European Commission

Agriculture and rural development

Women in farming in the EU

MARCH 2026

Analytical Brief N°15

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Maps and Graphs

Introduction

This analytical brief provides an overview of women in EU agriculture and an assessment of the characteristics of the farms they manage.

It accompanies the launch of the Women in Farming platform announced in the framework of the Vision for Agriculture and Food of the European Commission[1], which will serve as a forum to discuss and exchange good practices to attract more women to farming. Additionally, the brief is a building piece providing quantitative evidence which can feed into discussions around 2026 being the International Year of the Woman Farmer, declared by the United Nations to highlight the vital roles women play across agrifood systems[2].

The analysis presented in this brief utilises Eurostat datasets (Integrated Farm statistics - IFS), Farm Sustainability Data Network (FSDN), Annual Performance Report (APR) and Disaggregated Data on Interventions and Beneficiaries (DIB) to explore demographics, economic performance and subsidies.

The EU recognises the fundamental role of women in farming through policies with a gender-equality focus. Despite their potential, only about one-third of EU farms are managed by women, with young women representing just under 3% of farm managers. To address the challenges faced by women in agriculture, the Strategy for Generational Renewal in Agriculture of the European Commission[3] integrates gender considerations. It identifies that barriers to land, finance, skills, and rural infrastructure disproportionately affect women, especially young women, and emphasises that overcoming these barriers is essential for generational renewal[4]. Moreover, the Commission proposal for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2028-2034 explicitly requires Member States to target support, including at women farmers. This focus aims to empower female farmers and ensure their equitable contribution to the agricultural sector's future.

As part of its broader commitment to gender equality, the European Commission adopted the Roadmap for Women's Rights in 2025. This roadmap provides a framework to guide actions and develop targeted measures in the post-2025 Gender Equality Strategy, complementing efforts in agriculture to enhance opportunities for women[5].

[1] *(EC 2025), A Vision for Agriculture and Food*
[2] *https://www.fao.org/woman-farmer-2026/en*
[3] *(EC 2025), Strategy for generational renewal in agriculture*
[4] A recent study additionally highlights that patrilineal norms favouring male successors continue to prevail in family farms (which constitute the most prevalent type in the EU). Bertolozzi-Caredio, D. et al. (2026). *Gender differences in successor identification within family farms,* Journal of Rural Studies.
[5] Gender equality strategy - European Commission

Highlights

Women manage approximately 32% of farms in the EU as of 2023, showing slight growth in their share from 2010 but stability since 2020. The proportion varies significantly across Member States, with extremes from 6% in the Netherlands to 44% in Latvia. Among new farmers, the proportion of women rises to 38%.

Female managers tend to be older with 41% over 65 years old, compared to 32% of male farmers being over 65 years. The highest proportion of female farmers is found among those over 65 years old (37%), while only 26% of farmers under 40 years old are women.

Farms run by women are generally smaller, averaging 9 hectares, compared to the 21 hectares for male-managed farms. Almost three quarters of farms run by women are below EUR 8 000 of standard output per year. The share of farms run by women decreases with the increase in economic size class, ranging from 39% in the smallest class, to 10% in the class above EUR 500 thousand.

Farms managed by women are mainly specialist field crops (37% of holdings run by women), specialist permanent crops (22%) and mixed crops-livestock (12%). The share of farms run by women ranges from 23% in specialist granivores to 35% in mixed livestock farms.

Female managers possess lower levels of formal agricultural education than their male counterparts; only 19% have received basic or full training.

Female farmers tend to own more of the land they manage, with 55% ownership compared to men's 46%, though they oversee only 17% of the total EU utilised agricultural area (UAA).

Female workers account for 29% of agricultural labour in annual work units but rise to 37% when counted in person numbers, indicating the presence of part-time and seasonal work.

Farms run by women earn 42% less in average farm income per worker compared to farms run by men in 2023. The income gap has widened after a long trend of reduction.

EU initiatives support female farmers by addressing access to land, finance, and skills through the Strategy for Generational Renewal and the CAP 2023-2027. Efforts include gender-disaggregated data collection and dedicated platforms for entrepreneurship, aiming to empower women in agriculture.

Gender disparities in CAP payments: in 2023, women constitute 31% of beneficiaries but receive only 15% of payments, largely due to managing smaller farms. The Netherlands shows the lowest proportion of female beneficiaries (6%), while Latvia and Lithuania have the highest (45% and 44%).

Demography of EU farms

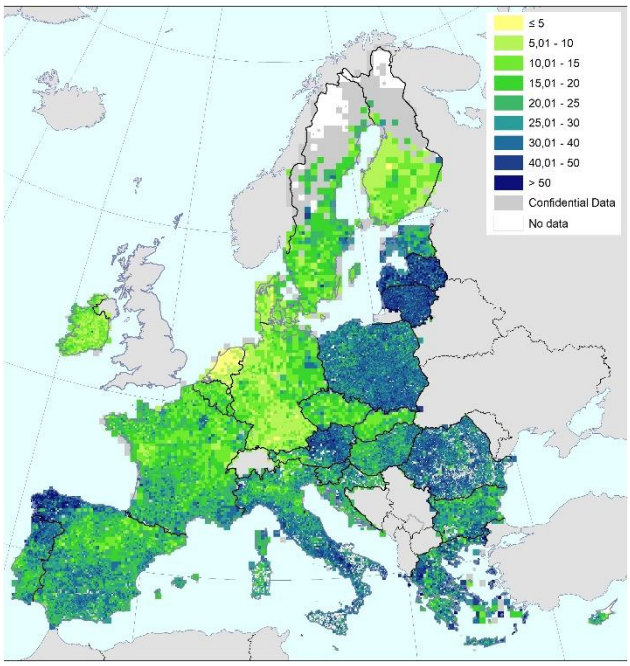
Farming in the EU is characterised by gender imbalance. In 2023, less than one third of farms in the EU were managed by women (32%)[6,7]. This share remained stable compared to 2020 but represents an increase by 3 percentage points compared to 2010. The highest increase in percentage points compared to 2010 was registered in Spain, Bulgaria and Greece. The biggest decrease was in the three Baltic states and Cyprus.

In 2023, the share of farms run by women varied among Member States and ranged from 6% in the Netherlands, to 43% in Lithuania an 44% in Latvia. Significant discrepancies are observed also at grid level (*Map 1*) (data for 2020).

More than two thirds of EU female farmers were concentrated in Romania (38%), Poland and Italy (both 15%) in 2023 (these three countries hosting 58% of EU male farmers).

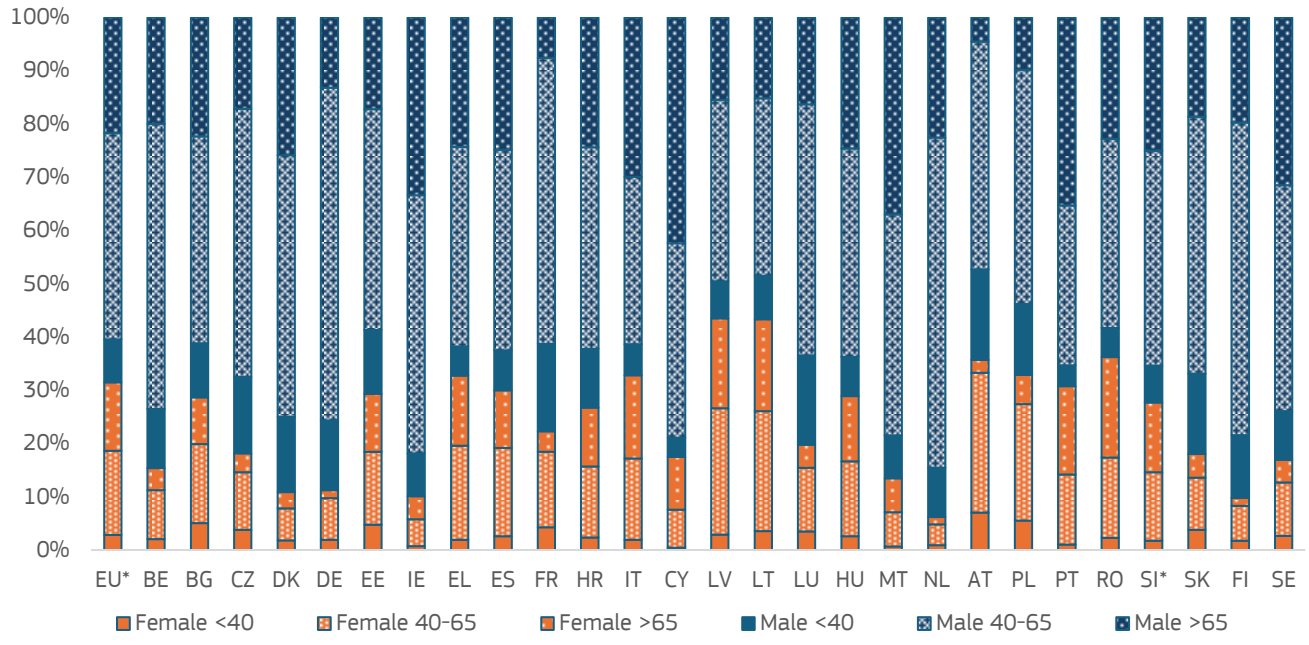
Only 26% of young farmers are female. The highest share of women is registered among farmers above 65 years old (37%), followed by farmers between 40 and 64 years old (29%). In most Member States, the highest share of women is registered among farmers above 65 years old. However, in eight Member States, the highest share of women is among young farmers (Bulgaria and Sweeden have the highest gap in favour of young female farmers compared to the average proportion of female farmers in their countries) (*Graph 1*).

MAP 1 – Share of holdings with female managers, in 2020



Source: EUROSTAT - Geospatial data from agricultural census (22/01/2026)

GRAPH 1 – Share of farms by age and sex of farm manager, in 2023



Source: Eurostat IFS [ef_fsi_agesex] (24/02/2026).
EU and SI* include 2020 data for Slovenia.*

[6] Manager of the holding is the natural person responsible for the normal daily financial and production routines of running the holding concerned.

[7] Source: Eurostat IFS [ef_fsi_agesex], 24/02/2026. 2023 data for Slovenia are not available yet.

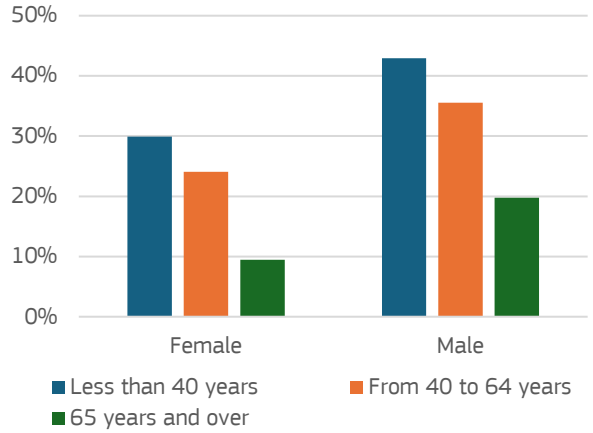
New farmers

Among the new entrant farmers in the previous 3 years, the share of women is higher than within the overall farming population (38% compared to 32%) and this enhanced proportion of women among new farmers is consistent across all Member States, except for Ireland. However, only 28% of these newly entered women are young farmers[8].

Skills and education

Female managers tend to possess a lower level of formal agricultural education than male managers. In 2020, 32% of male farm managers had either basic or full agricultural training, while only 19% of female managers had achieved the same. This disparity may be influenced by age demographics, as a higher proportion of female managers are over the age of 65 than male managers, and there is an inverse relationship between training levels and age[9]. When analysing the data by age group, the gap between male and female farmers with formal agricultural training narrows (*Graph 2*).

GRAPH 2 – Share of farms with formal agricultural training (basic or full) by sex and age of farm manager, in the EU, in 2020

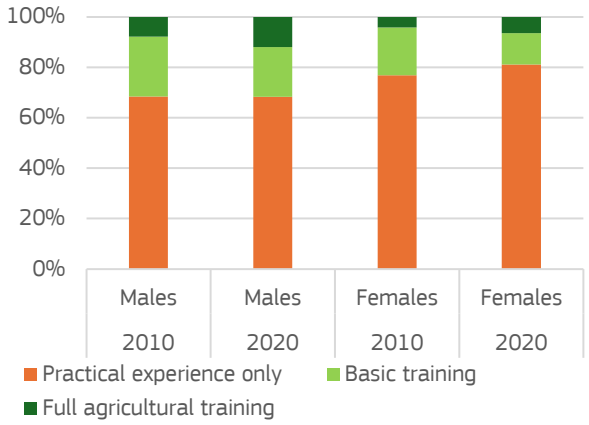


Source: Eurostat [ef_mp_training] (25/02/26)

The share of female managers with formal agricultural training is particularly low in Greece, Romania and Croatia (ranging from 4% to 6%).

Compared to 2010, the share of farmers with full agricultural training level has increased for both men and women. However, the share of men with formal education training (basic or full) has remained stable whereas for women it has decreased by 4 percentage points. This might indicate the need for targeted actions to promote training for women (*Graph 3*).

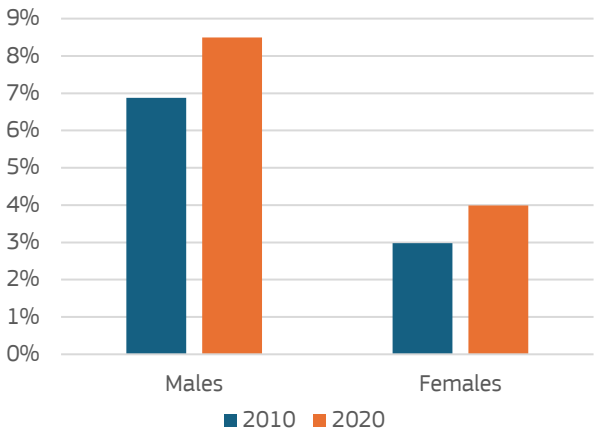
GRAPH 3 – Share of farms by level of agricultural training and sex of farm manager, in the EU, in 2010 and 2020



Source: Eurostat [ef_mp_training] (25/02/26)

Furthermore, a significantly smaller proportion of women participate in vocational training[10] compared to men, with women's participation being roughly half that of men's[11]. Although the overall participation rate remains low for both, it is showing a positive trend with gradual increases over time (*Graph 4*).

GRAPH 4 – Share of farms that attended vocational training in the last 12 months, by sex of farm manager, in the EU, in 2010 and 2020



Source: IFS [ef_mp_voctraining] (25/02/26)

[8] Source: Eurostat IFS *[ef_fsi_nfm]*, 25/02/2026. Data for 2023 for Slovenia are not available yet.
[9] Source: Eurostat IFS *[ef_mp_training]*, 25/02/26. Data for 2023 are available for a limited number of Member States for their whole farming population.
[10] The manager took vocational training, a training measure or activity provided by a trainer or a training institution which has as its primary objective the acquisition of new skills related to the farm activities or activities related directly to the holding or the development and improvement of existing ones.
[11] Source: Eurostat IFS *[ef_mp_voctraining]*, 03/02/26. Data for 2023 are available for a limited number of Member States for their whole farming population.

Agricultural labour

Women play a crucial role in EU agriculture, not only as farm managers, but also through their wide-ranging contributions to everyday farm operations. Although **women account for 29% of total agricultural labour** when measured in annual work units (AWU), their share rises to 37% when calculated by number of persons. This discrepancy suggests that women are more likely than men to engage in part-time or seasonal work often balancing farm responsibilities with care and household duties.

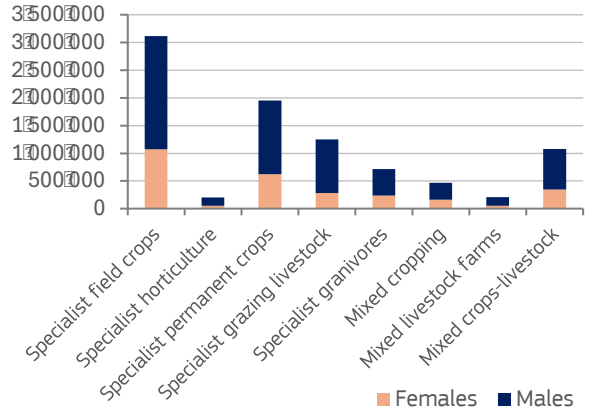
A significant proportion of women working in agriculture are family members of sole holders who are directly employed on the farm, excluding the holder themselves. This group represents 54% of women measured by number of persons and 48% of AWU. By contrast, the family labour component among men is smaller, accounting for 39% of persons and 30% of AWU. These figures highlight the central role women play in sustaining family-based farming system across the EU[12].

Beyond formal management roles, women contribute extensively to core agricultural activities such as crop cultivation, livestock care, milking, feeding, and animal health management. They are also heavily involved in diversification activities, including agri-tourism, on-farm processing, direct sales, and short supply chains. In many rural areas, women take responsibility for administrative tasks, financial management, compliance with regulatory requirements, and participation in rural development initiatives. Their work often combines productive, family, and community functions, making them key actors in maintaining the economic viability, social cohesion, and a long-term resilience of farming households and rural communities[13].

Structural characteristics of farms

The main types of farms managed by women are specialist field crops (37% of holdings run by women), specialist permanent crops (22%) and mixed crops-livestock (12%). The share of farms run by women ranges from 23% in specialist granivores to 35% in mixed livestock farms[14] (*Graph 5* in absolute values).

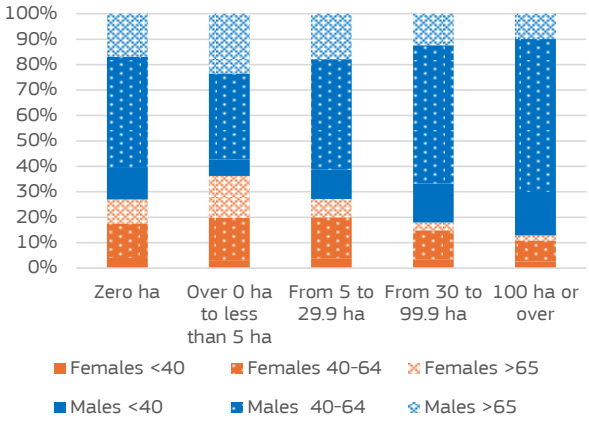
GRAPH 5 – Number of farms by sex of farm manager and type of farm, in the EU, in 2020



Source: Eurostat IFS [ef_mp_tenure], (24/02/26)

Farms run by women tend to be smaller in both physical and economic size, in all Member States[15]. The share of farms run by women decreases with the increase in farm physical size (*Graph 6*). However, the share of young female farmers out of total female farmers increases with the increase in farm physical size.

GRAPH 6 – Share of farms by physical size and by age and sex of farm manager, in the EU, in 2020



Source: Eurostat IFS [ef_m_farmang], (03/03/26)

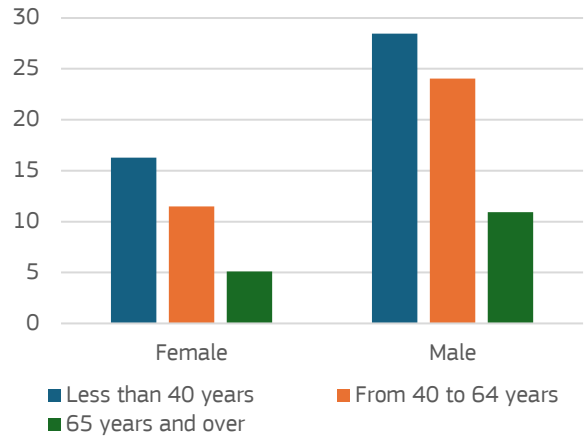
[12] Source: Eurostat IFS *[ef_fsi_lfsex]*, 26/02/26. Data for 2023 for Slovenia are not available yet.
[13] Source HORIZON projects: *https://www.grassceiling.eu/; https://fliara.eu/; https://swiftproject.eu/*

[14] Source: Eurostat IFS *[ef_mp_tenure]*, 24/02/26. Data for 2023 are available for a limited number of Member States for their whole farming population.
[15] Source: Eurostat IFS *[ef_fsi_agesex]*, 25/02/26. Data for 2023 for Slovenia are not available yet.

On average, female-run farms encompass 9 hectares, while those operated by men average around 21 hectares[16]. Depending on the country, farms managed by men are between 1.2 and 2.6 times larger than those overseen by women. The biggest gap is reported in the Baltic Member States and in Cyprus, where men manage farms that are 2.4-2.6 times bigger. The physical size gap is smaller among young farmers (*Graph 7*).

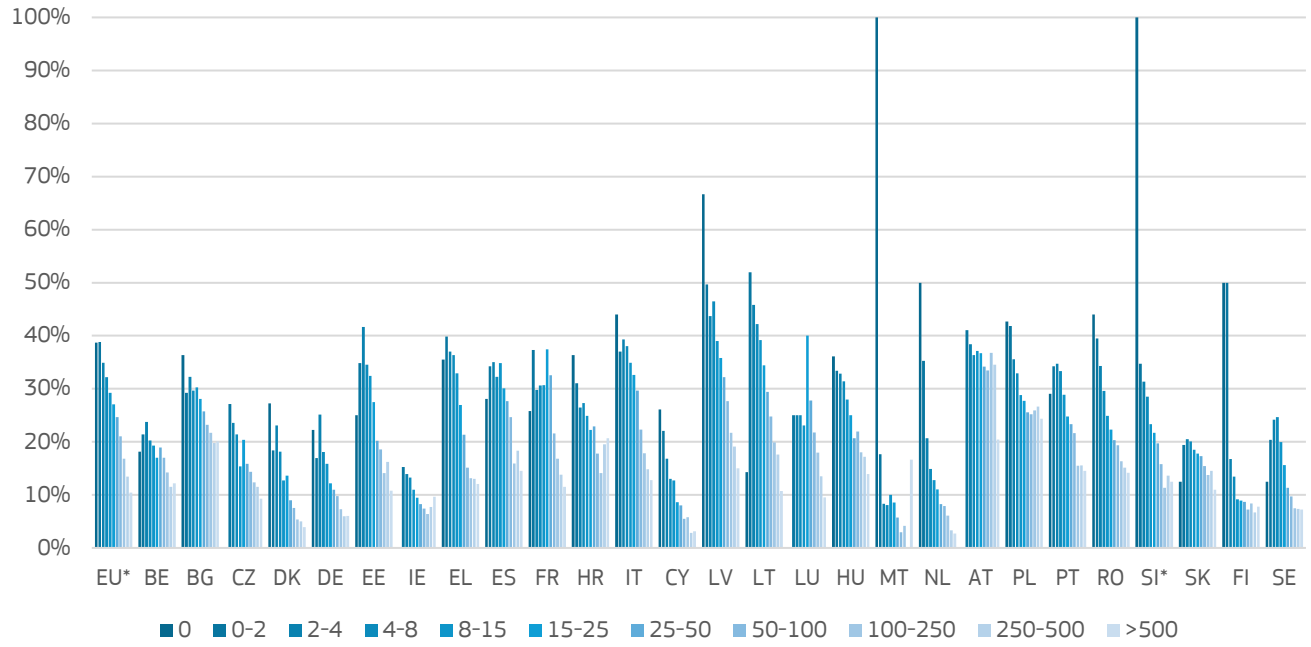
The share of farms run by women decreases with the increase in economic size class, ranging from 39% in the smallest class, to 10% in the biggest (above EUR 500 thousand) (*Graph 8*). Almost three quarters (72%) of farms run by women have an annual standard output up to EUR 8 000 whereas, for men, the share is much lower (58%).

GRAPH 7 – Average farm size in hectares by sex and age of farm manager in the EU, in 2020



Source: Eurostat IFS [ef_m_farmang] (26/02/2026)

GRAPH 8 – Share of farms managed by women by economic size class (in thousand EUR), in the EU, in 2023



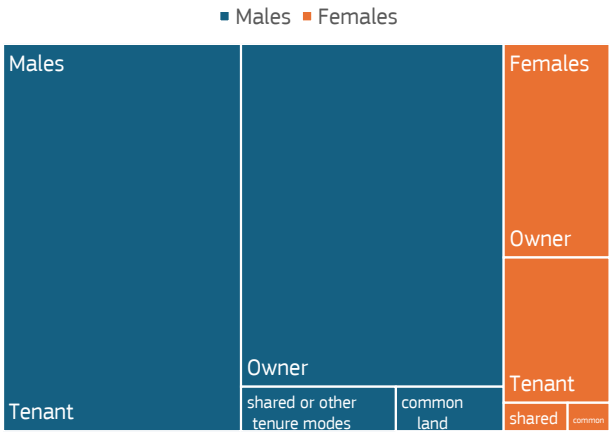
Source: Eurostat IFS [ef_fsi_agesex] (25/02/2026)
EU and SI* include 2020 data for Slovenia.*

Farms operated by women tend to employ fewer annual work units per farm (AWU), averaging 0.9 compared to 1.2 AWU on farms managed by men[17]. However, when assessing labour per hectare and per unit of output, farms managed by women use more labour. This pattern aligns with the smaller size of their farms, as larger farm size typically correlates with reduced labour input per hectare and per unit of output.

Women manage 32% of EU farms, yet their farms encompass only 17% of the total utilised agricultural area (UAA), reflecting a tendency to oversee smaller farms[18]. Interestingly, women tend to own a higher percentage of the land they farm, with 55% of their managed UAA being owned, compared to 46% for male farmers (*Graph 9*). This disparity may be attributed to the correlation between farm size and land ownership; as farms increase in physical size, the proportion of owned UAA typically decreases, aligning with the fact that women generally manage smaller farms.

[16] Source: Eurostat IFS *[ef_m_farmang]*, 26/02/26. Data refer to 2020.
[17] Source: Eurostat IFS *[ef_fsi_agesex]*, 26/02/26. Data for 2023 for Slovenia are not available yet.
[18] Source: Eurostat IFS *[ef_mp_tenure]*, 26/02/26. Data refer to 2020.

GRAPH 9 – Share of UAA by tenure and sex of farm manager, in the EU, in 2020



Source: IFS [ef_mp_tenure] (26/02/26)

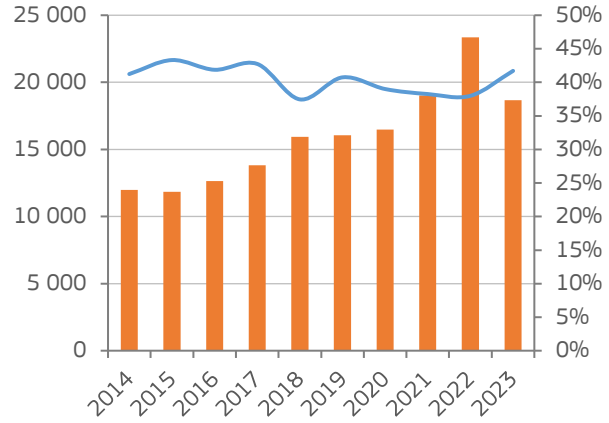
Among farms run by women, 3.2% engage in organic production (versus 4.1% of male farmers)**.** In 2020, 2.3% of EU farms managed by women were exclusively organic, with an additional 0.8% combining organic and conventional agriculture[19]. For men, these percentages were slightly higher, at 2.9% and 1.1%, respectively. Women dedicated 7.1% of their total UAA solely to organic farming (6.8% for men)[20]. In both men's and women's farms, those that are purely organic tend to be larger than conventional ones, although the size gap between farms managed by men and those managed by women persists even in exclusively organic operations.

Performance of market-oriented farms

The following part of the Brief focusses on market-oriented farms, using data from the Farm Sustainability Data Network (FSDN)[21]. This survey collects data annually from a sample of more than 75 000 farms, representing approximately 3.5 million market-oriented farms in the EU. The data collected are used to assess the performance and challenges faced by farmers and EU agriculture and to advise policymakers. In FSDN, information of the gender of each farm manager is collected, with most farms managed by a single individual. For farms with multiple managers, the classification takes into account the biggest total amount of labour provided by each gender[22].

Farms managed by women had an average farm income per worker of EUR 18 700 in 2023, which is 42% lower than the average income of farms run by men. The gap has increased in 2023, following a long trend of reduction whereas average income had an opposite trend (*Graph 10*).

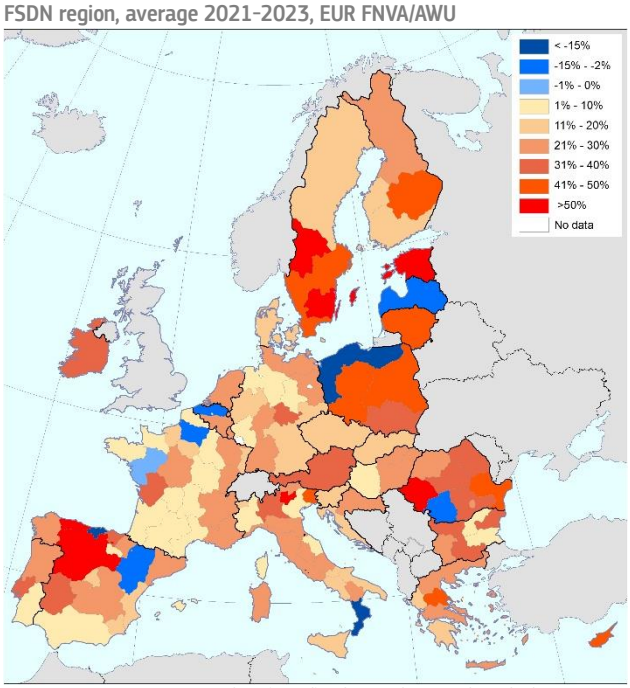
GRAPH 10 – Average income of farms managed by women in the EU, EUR FNVA/AWU (bars, left axis), and gap compared to farms manged by men (line, right axis)



Source: FSDN

The gender gap concerns almost all Member States, farm types and size classes (*Graph 11* and *Graph 12*).

MAP 2 – Gap between women and men in average income levels by FSDN region, average 2021-2023, EUR FNVA/AWU

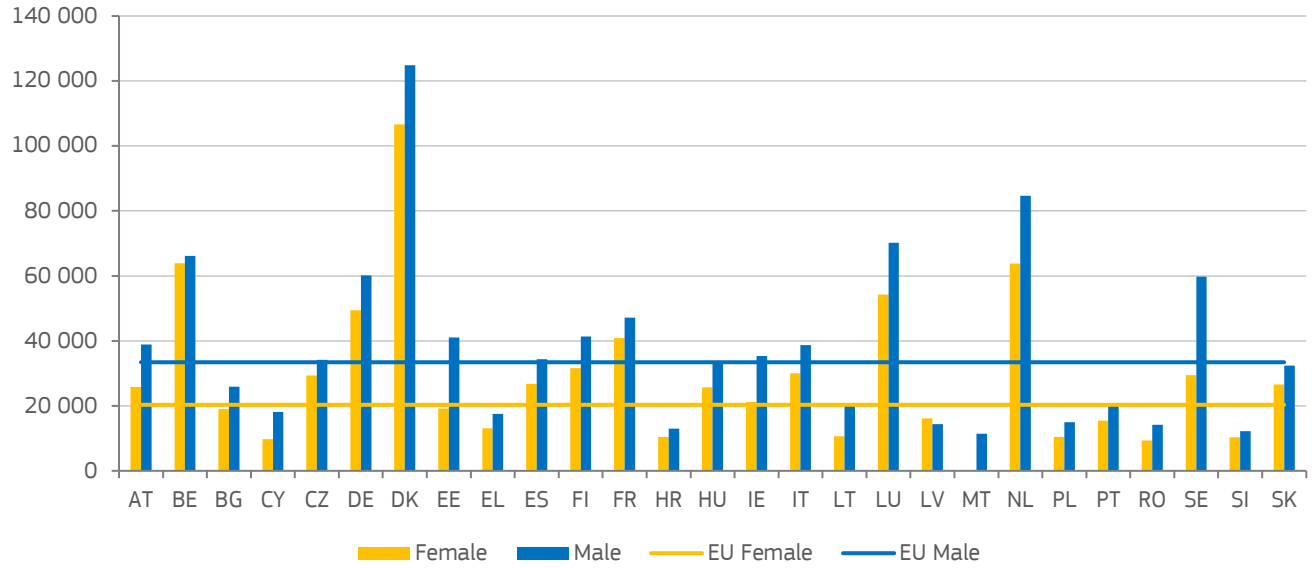


Source: FSDN. A positive gap class (in red) indicates that men have higher income than women, while a negative gap class (in blue) indicates the opposite.

Map 2 shows that even within the same Member State there can be significant differences: FSDN regions where men have higher income than women (positive values on the map) are more frequent, with higher concentrations in central-northern Spain, Sweden, Estonia, and some regions in Italy and Romania.

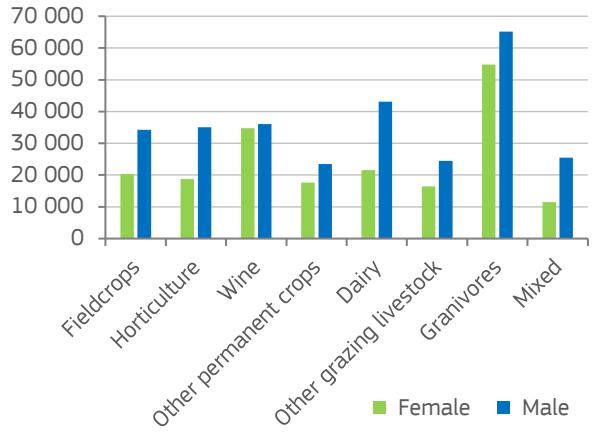
[19] Source: Eurostat IFS *[ef_mp_manorg]*, 23/02/26. Data refer to 2020.
[20] In addition, part of the category "Organic and non-organic farming" includes organic hectares.
[21] Data for Malta are currently unavailable for 2022 and 2023. Data for 2021, 2022 and 2023 for Romania remain preliminary.
[22] For the purpose of this analysis, FSDN farms are classified based on the prevailing managerial labour input by gender. Farms with an equal amount of female and male managers are excluded.

GRAPH 11 – Average income by Member State and by the gender of farmers, average 2021-2023, EUR FNVA/AWU



Source: FSDN

GRAPH 12 – Average income by type of farm and by the gender of farm managers, average 2021-2023, EUR FNVA/AWU



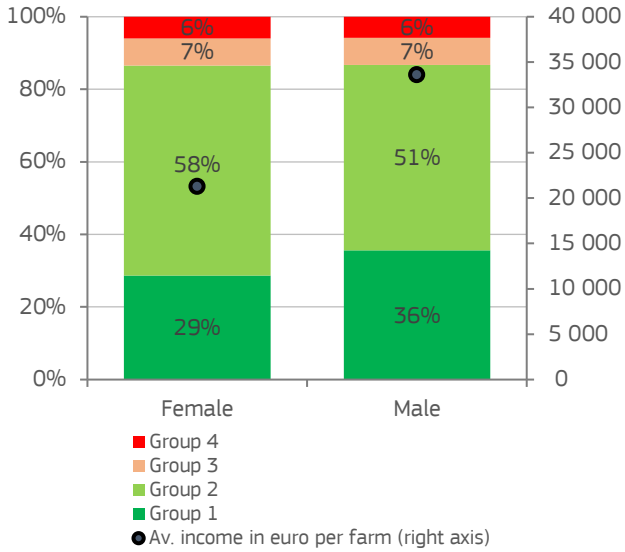
Source: FSDN

Farms run by women display a proportion of most economically viable market-oriented farms lower than men. *Graph 13* illustrates the economic viability of farms by gender of farm managers. For this analysis, economic viability is defined as a farm's capacity to generate sufficient income to sustain operations and cover costs, including imputed costs of own labour, land, and capital[23]. Farms are categorised into four groups based on their net income relative to costs:

- Group 1 (most economically viable): farms able to cover all costs (including imputed costs), save, and invest.
- Group 2 (still viable): farms with positive income but not able to cover their imputed costs.
- Group 3 (non-viable): farms experiencing losses but could have positive income by delaying depreciation.
- Group 4 (most inviable): farms experiencing losses with no possibility of positive income even with delayed depreciation.

86% of farms led by women achieve a positive income, a figure closely aligning with the 87% observed for farms managed by men. However, merely 29% of female-run farms can cover all their costs, including imputed costs of own factors, compared to 36% of farms run by men. The share of most economically viable farms increases with their economic size, which may affect women-managed farms as they are often smaller. This could explain the lower percentage among these farms.

GRAPH 13 – Share of farms by viability group and gender of farm managers, in the EU, average 2021-2023 (right axis EUR FNVA/AWU)

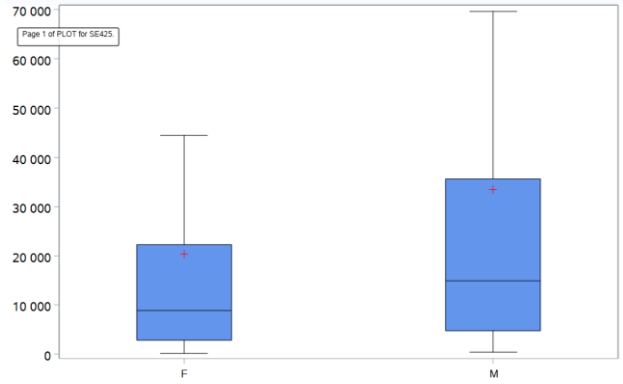


Source: FSDN

[23] Imputed costs refer to own labour, land and capital and are estimated based on average costs for paid production factors, observed in FSDN in similar farms.

Income distribution among female farmers in the EU reveals that the core farm incomes ranged from 2 800 to 22 300 EUR/AWU, in 2021-2023, whereas for men it ranged from 4 700 to 36 000 EUR/AWU (*Graph 14*).

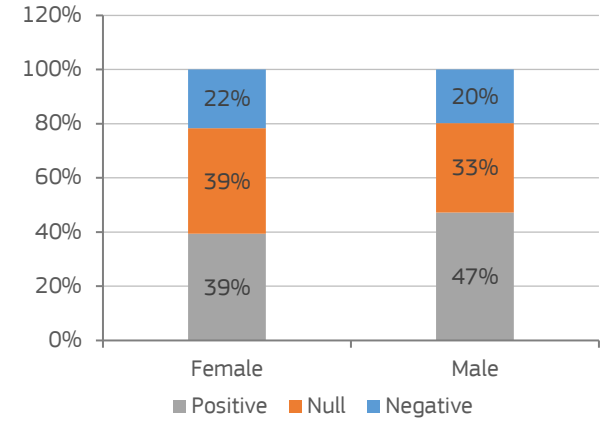
GRAPH 14 – Distribution of FNVA/AWU by gender of farm managers, in EUR, in the EU, average 2021-2023 (Percentiles 10, 25, 50, 75 and 90. The cross represents the mean)



Source: FSDN

Women exhibit a lower propensity to invest compared to men, with only 39% of farms managed by women undertaking a positive gross investment, as opposed to 47% of farms run by men. Additionally, 22% of female-managed farms were disinvesting, compared to 20% of male-managed ones (*Graph 15*)[24] There is a positive correlation between farm size and the likelihood of making investments. As farm size increases, the proportion of farms engaging in investment also rises.

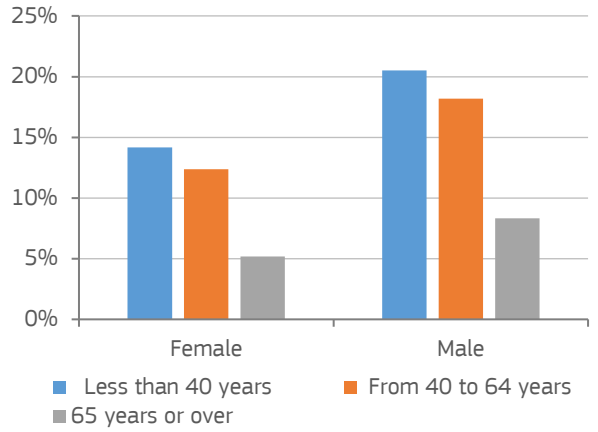
GRAPH 15 – Share of farms by level of gross investment and by gender of farm managers, in the EU, average 2021-2023



Source: FSDN

To finance their assets, **female farmers tend to rely less on credit** compared to men, across all age groups (*Graph 16*). This outcome is largely because women run smaller farms; within the same economic size classes, the liabilities-to-assets ratio is the same for both genders, except in the largest class, where women have a lower ratio. Unfortunately, there is no available data on access to credit by gender, which could shed light on why farms managed by women remain smaller, particularly if they face more challenges in obtaining credit.

GRAPH 16 – Liabilities-to-assets ratio (in %) by gender and age of farm managers, in the EU, average 2021-2023



Source: FSDN

[24] Farms are classified based on the value of their gross investment, which captures yearly purchases and sales of fixed assets (land, machineries, etc.), considering also changes in livestock valuation. Negative values of gross investment indicate an overall decrease in farm assets, where sales exceed purchases, and this is referred to in the text as disinvestment.

CAP support for female farmers

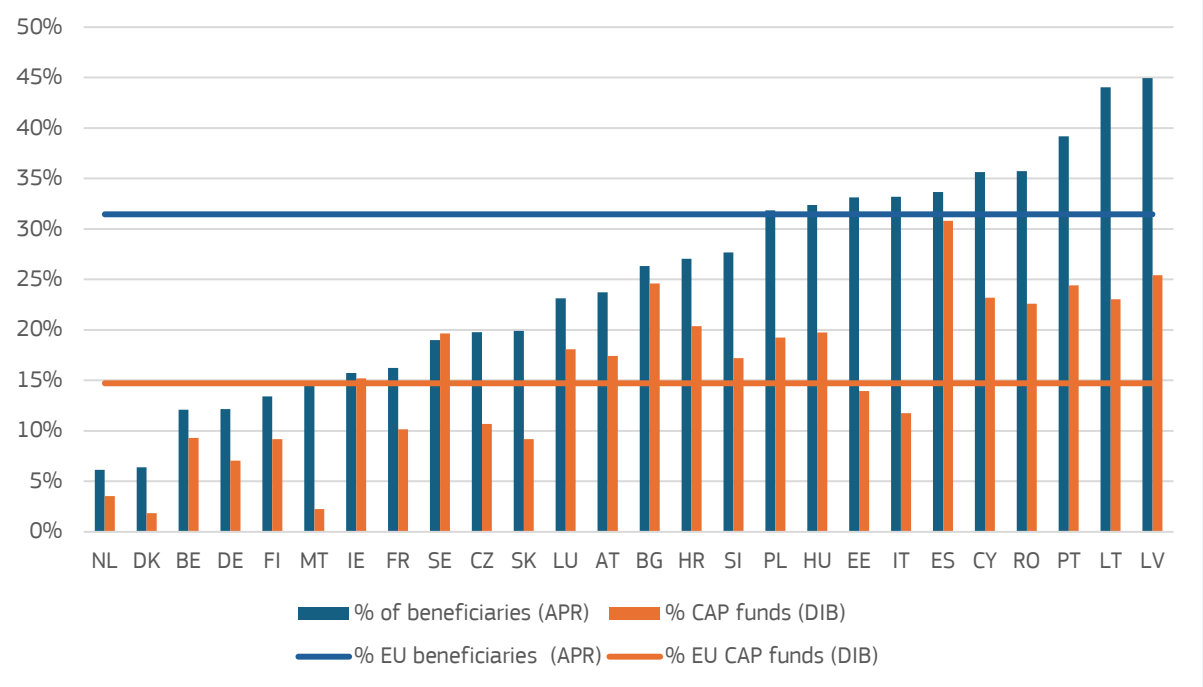
Based on data from DIB (Database on interventions and beneficiaries) and APR (Annual Performance Report), the first year of implementation of the current CAP in 2023 reveals notable gender disparities. Women account for 31% of beneficiaries (APR), yet only 15% of overall CAP payments (DIB), whereas men are 63% of beneficiaries and receive 69% of funds[25]. This discrepancy may arise from CAP payments being largely dependent on farm size, where women typically operate smaller farms on average.

Across the Member States and following similar proportions in statistical structural data, the Netherlands has the lowest proportion of female beneficiaries (6%), while Latvia and Lithuania exhibit the highest proportion, with female beneficiaries making up 45% and 44%, respectively (*Graph 17*).

In nearly all Member States, the percentage of funds allocated to women is significantly lower than their share as beneficiaries, as the average aid they receive is also inferior. In the Netherlands, only 4% of CAP subsidies go to women, whereas in Spain, this figure rises to 31%. Some Member States have introduced incentives for women by providing higher support rates to young women farmers under both CAP Pillars. For instance, Spain has included a top-up to the complementary income support to young farmers in the case of young female farmers, and Ireland has provided a higher level of support for women in the on-farm capital investment scheme.

The average amount of CAP support per beneficiaries is approximately EUR 4 200 for women, which is half of what men received on average.

GRAPH 17 – Share of women in CAP beneficiaries and in CAP funds, in the EU, in 2023



Source: APR (share of beneficiaries) and DIB (share of funds)

[25] APR includes data for 5.7 Mio CAP beneficiaries. DIB includes data for all the 5.1 Mio CAP beneficiaries. Out of them, 4.7 Mio are reported in DIB as men and women. The remaining beneficiaries are classified in the following categories: "non-binary", "prefer not to say", or "no prevalence" (perfect gender balance in the decision-making power between man and woman main managers) or the information is unknown. Further details are available in the *Guidelines for disaggregated data on interventions and beneficiaries.* CAP funds data are still subject to quality checks and data are currently unavailable for Greece.

Concluding remarks

The evidence included in the brief provides a very clear picture. Today, less than one third of farms in the EU are managed by women. Among new farmers, the proportion of women rises to 38%.While women play a crucial role in rural life and agricultural production, they are still significantly underrepresented in farm leadership.

What is also striking is the age distribution. The highest proportion of female farmers is found in the over 65 years age group, in contrast, among farmers under 40, the share is much lower. In fact, only about one out of thirty young farmers is a young female farmer. This tells us that generational renewal in agriculture is not yet translating into stronger gender balance.

When we look at farm size, the structural gap becomes even clearer. Farms run by women are, on average, much smaller — around 9 hectares — compared to 21 hectares for farms managed by men. This has direct economic implications, because farm size often determines income levels, investment capacity and access to support.

The same pattern appears in funding. Women make up roughly one third of beneficiaries under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, but they receive only about 15% of total CAP support. This is largely because support is often linked to land area, and women typically manage smaller farms.

Gender inequality in agriculture is not just about representation. It is also about structural access to land, resources, finance and decision-making power. If we want a truly fair, competitive and future-proof agricultural sector in the European Union, addressing these structural imbalances is absolutely essential.

The current CAP explicitly promotes women's participation in farming and in the rural economy. Member States now have greater scope to introduce targeted measures — including enhanced financial support — for women farmers. At the same time, we are improving the collection of gender-disaggregated data, because better data means better, evidence-based policymaking.

Looking ahead, **the Commission's proposal for the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028–2034** goes even further. Gender equality is embedded as a horizontal principle across EU spending programmes, with clearer budget tracking to measure real impact. And in the future CAP, we foresee more targeted support and specific provisions aimed at strengthening equality in farming and rural areas.

Overall, the Commission's strategy for more women in farming is both political and practical: reaffirm equality as a core value, integrate it into funding instruments, and ensure that women in agriculture receive concrete, measurable support.

More women are needed in agriculture — not only as active participants, but as leaders. They should be heading farms, cooperatives, and rural enterprises, and taking their rightful place at decision-making tables at local, national, and European levels. Ensuring the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of EU agriculture requires women's leadership, vision, and expertise.

To achieve this, women must have full and equitable access to land, finance, education and training, innovation, and professional networks. Structural barriers that limit their advancement must be addressed decisively.

In this context, the new **Women in Farming Platform** (the Platform) will play a transformative role. It will empower women by strengthening their visibility, voice, and influence across the agricultural sector.

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Please cite this publication as: EC (2026), Women in farming in the EU, March 2026.
European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, Brussels.

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