

► Project brief

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Gender mainstreaming in the national strategic plan for the Common Agricultural Policy

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- Since 1999, gender equality has been a cross-cutting policy objective of the EU, which also applies to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).
- In the CAP Strategic Plan for Germany and in the design of funding measures by the federal states, gender equality aspects are only taken into account in a selective manner
- A more gender-equitable design of the first and second pillars is necessary

Background and objectives

Gender equality has been a cross-cutting policy objective of the EU since 1999. Nevertheless, the European Court of Auditors' special report on *gender mainstreaming* in the EU budget 2021 found that this objective has hardly been addressed to date. It has also been insufficiently taken into account in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and its second pillar, rural development policy. In the 2023–2027 funding period, the issue of gender equality is explicitly addressed in the EU's CAP Strategic Plan Regulation and is mentioned, among other things, in specific objective 8 – but only as one of many other objectives.

In the study "*Gender Mainstreaming in the CAP Strategic Plan*," we examined the extent to which Germany's CAP Strategic Plan takes the objective of gender equality into account. The focus was on the design of the support measures financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) under the second pillar.

Approach

The study is based on a document analysis. In addition to the CAP Strategic Plan, we examined in particular the funding guidelines of the federal states for the implementation of EAFRD interventions in the 2023–2027 funding period, as well as supplementary information sheets and explanations – for example, LEADER calls for competition and selection criteria. We examined the documents of the CAP Strategic Plan to determine whether

- the initial situation is presented in a gender-differentiated manner,
- existing disparities are assessed in the SWOT analysis,
- the need for action and gender equality objectives are formulated, and
- it is clearly explained how these objectives are to be achieved.

We also analyzed the specific documents for the individual interventions to determine whether

- funding conditions are accessible or attractive to women and men in different ways,

- women and men benefit to different degrees from the expected effects of the funding,
- project selection criteria take into account structural disadvantages faced by women,
- In addition to gender, different life situations and age groups are also taken into account in the design of the funding measures.

We categorized the sub-interventions in terms of their potential contribution to gender equality and, in line with *gender budgeting*, linked them to the financial planning at the time of program approval.

In addition to the document analysis, we conducted ten interviews with experts from associations, administration, and practice.

Results

Initial situation – significant gender disparities: The living situations of women and men continue to differ significantly depending on age, household composition, and place of residence. The spatially differentiated gender index of the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) shows that there are considerable deficits in equality, especially in northern and central Germany. However, even in districts with comparatively high gender equality, complete equality has not yet been achieved.

There is a considerable need for action in both the agricultural sector and other areas of society, with some differences in the challenges faced in eastern and western Germany. In order to keep rural areas attractive for young women and families and to counteract migration trends, it is essential to address these disparities in a targeted manner.

Gender mainstreaming in the German CAP Strategic Plan has been insufficiently implemented to date: Gender equality aspects are only taken into account selectively in the CAP Strategic Plan and in the design of interventions at federal states level. There is a clear discrepancy between the description of the initial situation, the results of the SWOT analysis, the needs assessment, and the intervention strategy. Although the situation analysis in the CAP Strategic Plan clearly highlights

the structural disadvantages faced by women in rural areas in Germany – especially in agriculture – this is hardly addressed in the strategy.

Eligibility requirements in the agricultural sector favor male farm managers more than female farm managers: In principle, the support measures examined in the agricultural sector are equally open to women and men in farm management positions, provided they meet the operational and biographical eligibility requirements. On average, however, female farm managers take over less productive farms than their male colleagues and are therefore often unable to meet the requirements for investment support programs. These include defined minimum sizes and certain qualifications for farm management. For structural reasons, the objective of agricultural policy to accompany structural change while promoting economically efficient farms is therefore potentially at odds with the promotion of gender equality in agriculture.

Potential for further development of support measures in the area of rural development: Existing interventions cover a broad spectrum of relevant fields of action. However, there is considerable potential for further developing support programs, particularly with regard to equal participation in decision-making processes and the explicit integration of a gender perspective into village and regional development. Gender-sensitive planning takes into account the needs of different population groups and thus contributes to inclusive design. While practical guidelines already exist for urban development, such guidelines are currently lacking for rural development.

Starting points for gender equality-oriented funding remain largely untapped: The CAP Strategic Plan contains only a limited number of specific measures to compensate for structural disadvantages. With the exception of the "Innovative Measures for Women" in Baden-Württemberg, there are hardly any funding measures specifically aimed at women. In some federal states, however, minimum quotas in LEADER decision-making bodies are used to counteract the structural underrepresentation of women. In some federal states, women as entrepreneurs are given positive consideration in project selection, for example in agricultural investment support or in start-up grants for young farmers.

The examples mentioned are suitable starting points for anchoring *gender mainstreaming* in EAFRD support measures. However, such opportunities have only been used to a limited extent so far. On a positive note, women and men are explicitly addressed relatively frequently in program planning documents, guidelines, and information sheets.

Gender budgeting – A more equitable design of the first and second pillars is necessary: There are no reliable figures on the gender-specific distribution of payments for the first pillar of the CAP. Since income support is predominantly linked to the area applied for, women benefit less than average in mathematical terms. Supplementary income support for young farmers in Germany has also been designed as an area-dependent *top-up*, in contrast to France, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, where it is granted as a lump sum payment regardless of farm size.

Overall, only a small proportion of the CAP Strategic Plan's funds are used for measures that promote gender equality or at least have the potential to do so. Almost 70% of the funds go to interventions that perpetuate existing structural disparities, while the impact of around 20% is unclear (Fig. 1).

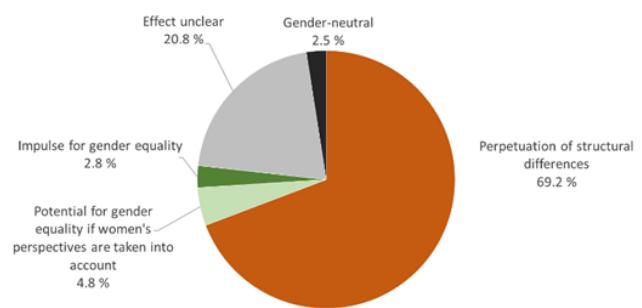


Figure 1: Public funds (planned) in the CAP Strategic Plan according to gender equality relevance (source: Raue and Davier (2025)).

Conclusions

Based on our analyses, we make the following recommendations:

- Anchoring *gender mainstreaming* more consistently in programming and implementation
- Strengthen gender competence in administration and politics
- Further develop funding opportunities for village and regional development in a gender-equitable manner
- Review funding requirements in the agricultural sector for gender equality effects
- Provide targeted support for female farm managers, farm successors, and female entrepreneurs

We elaborate on these recommendations in Thünen Working Paper 265.

Further information

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Publications

Raue P, Davier Z von (2025) Gender equality in the CAP Strategic Plan: the contribution of the CAP Strategic Plan to gender equality – with a special focus on the support measures of the 2nd pillar (EAFRD). Braunschweig: Johann Heinrich von Thünen Institute, 112 p, Thünen Working Paper 265, DOI:[10.3220/253-2025-15](https://doi.org/10.3220/253-2025-15)

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