

FEMALE FARMERS' WORK BOTH ON AND OFF THE FARM IN AUSTRIA

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Abstract

Since working on the farm and family life are combined, the role of female farmers is a complex one with many facets. Female farmers may be called upon to play a number of roles, e.g. working both on and off the farm as well as, 'traditionally', undertaking housework, caregiving or parental duties. This paper offers first hand reflections on the nature of female farmers' work in Austria both on and off the farm based on data selected from a survey done in 2016. This paper re-affirms that female farmers play an essential role in agriculture and community activities in rural areas.

Key words: *female farmers, working conditions, working life, Austria*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decades there has been a considerable rise in interest in the roles of women, especially female farmers, in agriculture and the effect of rural transformation on these roles. Numerous studies have pointed out the inequality between men and women in agriculture in terms of ownership of capital and labour division (cf. Bock & Shortall 2006, Pini 2007, Sachs 1983, Shortall 1999). A study of the trickle-down effect of development has shown that modernisation has had different impacts on men and women (cf. Boserup 2007, Rogers 1980). Modernisation and the multifunctionality of agriculture have often contributed to changes in status and workloads for female farmers (cf. Ahmed 1980, Boserup 2007, Chaney & Schmink 1976, LfL 2010a, b, Louti 1980, Palmer 1977, Rogers 1980, Rossier & Ressig 2014, Tinker & Bramsen 1976).

Analysing the position of female farmers is more complicated than it may initially appear. Official agricultural statistics give a very limited image of the work and life situation of women. Statistics on women are only available in connection with the ownership, the management and the labour force. Our knowledge of female farmers in Austria is largely derived from national studies and statistics as well as (periodic) surveys. This paper is based on data from official statistics and a survey done in 2016 throughout Austria. This data is analysed to describe the position, the workload and the engagement in community activities of female farmers. This paper also conducts a review of existing literature.

In this paper we draw on the available empirical evidence to study in which areas and to what extent female farmers participate in work both on and off the farm. The questions surrounding the activities of female farmers on and off the farm form the hub of this paper's research. Furthermore, this paper contributes to the gender debate in agriculture and to our knowledge of the role of female farmers in agriculture and rural areas.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. We first elaborate on the findings from research by discussing the literature on female farmers. The following section outlines the methods applied to explore the research questions. The paper continues with the presentation of the main findings and closes by drawing and discussing the main conclusions.

2. THE RESEARCH EVIDENCE: WHAT FEMALE FARMERS DO

Decades of research have largely supported any insights into women's participation in agriculture (cf. Boserup 2007, Chaney & Schmink 1976, Tinker & Bramsen 1976). More importantly, research has yielded useful information on the nature of female farmers' work on and off the farm and the determining factors behind it (cf. (LfL 2010a, b; Rheinischer LandFrauenverband e.V. & Westfälisch-Lippischer LandFrauenverband e.V. 2016, Rossier & Ressig 2014). Furthermore, many studies show that there is a traditional division of farm work by sex (Bock & Shortall 2006, Brandth & Haugen 2010, Copus et al. 2006, Rossier & Ressig 2014). Most farm work, such as machinery maintenance, work outside in the fields and stable work, is done by men, whereas most of the work inside the house are typically female jobs such as domestic work, parental duties, caregiving and gardening, farm administration, and some manual farm labour.

As farms are usually passed through the generations from father to son and therefore owned and managed by men, farming is broadly identified as a male business (Brandth & Haugen 2010, Shortall 2006). Accordingly, men generally derive their identities from farming (Saugeres 2002, Villa 1999). In contrast, women's identities have been found to be more connected to their role as farmers' wives and mothers (Whatmore 1991) or as daughters-in-law (Pini 2007). This traditionally gendered role division is strong, as it was found to have been widely reproduced until recently (Brandth & Haugen 2010, Morris & Evens 2001). However the division of roles is more rigid in cultural convention than in reality. It breaks down easily in response to changes in demand for farm paid labour, household and family labour and off farm activities.

Currently, there are two main developments which have greatly influenced the role of female farmers: the modernisation and the development of the multifunctionality of agriculture.

The modernisation of agriculture which took place during the last century has supported the masculinisation of agriculture. The post-World War II modernisation process is particularly regarded as having pushed women out of farming. Whilst farm women were involved in a large share of farming (e.g. in milking), the redistribution of farm work due to new agricultural technologies meant that farm women became more 'housewives' than 'farmers' (Brandth 2001). In some countries, farm women started working off-farm and found paid employment, for instance in nursing, teaching and administration (Kelly & Shortall 2002).

In the 1990s, many studies looked into the specific role of women in connection with the development of the multifunctionality of agriculture, i.e. such as agro-tourism, processing and direct sale and integrated (child) care or parental duties (Hassnik, Hulsnik & Grin 2014, McGehee, Kyungmi & Jennings 2007, Sharpley & Vass 2006). They argued that while modernisation pushed farm women into a peripheral position in farm management, women succeeded in regaining a central position by integrating new business activities and rebuilding their own labour domain (Brandth 2001). These studies shed light on the important roles of women in the initiation and further development of new on-farm businesses as well as their crucial economic contribution to the survival of family farms (Bock & Shortall 2006).

Qualitative research has shown that statistics do not always capture the breadth of women's farm work (cf. Jogna 2010, Wolf 2009). Often female farmers provide all the farm labour for a day if their spouse or partner is elsewhere. Female farmers play an important managerial role in farm business decisions (cf. Rheinischer LandFrauenverband e.V. & Westfälisch-Lippischer LandFrauenverband e.V. 2016, Statistik Austria 2013). Often this involvement is one of an influencer rather than of a decision-maker. Female farmers' work may free husbands to work off the farm, or alternatively, their income from off-farm sources may allow husbands to stay full-time on the farm. Furthermore, issues of rural development and the shortage of farm labour expand women's participation into farm tasks ascribed as 'male'. Statistics are never capable of recording the full breadth of farm work, particularly when some of this work is combined with family work (cooking meals for seasonal labourers, parental duties and caregiving). (cf. LfL 2010b)

Nevertheless, female farmers have a multi-faceted, challenging job profile (cf. KeyQUEST Marktforschung 2017, Rheinischer LandFrauenverband e.V. & Westfälisch-Lippischer LandFrauenverband e.V. 2016). They are farm managers, decision-makers, office workers, labourers and family counsellors. Many of their activities are related to their position as wife/mother/partner and are due to their deep concern for the survival and well-being of both family and enterprise. Female farmers often downplay their involvement to protect the image of the man as the farmer. This interrelated, multi-dimensional aspect of their work, together with their quick adaption to production requirements, and their personal commitment to the family, make it extremely difficult for the family unit to replace them with external paid workers. The female farmers' contribution can hardly be provided by ordinary paid labour. Not only can many farms not afford the additional labour costs, but it is also not possible to find a paid worker, or a combination of paid workers, who can perform the multi-dimensional and interrelated functions of the female farmers. Nor will hired workers use their income to subsidise the farm.

Variations in women's participation in work both on and off the farm – as well as other family members – depend on supply and demand factors linked to economic growth and agricultural modernisation as well as the structure of the rural labour market and employment opportunities (Copus et al. 2006, p.xxv). In turn, this needs to be tightly tied to Austrian and European regional policy to ensure stable regional conditions (cf. European Parliament 2010).

3. METHODS

With a view to learning more about the different working activities of female farmers we proceeded in different stages: Firstly the general picture of the working activities is redefined using a literature review. Secondly, official statistical data (Statistik Austria 2013) is used to describe the legal and economic responsibility and the agricultural labour force in 2010. And finally, data on work activities is analysed based on a survey of female farmers throughout Austria. The survey is based on a representative sample. The sample data was obtained from the Austrian IACS farm data set 2014 where farm operators had (i) the legal status natural person or group person (without community pastures and cooperatives), and an email address. The target population was 33,557 farms when excluding 4,335 wrong mail addresses. The survey was conducted as an online-questionnaire. 2,432 female farmers filled in the questionnaire in a way that it could be used after a quality test (consistency check) for the detailed evaluation. The response rate was 7% of the net sample. Due to the disproportionate return, a weighting according to the federal states, the age of the management and the agricultural area utilised was adapted to the structures of the features mentioned, which are known from the IACS data. The data thus collected was analysed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for reporting results and drawing conclusions.

4. RESULTS

This section illustrates that the manifold links on the farm as a living place and workspace are clearly visible through the many fields of activity of female farmers. In many cases, activity in the off-farm employment of female farmers and their partners are now part of everyday life.

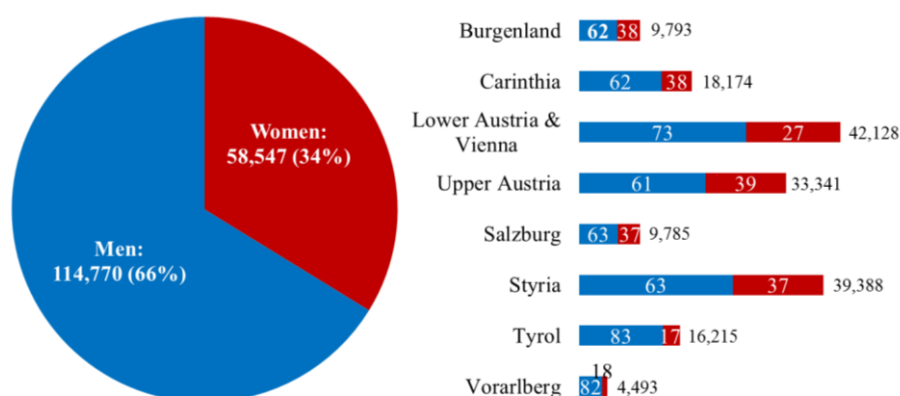
4.1. Statistically proven roles

Family farms shape the Austrian agricultural landscape. According to agricultural statistics farms with the legal status single natural person, operated as full- or part-time farms, are considered as classic family farms (Statistik Austria 2013). 160,697 farms and thus 93% of Austrian farms are family farms (Quendler 2015, p. 54). The changes in farm structures and legal status are leading to a steady decline in number of the 'classic' family farms. Other legal forms, e.g. legal persons, group holdings, 'agricultural holdings companies' or 'sowing pools', are gaining in importance. (Quendler 2015, p. 61)

In these cases, although the company operates under a different legal status, it is still managed by the family that were originally active as a single natural person.

The person who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the establishment is referred to as the operational manager or the manager. Thus, the management of farms is still the man's affair. The management of 58,547 farms (34%) was in women's hands in 2010. But the women are on the rise. The proportion of women in the last 11 years has risen by 7 percentage points from 27% to 34% (1999: 30%). In the comparison within Austria, Upper Austria leads with a 39% women share. In Burgenland 38% and in the Styria 37% of the farms are managed by women. The lowest rate, on the other hand, is in the west of Austria. In Tyrol 17% and in Vorarlberg 18% of farms are in women's hands (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Legal and economic responsibility for the farm, 2010



Source: Statistik Austria 2013

A characteristic of family farms is the identity of being both a production and a living space. In these farms the work on the farm has always been closely linked to the family and family members who perform jointly as part- or fulltime workers. Within this interface between family and business services women have a special role.

Despite this interweaving, agriculture is often perceived in public as male dominated. Nevertheless, women contribute significantly to the farm labour force. Women constitute 41% of the farm family labour force on farms and 40% of the total farm (the family and non-family) labour force, respectively (see Table 1).

Table 1. Agricultural labour force, 2010

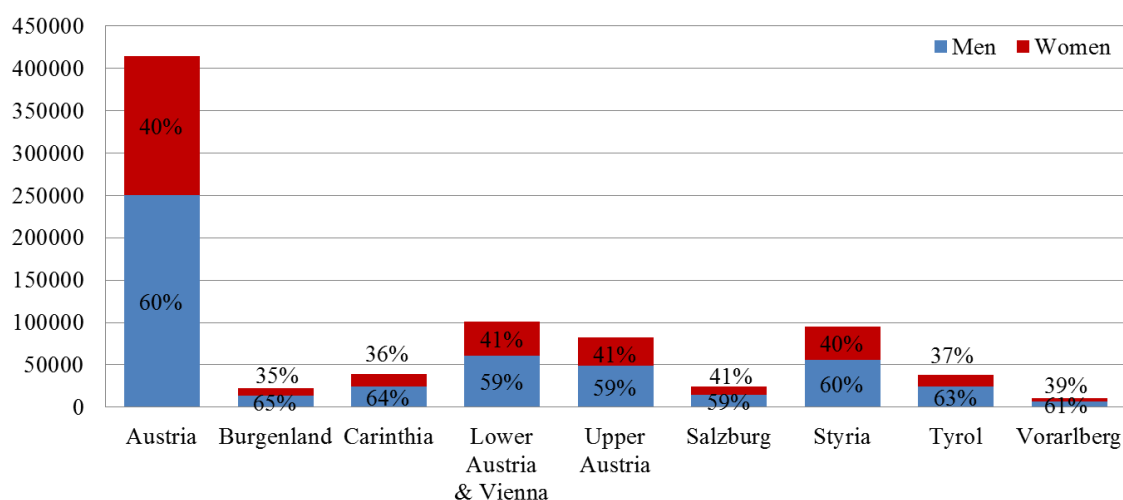
Austrian farm labour force persons: 413,755 of which 40% women			
Family labour force persons: 349,593 of which 41% women		Non family labour force persons: 64,162 of which 33% women	
Holders persons: 164,714 of which 34% women	Other family members persons: 184,879 of which 49% women	Regular non family labour force persons: 33,860 of which 30% women	Non regular labour force persons: 30,302 of which 36% women

Source: Statistik Austria 2014

There is considerable variance between Austrian regions in terms of the volume of work women (absolute and in percent) do on farms (see Figure 2). According to this data, women make up between 35% and 41% of the agricultural labour force. Although it is related to the number of farms we can see that in relative terms the women's contribution to the labour force in Lower Austria & Vienna, Upper Austria and Styria is higher than in the other provinces. The lowest contribution is shown by Burgenland followed by Carinthia and Tyrol.

Data on the economically active population provides the most comprehensive measure of the participation of women in agriculture. Many researchers have questioned the gender patterns that emerge from the employment data (cf. Beneria, 1981). In this measure, an individual is reported as being in the agricultural labour force if he or she reports that agriculture is his or her main economic activity. However, this data may underestimate female participation in agriculture because censuses tend to emphasize income-generating activities. Activities such as rearing small livestock, kitchen gardening, and post-harvest processing are often undercounted. This was verbally confirmed (M Dötzel 2017, pers. comm., 23 February).

Figure 2. Share of men and women in total agriculture labour force, 2010



Source: Statistik Austria 2014

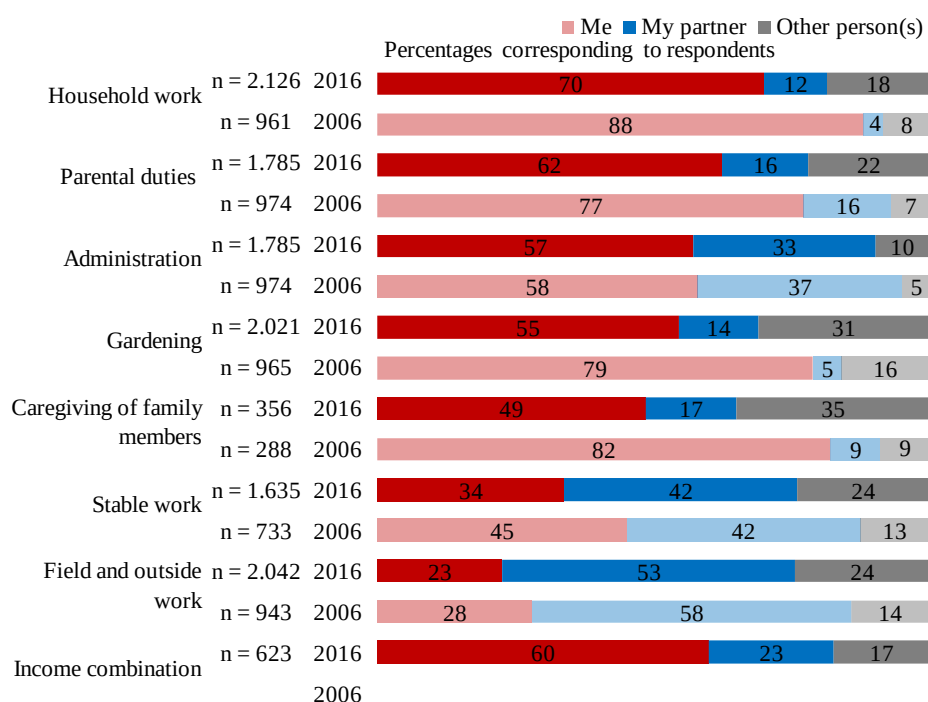
4.2. On farm activities

Female farmers have different roles and contributions to the activities on the farm. Regarding the role and tasks in the family and household management of the farm, the 'classic' distribution of roles is still strong – as shown in Figure 3. The female farmers take over 70% of the household work, 12% are done by the partner and 18% by another person. More than half of the work is spent on parental duties (62%), employment combinations (60%), administration (57%) and gardening (55%). In the caregiving of family members they do 49% of the work. Only in the case of stable work (34%) as well as fieldwork and outside work (23%) do they undertake less work, the majority is handled by the partner. A significant role is played by other persons in the caregiving of family members (35%), gardening (31%), stables and field work (24%). These results underline the high-level and multifaceted work done by women farmers in the day-to-day operations and for the family. When compared to 2006 it becomes clear that the female farmers are more and more being relieved by the partner as well as by other persons. The working shares of the respective fields reflect the prioritisation in daily life and life style of female farmers.

In their capacity as wife/partner/worker, they are deeply involved in the working day on the farm. As Figure 2 shows there is a type of work allocation where the man is mainly responsible for the outdoor area – the farm – while the woman is responsible for the interior – the house – and additionally for

certain areas of the farm work. This means a heavy multiple burden on the female farmer, both physically (yard work and heavy work), as well as mentally (through frequent changes of work processes and many interruptions). Nevertheless, according to Rossier & Ressig (2014, p. 7) the activities in the household and on the business are nowadays done more quickly than in the past, while more time is spent on parental duties and off-farm work.

Figure 3. Working shares of various tasks on an average working day from the female farmers' perspective, 2006 and 2010



Source: Survey of female farmers 2006 & 2016

4.3. Off-farm activities

The proportion of women who work off-farm has increased by 15 percentage points over the past 10 years. This corresponds to an increase of 41%. In 2016, 37% of female farmers work in their trained profession, usually more than 20 hours or up to 20 hours per week all year round. The main motivation of female farmers for off-farm work is to be financially independent (55%). This is followed by 'use of the skills learned' (53%) and 'additional income' (49%). The motives 'contact with other people' (46%) and the 'change from the farm' (42%) receive less approval. This is consistent with the findings from Bayerische Landesanstalt für Landwirtschaft (2010a, p. 51).

The occupational fields in which the female farmers surveyed are active cover a broad spectrum. In 2016, first and foremost, female farmers were employed in an office or in a bank (22%, 2006 21%), followed by education and training (14%, 2006 8%), activities in sales (12%, 2006 14%), tourism and gastronomy (11%, 2006 14%) as well as in health care (10%, 2006 11%).

A cross-linking of the data on off-farm work of female farmers and the partner shows how the off-farm employment between the female farmer and her partner is distributed quantitatively (see Table 2), i.e., whether female farmers work more or less than the partner on or off the farm. The results show that the female farmers are more employed on the farm than their partner. 40% of farmers work more off-farm than the female farmers. In 42% of respondents, the partners are equally employed (33%), both working seasonally (0.3%), up to '20 hours a week, all year round' (1%) or both are employed

more than '20 hours per week all year round' (8%). 11% of female farmers work to a greater extent off-farm than their partners.

Table 2. Off-farm employment of female farmers and partners, 2016

Off farm employment of the partner in %	Off farm employment of female farmers in %				Partner
	yes, more than 20 hours per week throughout the year	yes, up to 20 hours per week throughout the year	yes, just seasonal	not employed	
yes, more than 20 hours per week throughout the year	7.7	10.3	2.3	19.5	39.8
yes, up to 20 hours per week throughout the year	1.0	1.3	0.4	2.9	5.7
yes, just seasonal	0.7	0.3	0.3	2.7	4.0
not employed	4.5	3.9	1.0	33.1	42.4
no partner	2.0	1.4	0.4	4.4	
Female farmers	16.0	17.1	4.4	62.6	100.0

	... partner works more than the female farmer (38.1%)
	... both work off farm to the same extent (42.2%)
	... female farmer works more than the partner (11.4%)
	... overall extent of off farm employment

Source: Survey of female farmers 2016 (n = 2.200)

The future economic viability of family farms in Austria, as well as in most of the EU and other countries of the world, depends on the development of sources of income additional to agriculture. The established trend is for women to move into off-farm jobs (or farm diversification). This varies by region depending on the farm structure, culture and opportunities (Copus et al. 2006, p.xxv). However, we know that farm women's off-farm earnings contribute to farm family income and to the longer term viability of the farm (Shortall & Kelly, 2001).

4.4. Farm diversification

Over the last decades, many female farmers have started new activities on their farm. In so doing, they have not only generated new sources of income, but have also established agriculture as an activity that offers multiple services to society which go beyond the general food production (Krom & Dessein 2013, Ploeg & Roep 2003).

Data for secondary agricultural and forestry activities is available for Austria. This data tells us that in the year 2010 64,548 out of 173,317 farms were earning an income from a secondary activity such as direct marketing, agri-tourism, handicraft. In the case of 81% the proceeds from the secondary activities amounted to less than 10% of the total turnover. (Statistik Austria 2013)

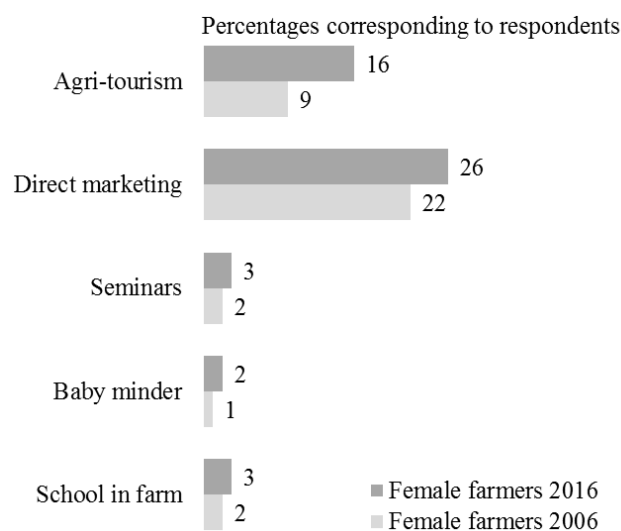
In the year 2016 52% of female farmers surveyed had a secondary activity whereas in the year 2006 36% claimed to have such an activity, as Figure 4 shows. It appears that on farms with agri-toursim 82% of the female farmers are in charge of it. 63% of the female farmers are responsible for seminars.

In the case of direct marketing or school in farm 56% of the female farmers have the responsibility and 34% in the case of baby minders. (Figure 4)

Furthermore, there are many national case studies that show that women are active in farm diversification activities (Bock 2004, Brandth & Haugen 2010, Gorman 2006). This research shows that women are often open to diversification activities because they allow flexibility around their farm commitments, childcare and other caring commitments. Furthermore, women who undertake diversification activities in these case studies are often more equipped through education to manage these enterprises.

Bock (2004) shows that often the way in which women approach diversification is different to men. It is often more small scale and less labour intensive. This is often a life-choice decision to pursue an activity on a smaller scale and is taken to accommodate other commitments. It is important that farm diversification schemes are mindful of these differences and do not discriminate against smaller initiatives. Moreover, a study from Norway shows that women with a higher level of education, due to diversification such as agro-tourism and social services, are increasingly looking for opportunities on the farm, thereby increasing the probability of a female taking over the farm (Heggem 2014).

Figure 4. Secondary activities, 2006 and 2016.



Source: Survey of female farmers 2006 (n = 1.127) and 2016 (n = 2.200), multiple answers

4.5. Engagement in community activities

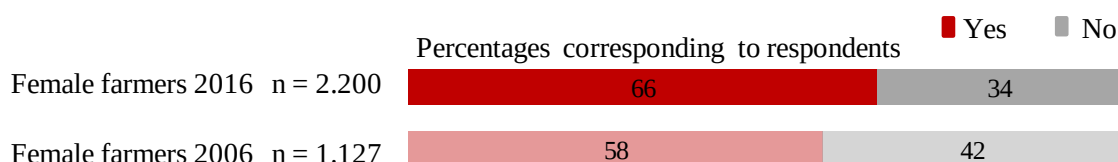
Honorary appointments play an important part in the lives of the agricultural population. Female farmers are not only active on the farm, but also voluntarily engaged in associations and organisations. These may be peasant and/or political ones but also other associations and organisations (not explained in more detail).

In 2016, 66% of the female farmers were voluntarily engaged in at least one organisation (see Figure 5). In 2006, the figure was 58%, whereas in 1996 only 34% were voluntarily engaged (KeyQUEST Marktforschung 2017). 24% of all women in Austria undertook voluntary work in 2012 (2006: 23%) (Bundesministerium für Soziales und Konsumentenschutz 2008, Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz 2013).

When female farmers, as also shown by Rheinischer LandFrauenverband e.V. & Westfälisch-Lippischer LandFrauenverband e.V. 2016, take on duties in clubs, in communities and in politics, they are highly aware of the fact that such activities also involve additional burdens (but also enrichments) and require time and energy, and the help of the whole family. In order to make a better contribution,

female farmers engaged in community activities would like the following support: 40% would like to have more time. 32% say they expect more support from society. 29% require no support. 14% would like to be more supported by the family.

Figure 5. Female farmers' engagement in community activities, 2006 and 2016.



Source: Survey of female farmers 2006 and 2016

5. CONCLUSION

Agriculture is going through significant re-adjustments as is the work of female farmers. We do not have coherent data to understand these changes. However, we do know Austrian female farmers have become active participants in all aspects of agricultural work, off farm employment and off farm activities in rural areas. They have multiple, intertwined roles which make them essential to the success of the farm family and rural areas. As 'domestic' workers, they are in charge of housework and other tasks which are tied to basic farm work. In their capacity as wife/partner/worker, they are deeply involved in the agricultural production. They do administrative work, parental duties and caregiving which contribute to the smooth functioning of both family and farm. They may work off the farm in order to obtain much needed capital and/or apply their hitherto acquired knowledge. Through their voluntary organisational and networking activities they advance their individual rights and those of their families while becoming an effective interest group. It is important that the positive economic and social role of women in farming is accentuated.

Female farmers are key players working towards the viability of the farm and the farm family. No doubt, gender ideology has played a crucial role in masking the importance of female farmers' work. Nevertheless, agricultural policy must be reframed to encourage women's active engagement in agricultural policy and practice. Failure to do so not only creates gender inequity, but also limits the potential of half of Austria's rural workforce. In this respect we should reflect further on the following:

- (i) Although data collection has improved substantially, there is still a lack of adequate statistical data on female farmers. As our understanding of women's roles increased, more research on female farmers is needed more than ever and is to be encouraged.
- (ii) Different institutions and organisations, such as women's organisations and solidarity networks, can be used and developed as mediums of instruction, units of mutual help and cooperatives to be used as self-help associations.
- (iii) The diversity of on and off farm activities of female farmers underpins the need for policies to ensure strong rural labour markets. While this underlines the continued importance of development initiatives, it is important that these are tightly linked to regional development policies in order to ensure stable regional conditions.

Despite being highly developed in many areas, Austria can also do more in its recognition and support for female farmers. This is not merely a gender equity issue. The Austrian agricultural sector faces challenges from both environmental change and a competitive global market. Women make up to two-fifths of the agricultural workforce and women represent a large part of our next generation of workers, managers, and decision makers. It is therefore necessary, that women's empowerment be taken seriously. This would also help to encourage more young women to see agriculture as a viable career path.

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