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EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE (ECA)

**ELEVENTH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON WOMEN
AND THE FAMILY IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Fribourg, Switzerland, 14-17 October 2002

**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE WPW 2000-2002 AND ITS
FUTURE FOCUS**

by Ms Guri Drottning Aarnes

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development (WPW) was established in 1965 by the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) and is open to all Member Nations of the ECA. The FAO Regional Office for Europe (REU) acts as the Secretariat of the WPW. The WPW “*assists FAO Member Governments to undertake joint actions and cooperate in gender and development projects as well as encourage and facilitate cooperation between international governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with this topic, and to make recommendations on all matters within its geographical competence*”. The purpose of the WPW is to:

- encourage the exchange of information and experience with a view to promoting the role of women and the family in agriculture and rural development;
- promote and encourage the professional development of rural women;
- cooperate with institutions and agencies striving for the integration of women in rural development; and
- formulate policy recommendations on matters pertaining to education, research, extension, training and other related fields within their areas of technical competence.

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2. Since 1980, ten biennial sessions have been held. These sessions provide a forum for making policy recommendations and decisions, evaluating existing activities and determining the future orientation of the WPW. The focal themes of the sessions are chosen from the suggestions given from participants and relate to the priority needs of member nations. Inputs and discussions on pertinent aspects have led to the formulation of recommendations for future development.

3. The Board of the WPW meets once a year and acts as an advisory committee between the sessions. Today it comprises 7 members. In cooperation with and assisted by REU it develops a plan of activities for a given biennium. These activities include regular meetings, workshops, sessions, seminars, projects, studies and technical consultations. From 1982-88 activities and programmes focused on pluractivities and extension in agriculture and rural development. In 1988 the orientation shifted to community development and in 1990 to rural development through entrepreneurship. As of 1997 the application of FAO's socio-economic and gender analysis (SEAGA) methodology is reflected in the work of the WPW.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS OF TENTH SESSION OF THE WPW

4. The Tenth Session of the WPW was held in Innsbruck, Austria from 4 to 7 October 2000 and was hosted by the Government of the Republic of Austria. The theme of the Session was "Challenges and Opportunities for Youth in Rural Areas". The Session was attended by 33 persons from 14 countries (8 western European and 6 CEE and CIS countries), 2 organizations with observer status, and FAO.

5. The Session acknowledged the ripple effect of the activities of the WPW, resulting in regional and subregional workshops, seminars, dissemination of methodologies and international exchanges of experiences. It also emphasised the importance of the continuation of the work of the WPW, as it is the only group within the European Region that works specifically with the issues relevant to rural women (the Report of the Tenth Session, para. 10).

6. The Session pointed to the need to increase the participation of rural youth in the political decision-making processes at all levels enhancing the quality and relevancy of educational structures and processes targeting rural youth. Further, it was felt that the rural socio-economic structures should be adjusted to the on-going global changes and that framework conditions addressing local employment needs and initiatives should be developed.

7. In order to promote a gender and youth sensitive rural policy, the delegates of the Tenth Session recommended also the introduction of:

- an information policy targeting rural youth including a campaign to promote rural life vis-à-vis youth;
- an information campaign to promote the image of rural areas vis-à-vis general public and development of a communication policy targeting rural youth.

8. The Session also noted that public, private and voluntary institutions play a crucial role in policy formulation and implementation in order to meet the specific needs and interests of rural youth. It is vital to promote cooperation, networking and partnerships among institutions including youth organizations.

III. REVIEW OF OTHER WPW ACTIVITIES IN THE 2000-2001 BIENNIUM

Board Meetings

9. The activities of the WPW for this biennium were planned on the basis of the recommendations of the previous session, by the Board in cooperation with REU and were organized and managed by REU. During the period two Board meetings were held in Rome, FAO Headquarters.

The work of the Board is based on the following objectives:

- to support rural development through initiating and promoting activities for rural women in order to increase their capabilities, effectiveness and self reliance in identifying and addressing political, social and economic issues, thus empowering contributing to them and to the socio-economic development of the country, and secondly
- to create awareness and influence policy makers and other authorities in addressing the critical issues of rural development.

Summer Schools

10. Summer schools are an annual event and represent one of the main activities of the FAO/ECA Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development.

- ***14th International Rural Development Summer School, Kiltimagh, Ireland, 16-22 September 2001***

11. The theme of the Summer School, hosted by the Irish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, was the “Alternative Initiatives for Rural Development”. The overall objective of the Summer School was for participants to gain knowledge and skills for rural development by learning how to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of different alternative approaches to rural development and how to use different tools and methodologies to mobilize local communities.

In total, 30 persons from 16 countries attended. The co-facilitators were Ms Maureen Lally (Ireland) and Mr Richard Hummelbrunner (Austria).

12. It has been advised that through the alternative initiatives rural communities may be able to create and reinforce their capability for rural development, and create conditions for improving the quality of life in their communities and environments. It has been pointed out that inclusion of local communities in development process is vital, if community development is to succeed. Access to information and resources, participation and cooperation were identified as the key words with the view to empowering rural men and women for development through alternative initiatives.

As a result of the Summer School, participants were able to do the following:

1. exchanged practical experiences and learned from the best practices in the European Region;
2. developed methodological approaches to strengthen the alternative initiatives for rural development using concepts discussed and shared;
3. developed follow-up activities to disseminate their ideas.

13. The WPW Board, at its last Meeting in December 2001, agreed to change the name of the summer schools to the **FAO/ECA WPW Expert Meeting on Gender and Rural Development**, as it was felt that the new title better reflects the real nature of the “summer school” meetings. It will be held with the same frequency as the summer schools, i.e. annually.

➤ *15th FAO/ECA WPW Expert Meeting on Gender and Rural Development, Mikkeli, Finland, 10-14 June 2002*

14. The Meeting was organized jointly by the FAO Regional Office for Europe, the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Mikkeli Institute for Rural Research and Training of the Helsinki University.

15. The theme of the Meeting was “Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of Rural Development Programmes and Projects with a View to Integration of Gender and Participatory Dimensions”. The main objective was for participants to build-up their capacity on the use of tools and methodologies for planning, monitoring and evaluation of rural development programmes and projects, in particular with the view to integrate gender and participatory dimension. In addition, participants exchanged experiences and learned from the best and/or worst practices in the FAO European Region. Finally, they drafted proposals to assist the countries in mainstreaming gender and participatory dimension in the rural development policies, programmes and projects.

16. In total, 34 persons from 16 countries attended. It has been noted that once again the interest to attend the Meeting has been extremely high. The co-facilitators/resource persons were Ms Guri Drottning Aarnes (Norway) and Mr Alexandros Koutsoursis (Greece).

17. It has been emphasized that development interventions play an important role in shaping up the lives of rural societies and in influencing employment opportunities, training, infrastructure provision and access to services as well as the quality of environment in its broadest sense. In ensuring an effective and sustainable development process, the participation of rural men and women is essential.

18. In addition, newly developed regionally relevant SEAGA materials, and in particular the one on SEAGA and Project Cycle were successfully tested.

19. The Meeting provided an excellent opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas on development policies and intervention for rural development in the FAO European Region and on how to increase the involvement of rural men and women in various phases of the planning process.

IV. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE – THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKING AND THE ROLE OF THE WPW

New Challenges for Rural Areas

20. A long standing objective of the Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development (WPW) is to address through its work and activities, pertinent and emerging development issues in the European rural areas. Rural Europe has been and is still profoundly affected by the globalisation process, the expansion of the European Union, and the transition processes in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This and the new policies concerning environment, social security and equal opportunities are triggering economic, social and environmental adjustments in rural areas that are deeply affecting the identities as well as the working and living conditions of rural people. For example, there are significant contrasts between agro-industrial enterprises producing raw materials for trans-national corporations, which are developing rapidly, and small farms whose very existence is threatened. The possible consequences of the current developments in rural areas for the environment and for rural people, especially women, have not yet been fully investigated, nor are they well understood. However, as a result of the recent developments, it has been observed that rural women are increasingly losing their role as food producers and are becoming, like most urban women, food consumers.

21. Existing gender inequalities in rural communities, households, and societies in general, are a matter for concern, as rural women throughout Europe continue to have limited access to resources – whether economic, political and/or cultural. It is therefore essential to continue improving the status of rural women and prevent any further increase in gender inequalities.

22. At the same time, rural women also need to face the challenges of the new initiatives, resulting in new forms of pluriactivity, means and measures to protect nature and the landscape, food supplies, and emerging social relations. Both rural and urban women constitute a vital force in Europe in making farming and rural life viable and environmentally sustainable, as a result of their concerns and direct involvement in rural environmental, food and welfare programmes.¹

23. It is obvious that to meet both present and future challenges for rural societies, in the full respect of local conditions, resources and possibilities, women, because of their central position in sustainable rural development and food security, necessarily play a key role in this process of change.

New Approach to Mainstreaming Gender in Agriculture and Rural Development

24. In a region as heterogeneous and diverse as the FAO European Region, the exchange of ideas, experiences and knowledge is an essential tool for raising awareness on the plight of rural women and achieving their empowerment, so that the major constraints and challenges can be effectively addressed.

¹ The Conference “Gender and rural transformations in Europe” which took place in Wageningen, the Netherlands, in October 1999, presented a wide range of gender issues from various disciplinary and sub-regional perspectives across Europe. The FAO/ECA Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development (WPW) was represented in the Conference International Programme Committee, as the only pan-European network for gender issues in rural development. Material for the Introduction to this document is largely drawn from the keynote speeches and paper abstracts produced by this Conference.

25. In planning future activities, the WPW, as an advisory FAO body, intends to work within the long-term priorities endorsed by the 22nd FAO Regional Conference for Europe (Portugal, July 2000)² and FAO Gender and Development Plan of Action (FAO GAD PoA) for 2002-2007³.

26. It is essential, in planning future activities, to make every effort to mainstream gender into these priorities. It is obvious that, from a gender perspective, certain areas call for immediate and priority attention. Among these, food safety and food quality are the most important and constitute a priority working areas for many rural and farm women organisations and groups throughout the Region.

27. The crucial question is how to strengthen their future role and participation in securing sustainable agriculture and rural development, or revitalizing of the agricultural and rural sector in those countries affected by war and/or natural disasters, in the face of the shift to increasingly diverse activities and role dimensions that are becoming available to rural societies.

WPW Programme

28. In accordance with its mandate and within the above-set context, the WPW strategy is to assist the Member Countries in the following:

- providing support to the formulation of rural development policies, particularly for less favourable areas, including diversification of rural activities and generation of alternative income, local and national capacity building and institutions strengthening, with special attention to gender issues;
- providing support to the development of policies for effective land administration and management to facilitate rural development;
- promoting regional cooperation in the collection, dissemination and use of gender-disaggregated data (quantitative and qualitative) and information;
- providing support to the formulation and implementation of the national action plans to promote gender mainstreaming in institutions and development programmes;
- monitoring and evaluation of socio-economic factors such as the ageing of the population, the ageing-related feminization/masculinization of agricultural activities and out migration of youth and its impacts on food security; and,
- providing support in strengthening the capacities of rural public institutions, private sector and civil society organizations at all levels to design and implement policies and strategies as well as poverty alleviation and food security programmes that

² Report of the 22nd FAO Regional Conference for Europe, Porto, Portugal, 24-28 July 2000 (ERC/00/REP). The priorities were developed with a view to identify the needs of the European Region in the agricultural, forestry and fisheries sectors, taking into account, *inter alia*, both the agricultural policies of Western European countries and the special requirements of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries and CIS countries as well as the range of expertise available in FAO, the experiences accumulated in the Organization and the role of its key partners in emergency and development work. In the context of these long-term priorities and with these considerations in mind, the following short and medium-term priorities (up to 2007) were identified:

1. poverty reduction through support to sustainable rural livelihoods and food security;
2. food safety and quality;
3. sustainable management of natural resources;
4. institution and capacity building to support the process of transition to market economies in the rural sector.

³ FAO GAD PoA (2002-2007) has been developed in pursuit of FAO's mission to help build a food-secure world (C 2001/9).

improve the socio-economic and food security conditions of small farmers, the rural poor and other marginalized groups.

29. With the view to the above, it is advisable that the WPW's proposed actions take into consideration and follow closely the strategies and work programmes adopted for the implementation of the FAO GAD/PoA in Europe. This "regionalization" will contribute to the effective removal of obstacles to women's and men's equal and active participation and employment in the European rural sector. Furthermore, the synergy brought about by this arrangement will provide a higher visibility to the proposed WPW activities and ensure a higher level of coherence as activities are linked together and mutually reinforcing towards achieving a common goal.

Workplan for 2002-2003

30. In future, the WPW intends to address, within the above-mentioned context, the specific and common needs and problems of rural women in the different sub-regions of Europe as specified by the last WPW Sessions (Armenia, 1998 and Austria, 2000), International Summer Schools (Estonia, 1999, United Kingdom, 2000, Ireland 2001 and Finland 2002) and other meetings, workshops and seminars in which the WPW has participated.

Proposed future major activities include:

- WPW Board Meeting, 1st week of December 2002 (tentative date), FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy;
- WPW Board Meeting, 1st week of December 2003 (tentative date), FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy;
- International Seminar on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of Rural Development Projects with a View to Achieving Improved Integration of Gender Dimension (country to be determined, 2003 or 2004, dates depending on the availability of funding);
- 16th Expert Meeting on Gender and Rural Development (country to be determined, June 2003);
- International Workshop on Gender-disaggregated Data (host country to be determined, 2003 or 2004 dates depending on the availability of funding).

V. RECOMMENDATION

31. Further, with a view to calling attention on gender issues and secure for rural women a vital role in meeting the challenges of ensuring sustainable development and food security, the WPW puts forward the following recommendations for the attention of the FAO and the Member Nations:

At international level

- Provision of technical and financial support to enable associations and organizations of rural women throughout Europe to become more visible and effective in lobbying for empowerment of rural women through various activities, i.e. programmes and projects;
- greater attention given by the international community to the status and socio-economic situation of rural women in the development processes and food security in

Europe as they are key agents for social and economic changes; this is best achieved by systematically placing rural women and gender issues on the agenda of the international conferences, seminars, disseminating information and supporting the promotion of celebration of the World Rural Women's Day throughout the Region;

- addressing rural women's deteriorated situation in those European countries devastated by war and affected by natural disasters;
- provision of development assistance and support wherever rural women suffer from social isolation, limited access to ownership of land, credit, social security and services, poor access to extension services, low level of participation in public affairs; and,
- strengthening the WPW facilitation role in networking and exchange of experiences, thereby contributing to rural women's empowerment in public and political spheres; this requires additional funding and increased support for WPW's activities.

At national level

- Promotion of gender mainstreaming into rural and agricultural policies through measures to increase gender awareness among the policy and decision-makers, including capacity building and training;
- provision of improved basic infrastructures (communications, health, childcare, etc.), to support expanded female access to training and employment (i.e. through programmes and projects);
- provision of support to both the formulation and implementation of National Action Plans for Gender in Rural Development; this can be facilitated by using and/or disseminating the methodology developed by FAO and supporting training events;
- carrying out evaluation of women's contribution to economic activity of farm in order to recognize the work performed by spouses using gender sensitive indicators;
- ensuring the enforcement of the already existing legislations that promote equality on ownership and taxation of farm holdings in agriculture through gender perspective ;
- enhancing the access of rural women to institutional and financial support, credits and loans, for entrepreneurial and professional activities.

At local level

- Supporting technically and financially the promotion of mechanisms or rural organizations such as clubs, networks, associations of rural women to strengthen their position and to help them play a key role in the improvement/development of their local area;
- provision of entrepreneurship training to rural women to improve their managerial skills;
- providing an appropriate range of training opportunities and career guidance tailored to rural women's needs and capabilities;
- increasing access to the tools of socio-economic and gender analysis (SEAGA) through programmes and projects for capacity building and training programmes;
- supporting networking and partnership among rural women and men and among rural and urban women.

32. The Programme, to be developed by the WPW in collaboration with the Regional Office for Europe would be intended to address the above-mentioned measures through a series of projects operating at regional, national and even, if resources permit, at local level. It would give priority to areas most seriously affected by war and natural disasters where poverty and food insecurity are at their highest. The Programme would be implemented progressively, in line with the amount of available resources.