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EUROPEAN COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE (ECA)

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

Nitra, Slovakia, 18-21 October 2004

**REPORT ON THE ADDITIONAL REU WID/GAD PROGRAMME
ACTIVITIES 2002-2004¹**

I. THE REGIONAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SITUATION: MAIN FEATURES AND TRENDS

1. The European Region embraces 44 Member Nations and one Member Organization² and is characterized by its heterogeneity. The reality of women and men living in rural areas throughout the European Region is being influenced and transformed by the wider socio-economic and political context they live in and various processes (i.e. privatization, decentralization, Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Reform, EU pre-accession policy) taking place within this context.

2. Rural women in the European Region constitute a heterogeneous population. Their socio-economic situation and their roles differ depending on the characteristics of the subregion, household and farm structure and personal characteristics such as level of education, age and marital status. In many Member Nations of the Region, rural and farm women are not necessarily the same social groups. They differ not only in their involvement with agricultural production and lifestyle, but also in their level of participation in public and political spheres. Therefore, in this paper, the term "rural women" refers to all women living in rural areas, while the term "farm women" refers to

¹ This paper was prepared by Dr Alenka Verbole as a background paper to the Session. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

² Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The FYR of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the European Community.

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women who are actively involved in agricultural production or are supported by an agriculturally active person.

3. As both farm and rural women are vital and viable actors in the sustainable development of agriculture and rural areas, it is essential that the impacts of different processes and additional specific variables influencing their socio-economic situation and participation in public and political life are analysed and taken into consideration by researchers, planners and decision-makers (i.e. transformation of the supporting agricultural and rural development institutions).

THE MAIN FEATURES AND TRENDS

4. Women in the Region are extensively involved in agriculture as female farm heads, co-owners, and family farm workers. They are also employees of farm enterprises, often in a professional or skilled capacity. A large number of farm women are actively involved in off-farm activities.

5. Throughout the Region, transformations in agriculture and rural areas are having multiple and divergent effects on farm women, on the one hand, pushing them out of farming or reducing their farm level responsibilities hereby increasing the precariousness of their livelihood; and on the other hand opening up new possibilities for professionalization and independence.

6. Whether women work full or part-time in agriculture or not, they tend to be classified as family workers rather than employers or self-employed. The data show women's frequent marginalization in the management of agricultural enterprises, as well as the social and cultural definition of women as family caretakers even when they play a major role in farm production and management. In general, rural women's work is also more insecure and more often not covered by legislative protection, with fewer opportunities for career advancement.

7. In the more marginalized areas of the EU as well as in other countries there are two developments affecting farm women: from one side there is noticeable out migration, especially of young women. On the other side, feminization of agriculture has been observed in some countries.

8. In most countries women and men legally enjoy equal rights; however, this *de jure* guarantee does not exist *de facto*. There is substantial evidence to suggest that farm and rural women have been especially affected by rising levels of unemployment, decreases in the provision of social services and reduced levels of social security, hence poverty and its social, political and economic consequences. Gender relations, especially those which determine that women are mainly responsible for domestic work and child care and have lower levels of education and fewer skills, are working to farm women's detriment both in the short and long term, making them more vulnerable to poverty.

9. The impacts of the processes taking place in the Region on the socio-economic situation of farm and rural women, level of income, economic dependence, social isolation, limited access to ownership of resources and to social security and services, poor access to extension services and credit, low level of participation in public affairs at local and national level, deterioration of health conditions and education, are among the areas that need to be addressed. One of the negative trends is the increasing trafficking of rural women in some countries. In addition, women in some Member Nations are still facing problems that have resulted from war devastation.

II. PRIORITY ISSUES OF THE WID/GAD PROGRAMME IN THE REGION

10. The activities of the Regional WID/GAD Programme are closely linked to developments in rural areas in the European Region. FAO's Regional Office for Europe (REU) has, in cooperation with the Gender and Development Service (SDWW), within its WID/GAD Programme, based on the Beijing Platform for Action and FAO Plan of Action for Women in Development (1996-2001) and Gender and Development Plan of Action (GAD PoA) (2002-2007)³ through its various activities, strived for recognition of rural women's contribution to development and for their empowerment in the public and political spheres.

11. The dissemination of methodologies to increase awareness on gender issues in agriculture and rural development, promotion of gender mainstreaming into policies, programmes and projects, regional and national capacity building and facilitation of international exchanges of experiences represent the main components of FAO's activities in the Region. The most important issues and areas that FAO has been working in and that require further action are mentioned below:

- Farm and rural women's participation in decision-making: An important activity that REU supported and continues to support has been the preparation and implementation of National Action Plans (NAP) for Mainstreaming Gender in Agriculture and Rural Development (e.g. Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovenia);
- Gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis: The lack of data on rural areas and on farm and rural women, in particular, was identified and FAO supported and continues to support the gathering of quantitative and qualitative statistical data on the socio-economic situation of rural women in CIS and Balkans;
- Gender mainstreaming into agriculture and rural development: With the European Union programmes for rural development that give primary importance to improving the economic and social conditions for rural men and women, and in particular to providing the conditions for equal opportunity for rural women, and gender issues in agriculture and rural development are becoming high on the governments' agenda. FAO is offering assistance in tackling the challenge of engendering the mainstream socio-economic development plans to ensure that rural development policies, programmes and

³ FAO GAD PoA (2002-2007) (C 2001/9) was approved by the FAO Conference in November 2001. The Plan promotes the removal of obstacles to women and men's equal and active participation in, and enjoyment of the benefits from, agricultural and rural development. It further emphasises that a transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is an essential condition for people-centred sustainable agricultural and rural development. Its objectives are to promote gender equality in:

- access to sufficient, safe and nutritionally adequate food;
- access to control over and management of natural resources, and agricultural support services;
- policy and decision-making processes at all levels in the agricultural and rural sector; and
- opportunities for on and off-farm employment in rural areas.

projects are sustainable, participatory and integrating the needs and interests of rural men and women in development.

- Field Programme development: REU WID/GAD Programme has been active in the Field Programme development resulting in several gender project ideas and proposals. The first gender stand alone TCP project in the Region, “Gender Mainstreaming into Agriculture and Rural Development in Slovenia” (TCP/SVN 2902 (A), became operational in early 2004. The development objective of the project is to contribute to food security and sustainable rural development through the integration of farm and rural women in the national development programmes and projects. The immediate objectives are to strengthen the national capacity in participatory gender approaches and mainstreaming, especially of the gender focal points at various institutions and frontline rural development agents and develop a National Plan of Action (NAP) for Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture and Rural Development. Under this project the SEAGA Training of Trainers (ToT) Workshop was carried out in April 2004.

MAIN ACTIVITIES IN THE 2002-2004 PERIOD

- ***Socio-economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) Training of Trainers (ToT) and Rural Women’s Entrepreneurship Workshop, Dobrna, Slovenia, 19-30 May 2003***

12. The Workshop was organized jointly by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and the Gender and Development Service, in collaboration with Slovenian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food (MAFF), Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry (CoAF) and Small Business Development Centre (SBDC) at the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

13. The event brought together more than 15 participants from all over the Region. The main goal of the Workshop was to build regional and national capacity among the participants from the Region with the view to disseminating in the Member Countries an approach that will allow addressing sustainable rural development issues, and in particular rural diversification and entrepreneurial activities from a participatory and gender sensitive perspective. The Workshop in Slovenia was the third ToT Workshop in the Region and it has been observed that a pool of regional and national SEAGA facilitators able to mainstream gender in different sectors (i.e. entrepreneurship, micro-credits, rural diversification, rural development in general) is slowly emerging, however follow-up activities are needed.

- ***National Socio-economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) and Rural Development Workshop, Stubicke toplice, Croatia, 21-25 March 2004***

13. The Workshop was organized jointly by the FAO Regional Office for Europe and the Gender and Development Service, in collaboration with the Croatian Agricultural Advisory Service (HZZPS). It was conducted in the Croatian language.

14. The main goal of the Workshop was to build national capacity among the participants with the view to disseminating the use of Socioeconomic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA), with specific emphasis on rural development. Twenty three participants (19 women and 4 men); agricultural advisory officers, researchers and staff of the NGOs working with rural women and/or in the field of rural development attended

the training. Some of the recently developed SEAGA case studies for the FAO European Region were tested.

15. The Workshop showed the importance of ensuring that SEAGA is disseminated among the stakeholders that who work directly with the rural communities. It was observed that it would be valuable to further strengthen the capacity building of agricultural advisory officers in the country and in the region by extension.

➤ *Regional Socio-economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA and Rural Development) Workshop, Ohrid, TFYR of Macedonia, 24- 28 May 2004*

16. The Workshop was organized jointly by GTZ and FAO within the framework of FAO's programme of assistance to Member Nations in support of national activities concerning the implementation of the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, FAO Plan of Action on Gender and Development (2002-2007) and GTZ's programme of assistance to the agro-food sector in Macedonia.

17. This was the first time that such a workshop was held in TFYROM. It brought together twenty three participants, among them rural development practitioners, high and medium level staff from the ministries, researchers and NGO representatives working in rural development and/or gender issues in agriculture and rural development. The high participation from Balkan countries was observed providing opportunities for networking and possible future partnerships and cooperation concerning mainstreaming gender in agriculture and rural development.

➤ *Collaboration with the Hungarian Central Statistical Office*

18. Following the Expert Consultation on Gender and Participatory Research Methods for Central and Eastern European Countries in Bulgaria and the Workshop on Gender-Disaggregated Data (GDD) for Central and Eastern European Countries in Romania in 2001 a joint project with the Hungarian Central Statistical Office was established to undertake gender-sensitive retabulation of the National Agricultural Census 2000 data set in order to help the Office introduce a gender dimension to its national system of statistical data production and use.

III. FUTURE GOALS AND ORIENTATION OF GENDER/WID PROGRAMME IN THE FAO EUROPEAN REGION

19. In the coming years, in addition to the issues and areas mentioned earlier, the priorities in the European Region related to gender and rural women should be:

- Continued gender mainstreaming in Member Nations;
- capacity building in mainstreaming gender into agriculture and rural development at national and regional levels;
- continuing to promote rural women's participation in decision-making processes at all levels;
- promoting equal access of farm and rural men and women to ownership of land and other resources;
- improving the knowledge-base on local initiatives for development in rural areas, especially those focusing on farm and rural women;

- promoting the building of a solid quantitative and qualitative database on farm and rural women in order to gain better knowledge of their specific contribution to the rural economy and assist the formulation of more accurate policies and strategies and to measure improvements resulting from development programmes (programme monitoring and evaluation);
- following up on existing international and national plans of action for mainstreaming gender in agriculture and rural development and supporting the formulation of plans in countries that do not yet have one;
- monitoring the evolution of such crucial processes such as the ageing population, the ageing-related feminization of agricultural activities (in some countries) and out-migration of youth and its impacts on food security and sustainable rural development;
- setting-up gender-sensitive monitoring system on the influence of poor infrastructure and low spending power including new requirements and pressures on rural areas;
- monitoring rural women's working position in formal and informal sectors (social security issues) and stimulating development of alternative activities for rural women (i.e. small scale enterprises, organic agriculture; aquaculture, small scale processing industries, agritourism);
- investigating how existing and potential international rural women's and related networks can support national and local networks and how they can be reinforced throughout the Region;
- investigating the role NGOs can play in the advancement of farm and rural women in society;
- continuing to provide assistance to the promotion of World Rural Women's Day throughout the Region.

20. In this context, WPW is invited to continue to actively participate in developing strategies and work programmes and projects that will benefit rural women in the FAO European Region. The synergy will provide a higher visibility to the proposed WPW activities and will ensure a higher level of coherence as activities are linked together and mutually reinforce working towards a common goal.