



FSN CEJA Contribution 2 – VP Paola Del Castillo

The future of Family Farming: empowerment and equal rights for women and youth

As a female young farmer and Vice-President of CEJA, I would also like to contribute to this discussion, following on from the CEJA President Matteo Bartolini's answers to the discussion questions.

CEJA is an organisation which represents female and male young farmers equally, considering that the lack of women farmers is not an issue in Europe today with one third of heads of holding in the European Union (EU) female – as Matteo previously stated. However, this is not the case across the world, with differing levels of equality between men and women causing legality issues in terms of ownership of land, property and production methods in many areas. But considering that young farmer levels are so low, and share the same barriers to access (which differ from those female farmers face) across the world, we believe that these issues should be treated separately. Young farmers need financial support to kick-start their career more than anything, while women farmers need to access the same rights as men in order to be considered head of the holding or to be legally accepted as owner of land and/or enterprise. It is important to make this distinction in order to avoid confusing the needs of the two groups or implementing unhelpful/unnecessary support tools.

Access to land is an overwhelming problem for many young people attempting to become farmers, and this needs to be desperately addressed, particularly in Europe, if we are to meet today's demand for food, let alone tomorrow's. Drawing on our own involvement in the state aid consultation process at EU level, CEJA believes that state aid for land acquisition can be a useful tool in agriculture. This is because the nature of agricultural activity is quite particular – structural and natural disparities exist between sectors as well as between regions in farming, and in order to fix these and ensure a well-functioning and equitable economy. One of the tools to bring us closer to this is state aid for land acquisition for young farmers. CEJA agrees that the use of state aid as a tool in general should be limited; however, because of the particularities of the agricultural sector and young farmers within it, as detailed above, the tool is exceptionally relevant in this context. It is for this reason that, although we support the concept behind the European Commission's state aid proposal, we are adamant that this measure should be a stand-alone provision in the regulation with admissible investment, independent from other measures, areas or funds. For example, this particular tool should be treated separately from issues relating to female farmers, which refer to a question of access to land rights, rather than land. This should be tackled in the context of the need for greater gender equality, whereas *young* farmers, both male and female, are in dire need of positive discrimination, particularly in terms of public support, across the world.

As well as access to land as a substantial barrier for young people attempting to enter the sector, access to credit is also hugely problematic. Young farmers rarely have the financial backing or assets they need in order to provide banks with the security required to obtain enough of a loan to make the high investments they need when starting a farm. Besides access to land, agriculture has much higher startup



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costs on average than other sectors, and therefore demands more support in terms of access to land but also bank guarantees. It is for that reason that CEJA would like to see an opening at the European Investment Bank for Loan Guarantees, exclusively available to young farmers, who could be given a guarantee at European level if they hold the appropriate academic/training qualifications and present a comprehensive and detailed business plan setting out their expected investments and returns for the coming years. This would in turn be presented to a national bank as the security necessary to obtain a loan at national level, thanks to the backing of the European Investment Bank.

Considering how scarce a resource land is in Europe and how difficult it has been for young people to secure loans since the financial crisis, state aid and a bank guarantee would help the development of agriculture significantly and have a positive impact on the sector, particularly in terms of the objectives of increasing young farmer numbers and rejuvenating European agriculture, contributing to the vitality of the EU territory by encouraging people and services to stay in rural areas, as well as helping farmers to modernise and develop their farming enterprises. These are measures which would help young male and female farmers alike of course. It is quite clearly, however, not the correct tool to tackle issues of gender inequality in terms of land and production rights in some parts of the world – here, an entirely readjusted mindset is needed to inspire moves towards greater equality for women, both in agriculture and further afield.

Whether they are men or women, all young farmers are faced with similar problems when attempting to enter the agricultural sector. In this context, the regulatory framework, including all administrative procedures, must ensure that provisions and incentives are available in order to eliminate these barriers and instead prioritise public support for young farmers in terms of modernisation aid, innovation, training and any other form of support that could help them to develop their farm business.