



Concept Note

FAO/ECA Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development

21st Expert Meeting

Tirana, Albania, 23 to 25 October 2008

Out of the Shadows: Making Female Labour in Agriculture Visible

*Women's labour input in agriculture and role in subsistence farms
in South-East Europe and Central Asia*

Realities and tools for legal and economic recognition

Introduction

Women constitute a major part of the economically active population engaged in agriculture, as farmers, heads of farms and as farm workers, and play a crucial role in securing household food security. While women's multifaceted tasks in farming and in households are acknowledged, they often face obstacles in access to formal employment status. As result, often they tend to remain concentrated in the informal sector of the economy. In commercial farms they often work without employment contracts, on temporary or seasonal basis or as wives or daughters of male farm workers. At the family farm, their work is often not considered as an economic activity but as an extension of household duties, although this work amounts to a sizeable number of days. Due to the absence of formal employment arrangements, women lack rights to regular wage and to social security benefits. Further, conventional statistics often contribute to make female labour in agriculture not recorded if not invisible. Legal and formal acknowledgement of women's contribution to the income and welfare of the family and the community, establishing wage and social security for women working in agriculture would improve women's position in the household and within society. Research and experience show that formal and institutional recognition of women's labour inputs serve to improve the overall family livelihood through better managerial decisions and resource allocation.

However, legal recognition of women's work status in agriculture often is, in a number of countries, insufficient. Practical implementation of statutory legislation in force can often be constrained by deep-rooted cultural practice, lack of legal awareness, common law or religious customs. Therefore, analysis of women's economic and legal status in agriculture requires a comprehensive approach.

Objectives

The Expert Meeting (EM) will undertake to identify the main legal, institutional, cultural, social and economic factors that affect the status of and exercise of women's rights related to farming and work in rural households, in order to achieve more equal treatment of men and women in their self-employed capacity and for assisting spouses of the self-employed, including - where appropriate - reference to European Union legislation* and international labour standards**. The EM will review the current status of women working in agriculture, the impeding elements for the legal and economic recognition of their status and contribution as well as efficient solutions and good practices to propose and introduce solutions to bridge the gap between law and practice.

Furthermore, the EM will aim to underline the role of and provide training on gender-disaggregated statistics as base for making women's labour input in agriculture visible and accountable.

Programme

The EM will investigate and analyse country experience in the form of case study presentations from the European region, with focus on South-East Europe and Central Asia countries. Participants will participate in training that will enhance future work in their countries and in exchange of national knowledge and experience. A study tour, hosted by the Government of Albania, will offer insight into the situation of women in agriculture and rural development in Albania.

A separate training session will be organised with the guidance of a Dutch consultant to present the recently implemented project *Your Just Reward* that aims to improve the financial situation of women who work together with their partners in agriculture enterprises.

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*Council Directive 86/613/EEC of 11 December 1986 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in activity, including agriculture, a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood; European Parliament Report on the situation of assisting spouses of the self-employed (A4-0005/97); European Parliament Report on equality between women and men in the European Union- 2007 (A6-0290/2007).

** www.ilo.org/standards