



Addressing Underrepresentation of Rural Women and Rural Entrepreneurship in the Emancipation National Policy

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Image courtesy of Marleen and Willeke van Rijn, 't Geertje, Netherlands



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“Emancipation is incomplete if rural women's leadership remains unseen and unsupported”

Executive Summary

The Netherlands' National Emancipation Policy (“Emancipatienota”) focuses heavily on urban and professional contexts, neglecting rural women’s specific realities, roles, and challenges. Women-led innovations in farming, rural entrepreneurship, and community development are key drivers of sustainable rural futures. Yet, they remain invisible in national gender equality frameworks. This brief advocates for integrating rural women's leadership and innovation into national emancipation policy goals and programs.

The Challenge

- 🏠 Rural women in the Netherlands face distinct structural barriers, including restricted access to land, finance, training, and decision-making spaces.
- 🏠 Their unpaid contributions to civic life—managing foundations, cooperatives, and rural services—are vital yet unrecognized in policy frameworks.
- 🏠 Current emancipation programs do not target or address these realities, reinforcing the invisibility of rural women's leadership.



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Policy Solutions

-  **Explicitly include rural women's leadership and entrepreneurship** in the objectives and measures of the National Emancipation Policy.
-  **Establish a rural women's leadership platform** within the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science's emancipation programs.
-  **Fund dedicated programs** to support rural women innovators, including access to land, finance, and education.
-  **Conduct a national survey** on rural women's socio-economic conditions and leadership roles.
-  **Promote partnerships** between urban and rural women's organizations.

Supporting Evidence & Best Practices

LEADER programs show strong female leadership at local levels (19 of the 31 Leader coordinators are female, and LAGs show a diversity of genders)—but **national policy lags behind**.

Experiences of rural innovators interviewed by FLIARA show that there are substantial gender issues in rural areas. This is not only a matter of policies but also of expectations of key stakeholders that look for a leading male figure to address in doing business.





National Emancipation Policy has no eye for rural women and rural women vocations. Specific, targeted national policy for rural women is needed

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Conclusion & Call to Action

Rural women must no longer be the invisible backbone of Dutch rural development. The Netherlands must:

CALL TO ACTION:

-  Recognize rural women's contributions in its national emancipation policies.
-  Provide structural support to amplify their leadership.
-  Make rural gender equality a national political priority.
-  Make communication to change traditional gender perspectives a priority



Further Reading

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[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>

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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