



Promoting Positive Images of Rural Farming Women and Rural Women Entrepreneurs Across All Education Curricula

Policy Brief

The Netherlands

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1

“You cannot become what you cannot see—rural girls need role models, not stereotypes.”

Executive Summary

Persistent stereotypes about farming and rural entrepreneurship undermine the aspirations of young women in the Netherlands. Mainstream education at MBO, HBO, and VWO levels often ignores or caricatures rural life and agriculture, particularly female roles in these sectors. Reforming curricula and promoting positive, diverse images of rural women entrepreneurs is crucial for building an inclusive, future-proof rural economy.

The Challenge

- 🏠 Many educational materials present rural life as outdated or secondary, reinforcing urban-rural divides and gender biases.
- 🏠 Teenage girls from rural areas rarely encounter inspiring role models who combine farming, entrepreneurship, sustainability, and leadership.
- 🏠 In many family farms traditional gender models are internalized and it is difficult to break these open.



- 🏠 This gap leads to brain drain from rural areas and the underrepresentation of women in rural innovation.

Policy Solutions

- 🏠 **Review and revise education curricula** (MBO, HBO, VWO) to include contemporary rural themes and role models, with a gender-sensitive lens.
- 🏠 **Integrate case studies** of successful rural women innovators into civic education, entrepreneurship, and sustainability classes.
- 🏠 **Support teacher training programs** that challenge stereotypes about farming, entrepreneurship, and gender.
- 🏠 **Develop national campaigns** featuring rural women leaders across media and education platforms.
- 🏠 **Encourage rural schools and universities** to organize field trips, guest lectures, and mentorship programs led by rural women innovators.

Supporting Evidence & Best Practices

- 🏠 **Multifunctional farms** led by women already serve as excellent real-life case studies ready for curricular inclusion.
- 🏠 **Studies show** that role models significantly influence girls' career choices across sectors. The Netherlands **only 5.6%** of farm managers are **female** in 2020 (EUROSTAT). This is even a slight **decline** in comparison with 2010. This is far **below the EU average** of 31.6%. Unlike in the Netherlands, the share of female farm managers is growing in the EU. This makes that there are **few female role models** around in the Netherlands, and there is a need of spotlighting female role models and reimagining female entrepreneurship in farming and rural areas

2

Conclusion & Call to Action

Without visible role models, the next generation of rural women entrepreneurs will hesitate to lead. The Netherlands must:

CALL TO ACTION:

- 🏠 Reform educational materials to reflect modern rural life and women's leadership.
- 🏠 Promote positive rural identities alongside urban ones.
- 🏠 Inspire young women to see farming and rural innovation as desirable, viable futures.
- 🏠 Address all people involved in family farming with this message



Further Reading

www.fliara.eu

[Innovators - FLIARA Project](#)

[Ambassadors - FLIARA Project](#)

Initial Guidelines for Case Study Assessment and Selection <https://zenodo.org/records/14045179>

Strategic Action Plan <https://zenodo.org/records/14045414>

Eurostat, Agricultural holdings and utilised agricultural area by training, age and sex of farm managers <https://edu.nl/8684p>

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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