

Session 2: Women in Agriculture

Women in the Mediterranean region ensure food security, and have been at the heart of the communities' and families' resilience of Covid-19. The region is not uniform, so the crisis itself resulted in a wide range of impacts. It stressed pre-existing political tensions, exacerbated fragile situations, and deepened inequalities.

Country-wide lockdowns were introduced and businesses were closed, which led to a crushing of formal and informal economy. During the pandemic, the burden of unpaid care and domestic work has increased, especially for women. According to a recent study conducted in the region, 70% of women surveyed reported an increase in household chores and childcare care duties compared to 59% of men. In rural areas, women reported that 60% of their time (14 hours of their day) is dedicated to household chores or unpaid work, compared to 12% of the time for the male counterparts, which does not leave much time for women to generate income. The disruption in public transport affected women involved in off farm working because most of them rely on public transportation to get to work. Agricultural activities in the informal economy, where 96% of women are engaged, were severely hit leaving women particularly vulnerable as they are not protected by social protection services. Women entrepreneurs in microbusinesses have been hit very hard in sectors such as accommodation services, agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

"women can secure food and build more sustainable and inclusive systems: we need to invest in women to help them deploy their potential"

Panellists were of converging views that in order to tackle these effects, social policies should be revised to prioritise services to address women's needs, including those of victims of gender based

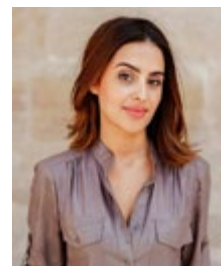


violence. In flow economies it is important to ensure that assets and relief packages are provided to make sure the agricultural calendar is not missed and to avoid further compromising food security in the communities. Other social packages to compensate for the loss of income are needed. Support to financial services is also important so that both families and businesses can renegotiate some of the payment terms and the micro financial institution can receive additional liquidity and avoid additional stress to the already endured measures. It is also crucial for women to have access to finance on equal footing as men.

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More generally, women need to be represented at all different stages of the decision making process so that they can respond to the specific needs of rural women in the different contribution to the economy. Myriam Fournier Kacimi underlined the important role women have played in leadership during the crisis. She pointed out how countries and local communities led by women have been more successful than men in responding to the pandemic and how important it is for women in agriculture to also be represented in leadership. As rural areas present diverse traits and a high degree of complexity, there is a need for more detailed studies in order to obtain data. Margarita Rico, explained that "indicator systems are very useful to design and test the situation's evolution, in times of crisis the analyses are even more important to help public institutions in decision making processes." The importance of education and training for rural women was also highlighted, as it correlates positively to the development of rural areas. However, having qualified women to do the job does not suffice. Ndaya Beltchika stressed the need for "gender transformative approaches for food systems, meaning approaches that challenge the social norms". The situation calls for clear action plans and sex disaggregated data to measure results and track progress.

Yasmine Seghirate, the moderator of the panel, closed the session by underlining that "women can secure food and build more sustainable and inclusive systems, we need to invest in women to help them deploy their potential."



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Myriam Fournier Kacimi, CEO, Sungy Sas

+860
Participants
Countries



56% NorthMed
40% South & East Med
4% Other

+700 Views
on Facebook



42 social
media posts

+15 experts
+10 interviews



24 news articles
reaching a potential
29M audience

57% Southern Med
Media coverage
43% Northern Med

