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Organización  
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Unidas  
para la  
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y la  
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**TWELFTH SESSION OF THE WORKING PARTY ON WOMEN  
AND THE FAMILY IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY FOR RURAL WOMEN'S  
EMPOWERMENT IN NORWAY<sup>1</sup>**

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Empowerment is a principal theme for politicians, administrators and researchers all over the world dealing with the situation of rural women in general, and women in agriculture in particular. Norway is often seen as a prefigurative example of institutionalized gender equality, and Norwegian women are seen as relatively "empowered". But farm women are seen as lagging behind in the equalization processes, and still subordinated to masculine dominance. This paper will try to broaden the concept of empowerment based on farm women's understanding of their own situation and it will question the understanding of rural women's empowerment founded on their participation in male dominated activities or organizations, such as driving tractors and participating in agricultural politics. The paper also argues that in order to understand women's situation one has to focus on what women do in their everyday lives and how they organize themselves in collective groups. On this basis, one can explore how women, through their individual and collective practices, are able to influence the conditions in their own lives, and how they plan to maintain and change these structures. Some further examples of institutional capacity building in Norway based on the ideal of equality and statutory rights are presented.

## II. SETTING THE CONTEXT

2. The analyses in this paper are based on a study conducted in the county of Tromsø in Northern Norway, north of the Polar circle<sup>2</sup>. This area has some distinctive as well as

<sup>1</sup> This paper was prepared by Dr Anniken Forde 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.

many general characteristics. The Arctic climate creates both constraints and opportunities for agriculture in this region. Short summers and long winters and the special landscape with high mountains that plunge into the sea limit the variation and size of farm production. Low population density (population of 467 000 on 112 948km<sup>2</sup>) and long distances to the markets also set limits to production. But special conditions of light, unpolluted nature and rich pastures also favour some productions, such as grazing animals like sheep, goats and cattle, hardy vegetables like potatoes, carrots and cabbage and berries like strawberries and black currants.

3. The climate and landscape have led to economic adaptations based on seasonal and diverse resource exploitation. Previously a combination of fishing and farming formed the main mode of living. Today the picture is more diverse as new industries have grown up. But farming in northern Norway is still marked by small holders and combinations of different sources of income. The most important productions are sheep and cattle, the latter for both meat and milk production. Production is delivered mainly to agricultural cooperatives, and the strong cooperative system makes it possible to maintain a decentralized agricultural production. This production is also based on state support (about half of the farmers' income is subsidized) and a strong protection of the national market (Norway has high import-duty on agricultural products). In spite of the subsidies, the income from farming is relatively low and farm production is often combined with exploitation of other resources or wage work. The "fisherman-farmer" model is replaced by new combinations, where persons or households combine farming with teaching, nursing, bus driving, etc.

4. Even if diversified small scale production still dominates agriculture in northern Norway (more than 40 percent of the farms are smaller than 100 decares), the trend here is the same as in most western countries; the number of farms is decreasing and the size of farms increasing. After a period of escalation and investment in the 1970s, agriculture has gone through a period of recession. During the last 20 years, the number of farms has declined by more than 60 percent and there are today about 6 500 active farms in the region. The amount of cultivated land remains stable and the average size of farms has increased from 54 decares in 1979 to 149 in 1999. These trends are often seen as irreversible as a consequence of the globalization process. Increased international trade demands harmonization of state policies and liberalization of the market. As Norway is a high-cost country, Norwegian agricultural products are more expensive compared to other countries. This has been compensated by market protection and price-subsidies. But internationalization represents a threat to the Norwegian system and national agricultural policy and the import regime are now under strong pressure. There are also other, competing trends. The globalized world also creates new preferences and values as people are becoming consumers in a consuming world. Globalization also implies more focus on the local (Bauman, 1998). And the productivist strategy has created serious problems, such as overproduction and animal diseases. This has led to a need for new strategies. As a result of this post-productivist turn, national and international agricultural policies now ask for a more multifunctional agriculture. The aim for rural areas is no longer only food production but also offering recreational activities and higher quality of life for rural communities. This implies a turn from specialized production to pluractivity. In this new situation, northern Norwegian farmers' long traditions for

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<sup>2</sup> This paper is based on Foder's PhD Thesis: A comparative study of women in agriculture in Northern Norway and Southern France.

combining different sources of income could be an advantage. This in turn could also be seen as an advantage for rural women.

### ***CHANGING PRACTICES: A MASCULINIZATION OF AGRICULTURE?***

5. The structural changes in agriculture are closely related to changing practices, which again have implications on gender roles. In Norway, as in most countries, the definitions of women's roles in agriculture are ambiguous. On the one hand, women are given priority in policy formulation, but on the other hand they are invisible in the definitions and understandings of modern agriculture.

6. The concept "fisherman-farmer" is often used to describe the traditional adaptation in northern Norway, referring to individuals (men) being both farmers and fishermen. Research shows that this adaptation was based on women taking care of the house and barn while the men were out fishing. Larsen (1980) proposed to change the concept "fisherman-farmers" with "caring-farmers", referring to women being both care workers and farmers. Even though men have been considered farmers, it is widely recognized that women have played a crucial role in Norwegian traditional agriculture.

7. Now, the discourse is quite different. As many women, also on farms, have entered paid work, the ruling narrative is that family and farming are less integrated and women are leaving agriculture. And as farming has become more technical, men have entered the barn. Women's tasks seem to have been rationalized or moved away from agriculture. Modern farming is thus seen as a one-man-profession (Almås, 1987; Wiborg, 1997). Several women scientists have tried to question this by showing that women are able to do farm work. To show women's ability, the focus has been on male dominated activities such as tractor driving, handling of modern machines and equipment, formal agricultural education and participation in farmers unions. This focus has resulted in the conclusion that only a few women enter agriculture and that those who do (younger women) are more similar to men. They have the same juridical status, perform the same tasks and have the same preferences, and "masculine thinking" dominates. Norwegian scientists hence talk about a masculinization of agriculture (Brandth and Haugen, 1994). It will be argued that this is a simplified and somewhat misleading picture of much more complex processes. The focus on masculine activities has managed to show the ability of a few women. But an unintended consequence of this focus, is that it has made most farm women and their work even more invisible.

### ***DIVISION OF WORK IN HOUSEHOLDS AND ORGANIZATIONS***

8. Research by Forde (2002) shows that women still are active in agriculture in northern Norway<sup>3</sup>. Almost half of the farmers registered are women and most farms have two persons registered. This reflects that most farms are still run by married couples. According to statistics women perform much less of the farm work than men. As shown by other studies women's labour seems to be more crucial on small farms than bigger ones (Brandth and Haugen, 1994). Many of the farmers, both men and women, have wage work outside the farm.

9. Most of the farm households still have a quite traditional division of work; men often do most of the technical work; they drive the tractor, handle the machines and are in

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<sup>3</sup> The study is based on participant observation and interviews. This is combined with analyses of statistics and a questionnaire performed by the farmers union (Nordland Bondelag).

charge of production. Women's tasks are often more diverse. Even though men have entered the barn and women have entered wage work, women still take care of most of the housework and caring work. Many women also do much of the caring and cleaning work in the barn. And they assist in busy periods, such as lambing and harvesting. In addition they often take care of new tasks, such as the increasing amount of paperwork at the farm. This diversity of tasks makes women's roles in agriculture today harder to define. Men often seem to have quite defined tasks. Women do "the rest".

10. The gendered practices at the farms have implications on the power structures. It has been observed that women's work on the farm is still invisible in the statistics. This has to do with the categorization of work. The tasks performed by women are not considered farm work. Except those few women who run a farm on their own, women on farms often find it difficult to call themselves farmers. Those women who have chosen to work outside the farm are not seen and do not see themselves as farmers, even if they participate in agricultural work. This is different for men; a man who works outside the farm is still considered a farmer (or at least a "hobby-farmer"). He does visible farm work. Elder women who have spent their lives on the farm doing traditional female tasks are considered more as housewives or farmers' wives than farmers. Young women, who have chosen to work as farmers, often find themselves stuck in the same situation. In an establishing period they have small children and spend more time with childcare and housework than in the barn or at the fields. And as the division of work is established, it is difficult to change it.

*Ann, a young farm woman and mother of three, explains it; "Just after we took over, I had our first child. It was therefore natural that Thor (her husband) did most of the work in the fields. I used to think I would participate more in this work as the kids got older. But now we have a system that works and we are too busy to change it. He knows about the tractor and everything. If I should do it, it would take much longer. We do not have time for me to learn. And anyway, I have enough to do as it is..." (Forde, 2002).*

11. It also has implications on power structures, as the division of work on the farm is extended into organizational work. Even if women in Norway have better access to political arenas and are more active in political work than in most countries, the farmers' organizations are still dominated by men.

*Ann's husband has board positions in the farmers' union and organizations specialized in their production, which are sheep and poultry. She is member of the local farm women's organization. Ann says: "Since Thor is the one who does most of the farm work, it has been natural that he has gone to the meetings in the farmers unions" (Forde, 2002).*

12. Even though the couple seem trapped in old gendered structures that they initially wanted to escape, they are both happy with the way they organize the work on the farm. Like most farm couples they have different tasks. This gives them different experiences, knowledge and skills that are present in their common strategies. Since the negotiation between them is kept private, women's strategies might not be that visible.

### **ACCESSIBLE PRACTICES FOR WOMEN**

13. Forde (2002) argues that farm women show a great capacity of what Rudie (1994) calls cultural creativity; they find new ways to integrate new experiences, and thereby solutions to meet both changing and static conditions. This leads to an enormous variation of coping strategies. But there seem to be three main strategies:

1. Conventional farming;
2. Combining farming and wage work;
3. New activities at the farm.

14. *Conventional farming:* Many farmers insist on continuing conventional farming, such as specialized milk production or sheep breeding. This is what they want to do and what they have the knowledge and skills to do. This is also what they consider as real farming. But conventional farming is under pressure as the Norwegian agricultural policy, which forms a basis for this adaptation, is changing. Farmers who insist on continuing conventional farming often oppose new strategies. On specialized farms, big investments also reduce their flexibility to meet changes in markets and politics by changing production. Both small scale farmers and relatively big scale farmers performing conventional farming feel threatened by the “post-productivist” shift in agricultural policy, which focuses on more pluractivity and additional income sources to food production. These changes threaten their economic security and their professional identity. As politics is such a critical factor for this adaptation, political work has become an important part of many conventional farmers’ strategy.

15. Foder (2002) found that women are less opposed to changes than men, but that many women still want to continue their practices as conventional farmers. Further she observed that women attend political work as much as men, but in different ways. Pessimism among farmers seems to have made many men loose faith in political work. At the same time it has provoked women to enter political work. Actually, in this situation of pressure, political work appears as the most potential field of action for many women to secure their practices as farmers. Women have access to most organizations, and many have entered organizations dominated by men, such as the farmers unions (NB and NBS). In addition, many women participate in the rural women’s organization (NBK). In their collective work, farm women try to secure the conditions for conventional farming by gaining understanding and accepting for their values and practices. This is done by communicating their values, knowledge, problems and everyday life experiences to others. They have a direct emotional and personal approach to political work, and try to make their own experiences relevant in all kinds of discussions. By including experiences and knowledge from social fields normally excluded from political work and by using all channels available to get their messages through they have challenged established political conventions and structures. In this way they have widened public agricultural discourse. Through individual and collective practices they contribute to maintaining agricultural practices, but at the same time they contribute to changing their conditions.

16. *Combining farming and work outside the farm:* Combination of different sources of income has always been an important aspect of northern Norwegian agriculture. In most farm households at least one of the spouses works outside the farm, often part time. Many choose this strategy because low farm income forces them to take other jobs. Farmers have three or four jobs in addition to the farm. These farmers show an enormous willingness to keep on farming, even though it costs a lot of work and income is low. Others, especially women, choose this strategy because they want to do different things. Many farm women have had other professions or education before they married a farmer and want to keep up their profession. Many young farm families have chosen farming as an alternative to a more urban life. These often called lifestyle farmers want to live on a farm and cultivate it, and to them combining of occupations is the only way to realise this. Additional work is then not just a source of income, but also a way to evade isolation, to realize oneself in different ways and to live a more varied life. The variety of income

sources also makes them more flexible towards changes in conditions; lower farm income can be compensated by more work outside the farm.

17. Time seems to be the most critical factor in these adaptations. To compensate a decreasing farm income they have to spend more time working outside the farm.

*As a young farmer, who has four jobs outside the farm, puts it; "There is a limit of how much we can subsidize the farm by other jobs. The days don't have enough hours"* (Forde, 2002).

For these farmers the days are split up and both their professional and family life is hectic. Another critical factor is access to paid work. The growth of the welfare state has offered many women the opportunity to work in the health or school sectors, etc. Today access is harder, as these jobs demand education. A decentralized education system is the solution to many rural women. Agricultural politics is also a challenge to this adaptation. The ruling policy based on the ideal of growth and hence specialized one-profession adaptations discriminates against these flexible adaptations. Still these farmers seem less involved in political work. They don't feel included in agricultural politics and respond by withdrawal. This makes them even more invisible in the processes of policy design.

18. *New activities on the farm:* More and more farmers start new activities on the farm, such as green tourism, "green care" or new products. These activities meet new trends in the market, such as an increased demand for experiences and local niche products based on traditions and quality. In northern Norway horse breeding and production of honey and berries are increasing. A variety of rural tourism, direct sales, etc. is arising. These innovative activities are often initiated by women. Women are often less attached to specialized agricultural production and their varied tasks give those experiences from different social fields. This makes them more open to new ideas. Whereas men often see activities like farm tourism as a disturbance to their farm work, women see it as a possibility of meeting people, enriching their everyday lives and enlarging the farm activity. The new activities represent new sources of income, and make the economical situation of farms more flexible. They also represent ways to make the farm women's everyday lives more varied and at the same time they can continue their independent adaptation. And maybe the most important aspect of these activities is that they represent a way of gaining recognition for their work.

19. These new activities are supported by today's politics. Farmers are offered courses and financial support to start niche production or farm tourism. They are also supported by the surroundings. But there are also important barriers to these strategies. One important barrier is the attitude within the agricultural milieu, where the concept niche has a negative connotation. Women who want to start new productions or activities are often met with scepticism and attitudes like "this is not real farming" or "this is only romanticism". Another barrier is that during the long process of specialization the traditional knowledge of processing has disappeared, and has to be reconstructed. And due to the traditional position as primary producers, farmers lack knowledge and experience in marketing. Several women have shown that these barriers are possible to overcome. And creating new activities on the farm strengthens women's position in agriculture. It gives them an important role, since the activities often are based on their knowledge and skills and are performed by women. It also makes women more visible; through these new activities they face the outside world, not only through meeting customers, but also through an increased attention to their activities. Through these inventions, farm women both maintain and change agricultural structures and practices.

20. It is not the intention of this paper to state some strategies as feminine in opposition to masculine, and hence freeze gender differences. Rather, the main object is to explore how women form their practices in relation to their surroundings; to men, other women, structures etc., i.e. to see gender as interaction and not as difference. Women's strategies are very diverse, but even if their strategies vary, they all try to adapt working life in and outside the farm to family life. Research shows that women are still the flexible part of the household.

### ***STATUTORY RIGHTS: EXAMPLES OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING BASED ON EQUALITY***

21. Equality is one of the strongest values in Norway. The Norwegian state is characterized by the social-democratic principle of equality, where everyone, independent of class, ethnicity and gender is supposed to have equal rights to education, jobs, political positions, social security, etc. The implementation of this equality policy is institutionalized in laws, directives and programmes of action. This is often referred to as state feminism. Below are presented some of the most important statutory rights for farm women.

22. Shorthall (1999) points to Norway as an ideal example when it comes to the political context for women in farming. She focuses on how women in general lack access to property ownership and thus are prevented an important source of economic, social, cultural and political power. In Norway women have the same rights as men to inherit farm property since the allodial law was changed in 1974. The new law made the eldest child, independent of sex, the legal heir to the farm, instead of the previous law by which the eldest son was the legal heir. Farm women who run a farm together with their husbands have fought to have the right to register formally as farmers and thereby have a professional status and the right to vote in farmers' organizations. Since 1988 both husband and wife were allowed to register as farmers on the same farm<sup>4</sup>.

23. In the 1970's farm women started to claim division of the farm income by contribution. They also claimed pension rights, rights to sick pay and paid parental leave like other groups in Norwegian society. As late as 1986 the maximum limit (which then was 30 000 Norwegian kroner, i.e. 3 750 Euros) of partners' income was removed, and farm women gained the right to real division of income. But the tax system seems to be a hindrance to income division, as many couples choose not to divide the limited income to make sure that at least one of them gain additional pension. The result is often that the entire income is registered on the husband.

24. An important aspect of the "state feminism" is equal representation of both sexes in decision-making authorities of all kinds. This policy is adopted by other organizations, and in recent years organizations like the farmers' unions have declared equal representation of men and women on their boards an objective. Even if this is far from being achieved, it has raised a consciousness of male dominance and discussions of how to include women.

25. This institutionalized equality has been a success in many aspects. The right to inherit land has made farming an opportunity to many women. Even if there still are

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<sup>4</sup> In 2002 a new law was introduced, which allows just one registered farmer per farm. This new law is not to influence women's rights to income and votes, and little attention has been paid to it. Nevertheless farm women again risk being without a professional status.

mostly boys who use their allodial privilege and most women still enter farming by marriage, the new law seems to have had large influence on peoples' attitudes towards female farmers. The farmer's daughter must be considered a potential farmer and has a real choice. And the picture is about to change. Today more than 50 percent of the pupils in agricultural schools are girls. This will certainly influence the gender balance among farmers in the future. The right to a professional status is important for many farm women, especially the younger ones, and the right to an independent income and hence pension and sickness pay is crucial. The policy of equal representation has definitively made organizations and decision-making authorities more open to women, even if they are far from representing 50 percent of the boards.

26. The slowness of change processes shows that statutory rights alone are not sufficient. In the 1980s the new allodial law was followed by a range of courses for all girls that possess allodial rights. These courses were supported by the state and organized by agricultural schools and organizations. Here young girls were taught about their legal rights, encouraged to take over the farm and advised on how to overcome all kinds of obstacles. An important strategy in this capacity building has been to give them *access to the same knowledge* as men such as courses in tractor driving and handling of machinery. Many young female farmers say that these courses were important to their choices, not so much because of the technical knowledge they gained but for the possibility it gave to meet others in the same position. Equally, there have been courses in political and organizational work for farm women. These courses were also financially supported by the state and carried out by actors like the women's university, the farm women's organization etc. The object for these courses has been to make women attend organisations and political arenas by helping them to speak up and by giving them training in handling the media, political organizations, etc.

#### ***INFORMAL WOMEN'S NETWORK: EXAMPLES OF INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING BASED ON WOMEN'S OWN TERMS***

27. Norwegian farm women have been fighting to gain rights. Several researchers have claimed that the women's organization in agriculture (NBK)<sup>5</sup> has been concerned with feminism and gender equality to a small extent. NBK has therefore been seen as defenders of a traditional gender regime where women are subordinated to men (Brandt, 2001). Foder (2002) argues that by using the urban feminist movement as a measurement, researchers tended to underestimate the effort and impact of farm women's collective work. They have been fighting for women's rights based on their own values and standpoints.

28. NBK, the Norwegian farm women's organization, was established in 1946 to "take care of rural people's economic, social and cultural interests". Their main objective has been for farmers to gain rights equal to other groups in society. In recent years their activity is less related to agriculture and more to rural life in general. They have also changed the name from Norwegian farm women's organization to Norwegian rural women's organization to include women not involved in farming. The organization has local unions of varying size and activities and about 17 000 members altogether.

29. Training its members has always been an important task for NBK. During the years they have provided a range of courses with themes that vary according to women's

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<sup>5</sup> Norsk Bygdekvinne lag (Formely Norks Bondekvinnelag).

changing situation on the farms and in society. Earlier they fought for electricity and water assessment and had courses in rational housework. Later they had courses in household economy, gardening etc. These courses have been an important source of knowledge and capacity building to a generation of women who did not have the possibility to continue studies after primary school. Offering courses is still an important part of NBK's work, mainly focusing on traditions, like traditional cooking, different traditional handicrafts, local traditions etc. But they also do courses in everything from conflict solution to literature and exotic dance. They do campaigns related to healthcare, protection of the environment, rural development and local traditions. The relationship between producer and consumer has been an import theme and so has communication and transmission of rural values. In many communities the farm women's organization is an important social institution. They are involved with teaching school children traditional handicrafts; they arrange open farms, happenings for retired people, etc.

30. How can this be related to capacity building for farm women? How it is at all related to agriculture? NBK is today not seen as an actor in the performing of agricultural politics or of feminist politics. The members themselves stress that NBK is not a political organization, but a more informal network. Their focus is more on what they call "typical women's values" such as solidarity, housework, family caring and social life. Their activity is quite different from the activity of the more male dominated farmers' unions. As we have seen, women and men often base their farming strategies on different objectives and values, women focusing more on social flexibility, greater interests in additional activities like tourism and direct sale and more commitment to the communication of their experiences. In farm women's organizations they can focus on these interests.

31. The French feminine development groups in agriculture (les GDAF's) can serve as a good example of how women's exchange of experiences can change farm women's conditions; they have initiated and developed new activities like green tourism, pedagogic farms and farmers markets. They have hence been pioneers in a number of fields and have changed women's position on many farms and in rural society by making them visible and acknowledged. In Norway this role of the women's groups is less visible, but they also play an important role in women's lives. Many of the farm women met say that being member of NBK has been of great importance for their social integration in the local community. They also stress that attending NBK's courses has been important for their self-development. Through this network they have gained self esteem. Many say that NBK has been a starting point to join other organizations and take political positions. And also here the farm women's organization plays an important role in communicating the farmers' experiences and values. In a time when farmers' unions experience great difficulties being heard and getting their message through, the farm women's organizations gain much attention for their open farm-arrangement, their courses in traditional handicrafts and exotic dance etc. They are open to new knowledge, and meet new trends in society by serving their local traditions. In this way they build bridges between the traditional and the modern, producers and consumers, farmers and the non-agricultural population, the rural and the urban population, young and old, the local and the global.

32. These kinds of capacity building are based on an acknowledgement of the differences between men and women in everyday life experiences, wishes and values. Its trivial, informal and non-political character often makes these strategies invisible in the

discourses of empowerment. But what might seem trivial is often of crucial importance for the development of agriculture, rural communities and women's lives.

### ***THE DILEMMAS OF EMPOWERMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS***

33. To summarize the empowerment strategies have to be based on knowledge and acceptance of what women do in their everyday lives, what kind of practices they want and what they feel as barriers to realize them. A dialogue with rural women and understanding of their knowledge and values is needed. This perspective has sometimes got lost in empowerment strategies. Striving for change, it is easy to "run over" rural women and force them into an understanding of empowerment based on more urban feminism. Actually, rural women have sometimes been seen as hindering their own liberation by their traditional attitudes. But then, who is to be liberated, and what does empowerment mean? For most farm women, this has little to do with driving tractors. It is a question of the possibility of creating a life where they can realize as many as possible of their values. Feminists have feared a perspective focusing on women's values, as it might lead to freezing gender differences; this is an evident risk. Equality should be understood in terms of acceptance of variation rather than conformity. This perspective should therefore not be seen as an opposition to gender equality in terms of equal rights. Rather, it should be seen as a confirmation and expansion of gender equality, where women are given the right to define their goals and means for their own lives. In this way strategies for empowerment can be assigned on women's own terms.

#### *Policy Recommendations:*

- Bettering the general conditions for farmers, their income and recognition. Many farm women are more concerned with general political conditions than with women's rights. Policy directed towards farm women's situation has to be related to the overruling agricultural policy.
- Opening the agricultural sector to less specialized production and new activities such as tourism and green care. These activities are attractive to women and can give them a stronger position in agriculture.
- Seeing agriculture in relation to other aspects of rural development. As we have seen, farm women's situation is connected to other aspects of rural life. The possibility of getting part-time jobs in other sectors, the possibility to decentralized education, the possibility of leisure activities, the educational facilities for children, etc are often conditions as important to them as the conditions for farming.
- Striving for gender equality in terms of possibilities and rights, but avoid forcing women to choose "male" strategies. It is important to give women equal opportunities to conventional farming, but it is just as important to open conventional farming to their own strategies.
- Shifting the focus on capacity and knowledge-building. Instead of just training women to handle men's tasks, one has to train them to carry out their own projects. Courses in English, processing and marketing seem to be as important as courses in tractor driving.
- Strengthening both traditional and new knowledge. We have seen that it is possible to make inventions by meeting new trends while focusing on traditions.

This implies a strengthening of traditional knowledge which is becoming lost, as well as strengthening of new knowledge such as information technology.

- Opening up political discourses to women's experiences. This seems a fruitful way to reduce the increasing gap between politics and everyday life.
- Taking women's organizations seriously. They could be given status as collaborating partners in policy making. As we have seen, encouraging and strengthening women's collective practices can contribute to inventions in farm production, strengthening of women's positions on the farms, strengthening of social life in rural communities as well as better communication between producers and consumers, rural and urban citizens.
- Empowering of women must not be a policy apart, but included in the current agricultural and rural policy. By including women's knowledge and experience in the designing of the overruling policy, it is possible to build a strong agriculture and viable rural communities.

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