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PRIMA
PARTNERSHIP FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA

WOMEN AS KEY PLAYERS IN GREENING MEDITERRANEAN FOOD SYSTEMS: DRIVERS AND CHALLENGES

Monday 5 June 2023 | 14.00-16.00 (CEST)

In collaboration with the partner event "[Empowering Women as Champions of the Mediterranean's Green Transition](#)" organized in the framework of the #EUGreenWeek 2023

All across the Mediterranean, women contribute to food systems at multiple levels, be it as food producers, innovators, researchers, consumers, or decision-makers. Although with significant differences across countries, agriculture remains a key source of livelihoods for many women. Particularly striking in terms of women's employment in agriculture are the cases of Morocco (52.2 percent)¹ and Albania (51.6 percent).² Women should therefore play a key role in the "green transition" of Mediterranean food systems, aimed at achieving a neutral or positive impact on the environment, increasing the food system's resilience to the impact of climate change, and promoting a more sustainable management of natural resources.

However, significant gender gaps persist that undermine women's potential to build more resilient and inclusive food systems as documented by the new comprehensive FAO report "[The status of women in agrifood systems](#)".³ The data presented in the report clearly show that, while women have gained more access to some resources – such as digital technology and financial services – over the past decade, the gaps are either unchanged or growing in far too many areas, particularly for rural women.

Women's contribution to the agrifood system tends to be underestimated in many Mediterranean countries (such as Albania,⁴ Bosnia and Herzegovina,⁵ Egypt,⁶ Tunisia,⁷ Türkiye,⁸ just to name a few). This is due to the fact that women take on a large burden of unpaid agricultural work, and that they also make up a significant proportion of the informal, or shadow, agri-food labour market. Such lower visibility of women's roles is heightened by the gaps in reliable and updated national statistics, particularly gender and sex-disaggregated data relevant to the subject.

If not combined with efforts to ensure equity and social inclusion, the green transition of Mediterranean food systems bears the risk to exacerbate existing gender gaps, thus creating further marginalization and inequality. Across the Mediterranean, many women and girls still face considerable challenges in accessing specialized and mostly male-dominated education and training (e.g. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, as well as agriculture-related subjects), agricultural support and financial services, green job opportunities, and innovative and climate-smart technologies and practices.

Owing to these persisting gender inequalities, women and girls in the region experience climate change in different and uniquely gendered ways. Their resilience and adaptive capacities are often undermined by their lack of control to key assets and resources, such as land⁹ and water, or access to appropriate information, inputs and practices.¹⁰ Limited mobility compared to men also poses women more at risk of climate shocks and catastrophic events. As such, their needs and constraints should be fully reflected in climate-related policies, programmes and national adaptation plans. However, despite the progress achieved in the past decades, wide gender gaps are still observed in political participation and decision-making in many countries, and more specifically in natural resource governance mechanisms, relevant policy processes and climate negotiations.

While Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) have emphasized the **importance of women's leadership in climate change policymaking across several key decisions**, progress remains uneven and slow. Women remain widely underrepresented on the Conference of the Parties (CoP) delegations of many countries, particularly in high-level positions, as well as on the CoP delegations of countries most vulnerable to climate impacts.¹¹ At the national level, **it is also crucial that policies and interventions have a more explicit focus on gender equality and women's empowerment** and that gender issues are considered from the design and planning stage. However, national strategies related to agriculture, climate change and natural resource management often do not integrate gender-responsive considerations adequately. It is the case for example in Albania,¹² Bosnia and Herzegovina,¹³ Egypt¹⁴ and Lebanon.¹⁵ Some of the limitations observed include the lack of policy objectives that address gender-based discrimination in rural areas and in the agri-food sector; in some cases, where high-level strategies do exist, there is a disconnect vis-à-vis action plans, hence interventions targeting women-specific needs and opportunities for climate action or natural resource management are absent. **The collection and use of high-quality of sex- and age-disaggregated data,**

THE SFS-MED PLATFORM

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) have joined forces in a [multi-stakeholder initiative for Sustainable Food Systems in the Mediterranean \(SFS-MED Platform\)](#), as an affiliated project of the One Planet Network Sustainable Food Systems Programme. The SFS-MED initiative aims at promoting dialogue and collaboration among Mediterranean countries and stakeholders while they implement national and local efforts for a transformation to more sustainable food systems.

THE SFS-MED WEBINAR SERIES

This series of technical webinars is organized to leverage the knowledge and expertise of a network of researchers, development practitioners and decision-makers. The webinars aim at **strengthening knowledge sharing** and **stimulating debate** around themes relevant to food systems transformation in the Mediterranean, **peer exchange** about recent research and study findings, as well as **showcasing successful and inspiring actions** to promote the operationalization of food systems approaches.

Building on the findings of a [stocktaking exercise of the UN Food Systems Summit \(UNFSS\) Dialogues held in the Mediterranean](#), the webinars will revolve around a set of shared priorities and trends that are common to most countries in the region, considered as entry points or main thematic areas regarding what to transform in the Mediterranean food systems. Many of these were reflected as well in the national pathways for food systems transformation that countries developed within the UNFSS process during 2021.

and the implementation of rigorous qualitative and quantitative gender research are paramount for monitoring, evaluating and accelerating progress on gender equality in agrifood systems.¹⁶

Gender-neutral policymaking also results in the lack of public budgetary resources specifically allocated to women-targeted interventions. Budgets need to be elaborated with a gender lens, taking into account the gendered dimensions of climate change impacts and allocating adequate human and financial resources to implement the gender-related work.¹⁷ In the case of Palestine,¹⁸ a framework for gender-responsive budgeting was adopted but remained inactive, because of low prioritization due to prevailing economic distress. Similarly, while gender considerations exist throughout the National Adaptation Plan, there is no indication of gender-balance in the planning process or engagement with relevant civil society organizations or the Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs.¹⁹

Finally, as new policies incentivize the green transition, **the market demand for "green skills" is expected to increase.** The green economy sectors have the potential to provide solutions to the high unemployment levels affecting Mediterranean youth, by providing new career and training opportunities and fostering jobs with higher wages.²⁰ However, it may also further deepen pre-existing barriers to young women's full inclusion in the economic space and the labour market, such as the digital gender divide and the employment gap in STEM sectors. Women represent 57.7 percent of tertiary graduates in the European Union (EU); proportions of female students in STEM programs represent 34–57 percent in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. However, the rate of women working in STEM fields is significantly lower than men throughout the Mediterranean.²¹ **To realize a green and equal transition of the agrifood labour market, hence contributing to more inclusive and resilient Mediterranean food systems,** investments are needed in upskilling and reskilling women in green sectors and supporting the STEM school-to-work transition. At the same time, working conditions must reduce unconscious biases against women's scientific and digital abilities, while promoting equal childcare responsibilities.

OBJECTIVES

KNOWLEDGE

Create a knowledge base about opportunities, innovative solutions and gaps or limitations for food systems transformation, specific to the Mediterranean context.

EVIDENCE SHARING

Facilitate replication and upscaling of concrete solutions for food systems transformation through the dissemination of evidence about successful approaches and lessons learned from across the Mediterranean.

AWARENESS

Promote and raise awareness on food systems thinking by facilitating multi-disciplinary and multi-sectorial exchanges.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

Based on the above background, the SFS-MED Platform is organizing the fifth technical webinar of a series about the levers for food systems transformation. This webinar aims to discuss the contribution of women to Mediterranean food systems and green transition. The speakers will be invited to reflect on what needs to change to address the persisting gender gaps undermining women's potential role and equal participation in greening food systems in the Mediterranean region. Bringing together representatives from governments, agri-food enterprises, researchers, international organizations and civil society, the webinar will provide a forum to exchange knowledge and concrete experiences about the role that multiple stakeholders can play in promoting the effective participation of women to greener, more sustainable and more resilient food systems in the Mediterranean.

This session will aim to address some key questions:

- How can the greening of Mediterranean food systems be a driver rather than a challenge for women's equal participation, and what are the risks that a gender-blind green transition would entail?
- Are there any specific policies, programmes, or technological or scientific advancements that have proven to be effective in overcoming the barriers that women face to participate in the green transition?
- What needs to change to ensure that food systems become both green and inclusive of women's participation and leadership, and who should be involved in / who is responsible for this transformation?



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¹The World Bank. 2022. Employment in agriculture (% of total employment) (modeled International Labour Organization estimate). In: The World Bank Data. Washington D.C., The World Bank. Cited 01/05/2023. <https://bit.ly/430oehx>

²FAO. (forthcoming). National gender profile on agriculture and rural livelihoods – Albania. Country gender assessment series. FAO.

³FAO. 2023. The status of women in agrifood systems. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc5343en>

⁴See 2.

⁵FAO and UN Women. 2021. National gender profile of agriculture and rural livelihoods – Bosnia and Herzegovina. Country Gender Assessment series. Budapest/Sarajevo, FAO <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb5472en>

⁶FAO. 2021. Country gender assessment of the agriculture and rural sector – Egypt. Country Gender Assessment series. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb8060en>

⁷FAO. 2022. Évaluation genre des secteurs de l'agriculture et du développement rural – Tunisie. Série des évaluations genre des pays. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0002fr>

⁸FAO. 2022. Gender mainstreaming in agriculture and food security: FAO Türkiye's experiences 2021. Ankara, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0840en>

⁹FAO. 2022. Gender and Land Statistics. In: FAO Gender and Land Rights Database. Rome, FAO. Cited May 2023. <https://bit.ly/45kiGR4>

¹⁰United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). 2022. Mainstreaming gender in climate action in the Arab region. Beirut, ESCWA. <https://bit.ly/3e50Y1p>

¹¹Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO). 2022. Women's participation in the UNFCCC: 2022 report. New York, USA, WEDO. <https://bit.ly/3lenCg7>

¹²See 2.

¹³See 5.

¹⁴See 6.

¹⁵FAO. 2021. Country gender assessment of the agriculture and rural sector – Lebanon. Revised edition. Country Gender Assessment series. Beirut, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb5909en>

¹⁶See 1.

¹⁷FAO. 2021. Gender equality action for climate-resilient food systems and agriculture. Informational paper. In: Expert Group Meeting: Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes. 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66). New York, USA, UN Women. <https://bit.ly/3BvnLly>

¹⁸FAO. 2021. Country gender assessment of the agriculture and rural sector – Palestine. Country Gender Assessment series. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb4824en>

¹⁹See 10.

²⁰Belaid, J.L. 2022. Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Prospects and Avenues for Women's Inclusion and Empowerment in Mediterranean Societies. Quaderns de la Mediterrània, 34, "Mediterranean women breaking barriers". Barcelona, Spain, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed). <https://bit.ly/3pMnFvV>

²¹UfM. 2022. 2021 Regional progress report on gender equality. Barcelona, Spain, UfM. <https://bit.ly/42JxfMg>

AGENDA

Interpretation will be provided in English and French

14.00-14.10	Welcome remarks	Lauren Phillips <i>Deputy Director, Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division, FAO</i>
14.10-14.20	Keynote remarks <i>Status of women in agrifood systems: perspective of Mediterranean countries</i>	Frida Krifca <i>Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of Albania and President of the Governing Board, CIHEAM</i>
14.20-15.30	Panel discussion <hr/> <i>Policy framework: Eastern Mediterranean</i> <hr/> <i>Policy framework: Southern Mediterranean</i> <hr/> <i>Access to green finance/investments and STEM careers</i> <hr/> <i>Green entrepreneurship for sustainable food systems</i> <hr/> <i>Gender gap in climate negotiations</i>	<i>Moderator: Anna Dorangricchia Project Manager, Gender Equality, Social and Civil Affairs Division, Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)</i> <hr/> Gordana Rokvić <i>Associate professor, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Banja Luka</i> <hr/> Sarine Karajerjian <i>Programme Director of the Environmental Politics Programme, Arab Reform Initiative (ARI)</i> <hr/> Shada El Sharif <i>Senior Advisor, Green Economy, Climate Change & Sustainability Founder, SustainMENA</i> <hr/> Guadaluna Chaer <i>Co-founder, LUXEED Robotics</i> <hr/> Rajae Chafil <i>Director, Climate Change Competence Center of Morocco (4C Maroc)</i>
15.30-15.50	Q&A	
15.50-16.00	Closing remarks	Octavi Quintana Trias <i>Director, PRIMA Foundation</i>

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- **CIHEAM**. 2022. Gender equality in the Mediterranean region. General overview and focus on the agricultural sector and rural areas. Paris, CIHEAM. <https://bit.ly/3BHs3fK>
- **CIHEAM and UfM**. 2018. Strengthening the role of women in rural and agricultural areas. Obstacles and opportunities. Watch Letter n.40. Barcelona, Spain, UfM. <https://bit.ly/3pS0tdi>
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Articles

- **Belaïd, J.L.** 2022. Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Prospects and Avenues for Women's Inclusion and Empowerment in Mediterranean Societies. *Quadrans de la Mediterrània*, 34, "Mediterranean women breaking barriers". Barcelona, Spain, European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed). <https://bit.ly/3pMnFcV>
- **Deininger, F. and Gren, A.** 2022. Green jobs for women can combat the climate crisis and boost equality. In: World Bank Blogs. Washington D.C., The World Bank. <https://bit.ly/3M6Y2ei>
- **Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO)**. 2022. Women's participation in the UNFCCC: 2022 report. New York, USA, WEDO. <https://bit.ly/3lenCg7>

Websites and online resources

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- **UfM**. 2022. UfM Grant Scheme to Promote Employment and Entrepreneurship in the Green Economy. In: Union for the Mediterranean. Barcelona, Spain, UfM. <https://bit.ly/3pPBtmX>

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