes and support services targeting women.

Policy Solutions

We propose to:

- 👤 Made available public spaces and public land plots under favourable conditions for women proposing entrepreneurial or social projects.
- 👤 Promote Civil Society/Private-Public Partnerships to ensure the maintenance of services at local level. LAGs could facilitate these partnerships targeting women farm managers and entrepreneurs specifically.
- 👤 Support the creation of farm- kindergartens and of multifunctional spaces.
- 👤 Promote women-led businesses through public events (markets, festivals, etc.) to give visibility to women entrepreneurs and increase their recognition within the local community. This would contribute to challenge gender stereotypes and to promote gender equality.

Practical Tips

- 👤 Local authorities and LAGs should organize regular meetings with women farmers and rural entrepreneurs to get to know their needs and be informed about the challenges they face.
- 👤 Local authorities should promote calls for tenders for the management of public spaces/public land, possibly also in collaboration with local LAGs. Projects submitted by women will be given preferential eligibility.
- 👤 Local authorities should negotiate agreements with agri-kindergartens to offer childcare services.
- 👤 Regional and local authorities should provide financial support for the opening of multifunctional spaces (e.g. multi-service shops), particularly in remote rural areas. Get inspiration from the call of the [Piedmont Region](#)

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Supporting Evidence & Best Practices

The FLIARA Project found more than one project making use (usually for a fee) of public spaces or public land and demonstrating the relevance of this type of policy in encouraging female innovation and ensuring new services at local level. Municipalities should facilitate access to these assets under favourable conditions for women proposing entrepreneurial or social projects, potentially also involving LAGs. These public areas or spaces are little used or not used at all by public administrations, who have to bear the cost of maintaining them. Making them available for activities promoted by women is therefore doubly beneficial, both in terms of reducing public costs and in terms of supporting the local economy and/or creating new services for citizens.

In Italy, for example, the **project of Salento Km0** expanded in 2015 when a Laboratory was opened in a public space provided by a local Municipality, and where events, workshops and dinners dedicated to the enhancement of local products are organized, as well as a weekly farmers' market.

A **young woman** developed her innovative idea of extracting birch sap by obtaining a concession for a birch forest owned by the municipality. She guarantees the cleaning and maintenance of the forest at the same time.

Another woman manages an alpine hut owned by the local municipality. It is open all year round, thus guaranteeing a meeting point for the local community; providing a restaurant and a bar, as well as a place where children and adults of all ages can meet, play games, share stories, and read books.

An interesting experience is that of the **Cooperativa Agricola Germinale**, which also runs a small restaurant in a public space. A "Bottega dei servizi" (funded by the Piedmont Region and FinPiemonte Spa) has been opened in the same space. It is a multifunctional shop where it is possible to buy basic necessities and access various services (e.g. home deliveries, co-working space, sports equipment rental, etc.).

The **RYSSBY Library project** in Sweden is a prime example of a Civil Society-Public Partnership that successfully ensured the maintenance of services at the local level. The municipality made an agreement with 14 local associations and handed over the management. The library has become a "local living room" used by the village associations to host cultural events.


The evidence from FLIARA clearly shows that the establishment of agri-kindergartens has a double benefit. First, it increases the farm's profit. Second, it promotes social inclusion in rural areas by helping women balance work and private life. Children learn to live in harmony with nature, how food is produced and processed, and the role of different animals and insects on the farm.

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Conclusion & Call to Action

Local authorities should support women-led innovative projects.

CALL TO ACTION:

-  Local authorities and LAGs should organize regular meetings with women farmers and rural entrepreneurs to get to know their needs and be informed about the challenges they face.



- Local authorities should make available public spaces and/or public land for innovative projects developed by women in order to support them.
- Local authorities should promote public/civil society partnerships to enhance local services, also involving women farmers' and rural women's associations.
- Policymakers should fund multiservice shops to guarantee more local services also in rural remote areas and support the creation of agri-kindergartens.
- Funds should be allocated to promote women-led businesses through markets, festivals and other public events to give visibility to women and enhance the recognition of their work within the local community.

By investing in these strategies, the contribution of women's innovations in agriculture and rural areas can improve the quality of life of rural communities.

Further Reading

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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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