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## THE SITUATION OF RURAL WOMEN IN SPAIN: THE CASE OF SMALL-SCALE ARTISAN FOOD PRODUCERS

### LA SITUACIÓN DE LAS MUJERES RURALES EN ESPAÑA: EL CASO DE LAS ARTESANAS ALIMENTARIAS A PEQUEÑA ESCALA

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#### Abstract

Rural women's discrimination and the lack of effective implementation of the legislation on gender equality is a phenomenon found around the world. Women have been traditionally the responsible of family care and feeding, thus they have developed productive tasks that allow combining productive and reproductive activities in the farm. Food processing is one of these activities and it allows women to have a paid work or to complement agrarian rents in a context where most of agricultural works are vetoed to them. Nevertheless, women are usually linked to small-scale agricultural projects which prioritize quality and local food production, and the expansion of industrial food systems has worsened the situation of artisan women. In the present research we aimed, through the use of qualitative methodologies, at conducting a diagnosis of the situation of women leading small-scale food transformation projects in Spain while eliciting their main difficulties, needs and claims.

#### Resumen

#### Palabras clave

Mujeres rurales  
Conservas alimentarias  
Estándares de seguridad  
alimentaria  
Proyectos a pequeña escala

La discriminación de las mujeres rurales y la falta de una aplicación efectiva de la legislación sobre la igualdad de género es un fenómeno extendido alrededor del mundo. Las mujeres han sido tradicionalmente las responsables del cuidado y alimentación familiar, en consecuencia han desarrollado tareas productivas que facilitan la combinación de actividades productivas y reproductivas en la explotación agraria. La transformación alimentaria es una de esas actividades que permite a las mujeres tener un trabajo remunerado o complementar la renta agraria en un contexto dónde la mayoría de los trabajos agrícolas están vetados para ellas. Sin embargo, las mujeres suelen estar vinculadas a proyectos que priorizan la producción local y de calidad, y la expansión de la producción industrial de alimentos ha empeorado la situación de las mujeres artesanas alimentarias. En el presente estudio se pretende, mediante el uso de metodologías cualitativas, abordar un diagnóstico de la situación de las mujeres que llevan a cabo proyectos de transformación alimentaria a pequeña escala en España mostrando sus principales dificultades, necesidades y propuestas.

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## Introduction. Global inequity of women in agriculture

According to the FAO, women's de facto discrimination and the lack of effective implementation of the legislation on gender equality is a prevalent phenomenon among rural women. This discrimination includes land redistribution benefiting only

men, lack of effective enforcement of laws mandating farm co-ownership or on behalf of the couple, violation of labour laws regarding equal opportunities or exclusion of women from rural cooperatives (FAO, 2007). This discrimination is part of a context in which the gender gap covers many assets, supplies and services — land, livestock, labour, education, extension and financial services and technology — and supposes a cost to the agricultural sector, the economy and society, and to women themselves (FAO, 2011). Thus, within agriculture men tend to be disproportionately represented among own-account and women are concentrated in low-quality employment (Grown, 2007). In Europe, for instance, the bulk of agricultural production continues informally using female workforce, which has major drawbacks in both full-time (26% of women versus 52% of men) and part time work (9.7% of men versus 11.8% of women) according to data from 2009 (European Commission, 2010, Table 3.5.1.4. Employment in agriculture and in the other sectors: structures compared, p. 146). Sadly, the informal and illegal work is a wide phenomenon in rural areas. Of particular concern is the status of migrant women (both intra and extra-EU), which often are denied the most basic rights (Rondinelli, 2012). Furthermore, a significant proportion of women living in rural areas and working in agriculture are also unpaid — and unrecognised — contributing workers on the family farm. In fact, the provision of domestic and personal services by household members to be used within the household (cooking, cleaning, and taking care for children and the elderly) continues to be left outside the production boundary. Women farmers tend to spend more time in unpaid care work than women employed outside agriculture (Grown, 2007) because their productive and reproductive work is normally placed in the same space, while this is not true for men. Adding to this, there is the paradox that women are the ones who produce more food worldwide but also the ones suffering most acutely from the consequences of poverty and starvation (Allen & Sachs, 2007 & Grown, 2007).

Despite the described global trends, the European Parliament recognizes that agricultural production qualitative dimensions have women as protagonists, either as producers, consumers or transmitters of traditions (Rondinelli, 2012). In that sense, academic research in this field is important in order to interact with rural areas and study the real needs and potential of rural women (Chamberts, 1983 & Rondinelli, 2012). However this type of research is not abundant and even more scarce, is the research on the contribution of women to artisanal food transformation, despite its importance for the preservation of local values and knowledge and its contribution to the maintenance of social networks and the environment (Grimes & Milgram, 2000), and the effects that global trends on food production have on artisan agri-food productions (Desmarais, 2003 & Grown, 2007).

Driven by the economic necessity to diversify farm income, women undertake side agricultural activities including agro-tourism, local agri-food production, and food processing of artisan products (Anthopoulou, 2010). Generally, craft production and trade are embedded in the economic, social and cultural environment in which they operate and thus, conditions are different depending on the context where they take place. However, current policy trends tend to favour industrial agri-food systems which prioritize the increase of productivity and economic benefits against the maintenance of agricultural work and peasantry. Instead, this system is based on privatization, industrialization, liberalization and globalization of agriculture and is also accelerating inequalities (Windfuhr & Jonsén, 2004). For that reason, it is important to reflect on how gender, power, and class relations cross-cut transformations in the small product labour process. Public policies have supported this import-export model of agriculture, eliminating tariffs, opening borders and increasing global trade in agriculture and food (Desmarais, 2003). Many examples exist around the world where local markets have been destroyed by implementing liberal policies in agriculture because smallholders cannot compete with global agri-food industries (Windfuhr & Jonsén, 2004). Martha McMahon (2009) exposes, from a feminist perspective, how the new regulation standardizing meat production caused the centralization of local slaughterhouses in British Columbia (Canada) in 2007. Small-scale livestock farmers related with meat processing, most of them women, were gradually disappearing because they could not afford the economic expend that implied the new regulation and the long distances that meat had to run to centralized slaughterhouses. Hence, a local productive activity that used to be conducted mostly by women in small-scale projects is nowadays centralized in a few large-scale industries. Thus, an important consequence of agricultural globalization is the disintegration of many rural communities, in detriment of small-scale agricultural projects, which prioritize quality and local food production, forcing peasants into the informal economy, and most specifically, women (Kerr, 2012). But artisans reveal that this trajectory can be modified promoting local economies and recognizing the role of women in their communities (Grimes & Milgram, 2000). Jane Maidment and Selma Macfarlane (2011) showed how older artisan women in Australia contributed to community fundraising, building social networks and providing learning opportunities to other members of the community.

Aiming at deepening in the problematic of women working in small-scale farm projects, the objective of this paper is to conduct a diagnosis of the situation, their main difficulties and needs, as well as the opportunities they create based on their own experience. Specifically, the research analyzes the problematic of small-scale food craft projects conducted by women in Spain. This economic activity is culturally and

economically important in rural areas, but it is yet a research topic that has so far attracted little attention.

## Women in the Spanish rural context

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### Demographic trends

Rural population in Spain, as in the rest of the European Union (EU), has been continuously decreasing in the last few decades, from 43.7% in the 1960s, to 20.9% in 2011. Further, United Nations estimates that this trend will continue with a further decrease of 15% in 2025 (FADEMUR, 2012). Spanish rural women population also diminished from the 1960s, but became steady in the last 15 years, decreasing only 0.04%. One factor that can explain this latter trend is the number of foreigners that went to work to Spain during this period where 15.4% of the rural population are foreigners, whereof 47.2% are women (FADEMUR, 2012). Nevertheless it is important to note the masculinisation and the ageing of the rural population. The number of women is lower compared with men in the groups below 65 years and this trend is reversed in the groups above 65 years. This phenomenon is due, among other factors, to the rural exodus produced during the fifties and sixties which was mostly staged by men. Another trend to take into account is the “super-ageing” which refers to the number of people over 75 years. In rural areas the proportion of people over this age is 11.4% (8.6% in whole Spain) and it generates an important group of dependent people. This data is important from a gender analysis because women are in general responsible of family care. In addition, public services related to health are essential in order to avoid additional family burden to the younger women in rural areas (Rondinelli, 2012). The decrease of working age women living in rural areas and the reduction of social services in the current context will become a problem in the near future (FADEMUR, 2012).

### Being a peasant woman in Spain

While female labour on farms increased since the ends of the sixties to the eighties, when Spain joined EU in 1986, the proportion of women living on farms who had farm production responsibilities fell from 21.1 to 16.2% between 1989 and 1995. This situation can be explained by patriarchal succession and the increased field mechanization, which reduced labour demands (Hoggart & Paniagua, 2001). In despite of these statistics, it is important to note that the understatement of peasant women in rural areas includes also their invisibility in official statistics (Camarero, Castellanos,

García & Sampedro, 2006; De Gonzalo Aranoa, 2011; Majoral & Sanchez-Aguilera, 2002). On the one hand, most of the women working in family-farms are not officially recognised as farm holders, but as best inscribed as “holders' spouse” or as “other relatives” and thus, they are not classified using work as criteria but only their family links. On the other hand, non-regularised work, common among rural women, is not visible at official statistics, neither the temporary or partial labour, especially when it is done in the family-business. As a result, active participation of women in agricultural holdings is not reflected in official statistics and these women do not have the access to the economic benefits of their own farms neither access to social protection associated to labour. Not being recognized as agricultural workers has other disadvantages such as not being able to apply, for instance, to agricultural subsidies and other economic benefits. Nevertheless, even when that happens, women receive less agricultural economic benefits from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) as compared to men (32% versus 68%) because they are usually linked to small farms and smaller productions (De Gonzalo Aranoa, 2011). Other problem associated to this situation is that they cannot participate in agricultural unions, which means they cannot fight for their rights as rural women and they cannot participate in the process of farm decision making. Thus, the invisibility of rural women's work and care assumption perpetuate the masculinisation of agriculture in the Spanish context (Camarero Rioja et al., 2006). It is of special interest that this situation increases the vulnerability of rural women in violent family situations, being rural women the group that experiences greater difficulty in getting out of gender violence (Sanz, 2011).

## Pilot study: artisan production and gender inequity in five Spanish regions

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Small-scale traditional food processing in Spain is usually a women's activity, both for on-farm consumption and for selling, even when they have no professional consideration. Bigger artisan companies however, are often in the hands of men and workforce most frequently is feminine (Martínez León & de Miguel Gómez, 2006). Nevertheless, current trends show an increasing number of young women joining to agricultural activities in certain Spanish areas (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012). Our pilot study is performed in 5 Spanish regions with different food craft normative (Andalusia, Basque Country, Castile-Leon, Catalonia and Galicia). We were particularly interested in the barriers they face as well as the solutions they propose to tackle them.

## Methodology

The study was conducted through semi-structured interviews to 16 food artisan women from five regions of Spain. The sample is described in Table 1. In addition, we interviewed at least one technician working in food safety regulation in each of the analysed regions, 6 in total, in order to deepen in the regional specific food craft regulation (see Table 2). The questionnaire was divided in 4 thematic sections. The first one dealt with the context of the interviewed women (i.e. experience in agriculture and food transformation, type of production and commercialisation, affiliation), while the second section aimed at eliciting the situation of rural women working on food transformation. The third section was related to the regulatory and economic aspects of food transformation. Finally, the fourth section included questions on their demands and proposals for improving their situation. Data were analyzed using *Dedoose* software, a web application for qualitative and mixed methods research.

ID	Production	Elaboration	Territory	Union membership	Antiquity (years)	Products
1	Yes	Yes	Basque country	EHNE	> 10	Vegetables, cider, eggs
2	Yes	No	Galicia	SLG	> 10	Milk, beans, diversified vegetables
3	Yes	No	Castile-Leon	COAG	> 10	Vegetables, cereals, legumes
4	No	Yes	Andalusia	--	> 5	Small vegetable cannery
5	Yes	Yes	Catalonia	UP	> 10	Fruit, vineyards, vegetables
6	Yes	Yes	Andalusia	SOC	< 5	Vegetables, fruits and jams
7	No	Yes	Catalonia	--	< 5	Bread, pastry
8	Yes	Yes	Basque country	EHNE	< 5	Yoghurt, cheese
9	Yes	No	Catalonia	ASAJA	> 10	Veal
10	Yes	Yes	Basque country	EHNE	> 10	Meat and cheese from goat
11	Yes	Yes	Andalusia	ASAJA	> 10	Meat and cheese from sheep and cow
12	Yes	Yes	Castile-Leon	COAG	> 10	Meat and cheese from sheep
13	Yes	Yes	Catalonia	JARC	> 10	Deep-drawn, meat
14	Yes	Yes	Castile-Leon	COAG	> 10	Bakery, vegetables
15	Yes	Yes	Galicia	SLG	> 10	Fresh cheese, milk, flour, chickens
16	Yes	Yes	Galicia	SLG	> 10	Honey, vegetables, chickens, eggs

**Table 1.** Description of interviewed food artisan women sample

Participants were selected among women listed in “Female larder” (CERES, s/f), a catalogue of food artisan women, through direct contacts facilitated by regional agricultural unions or after recommendation of other interviewed women. Technicians were selected as representative of their institutions, and due to their experience with

ID	Territory	Description
17	Basque country	Technician at EHNE Union
18	Castile-Leon	Sanitary technician from local administration
19	Basque country	Agribusiness technician from local administration
20	Catalonia	Technician at the Agriculture Department
21	Galicia	Technician at the Rural Environment Council
22	Andalusia	Technician at the Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment Council

**Table 2.** Description of interviewed food safety technicians

the normative aspects of artisan food transformation. In parallel, a revision of the main regulations affecting rural and peasant women, and food craft production in Spain was conducted, as well as a literature review on these topics.

## Women as food providers and the link with small-scale food transformation

Based on the experience of interviewed women, we can elucidate the link between women and artisan food transformation. Most of the interviewed women agreed in pointing out that family feeding has always been in the hands of women, thus they have developed the traditional knowledge involved in farm food processing. Furthermore, this relationship is also due to the fact that women are in charge of family care and this activity allows combining different works. Food processing allows women to have a paid work or to complement agrarian rents in a context where most of agricultural works are vetoed to them.

Thus, small-scale food processing is an important sector outside the established agri-food model, with diversified productions and direct sale oriented, because the objective is to produce quality food with criteria that include proximity, sustainability, creativity and creation of support networks. Interviewed women agree that this model is more human and less “productivist”. Thus, participant women define artisan food production and processing as a concept linked to feeding, not to business. Although this activity had been devalued inside and outside the farm, food crafting is being enhanced in the last few years and industrial projects related with craft products are emerging. This fact generates mistrust between interviewed women because they think they are misrepresented by this trend, mainly focused on industrial projects that often do not take into account existing local resources, the origin of raw material or



traditional knowledge. Instead, they have been used as a “folkloric element for marketing”. For instance, an interviewed women expressed how these last decades of industrial productive model has displaced food artisan profession or has used it as a folkloric element in order to attract tourism:

In my area even the term peasant woman, because means woman that lives in the countryside, is bad considered. In the last decades it has been displaced by other productive model or it is derived towards the folkloric, for marketing of tourism products or agrotourism (...) (Interviewed subject N° 3, personal interview, 2nd April 2012)<sup>1</sup>.

For this reason, some of the interviewed women prefer to name their products as ‘peasant products’ because they want to differentiate them from the industrial production that is using the ‘good name’ of artisan products as a new market niche.

### Hygienic-sanitary normative and the food safety regulation of artisan production in Spain

Food safety regulations are one of the most important factors conditioning artisan food production. In order to understand this normative we expose here what are these regulations and how they work in the Spanish context, as well as the relationship between the hygienic-sanitary normative and the regulation of the artisan food production.

On the one hand, food crafts have been the traditional form to preserve the excess of agricultural production in rural communities. The industrialization of agriculture fostered the regulation of this economic activity in order to differentiate between artisan and industrial productions. The regulation defines that a food craft product is characterized by being produced by artisans, either completely by hand or with hand tools or even mechanical means, as long as the direct manual contribution of the artisan remains the most important component of the finished product. The added value of food craft products is due to the type of production and its relationship with the region where it has been produced, which is culturally important. This type of production, usually linked to small-scale projects, may be disadvantaged in the food market due to rapid economic and technological development of the industrial productive sector. For that reason the food craft legislation seeks to protect this sector in the current global market (Fundación Alimentum, 2009). It is also important to take into account that small producers often market or trade crafts in addition to producing them (Grimes & Milgram, 2000).

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<sup>1</sup> Interviewed subjects are numbered to ensure anonymity (translation ours).

On the other hand, hygienic-sanitary normative has been elaborated with the aim of reducing food contamination in agri-food chains. In fact, food safety refers to the harmlessness of food, that is, the potential hazards associated with food that can cause ill-health in humans. Some of these hazards are naturally-occurring (for example aflatoxins in groundnuts), whilst others occur through contamination (for example pesticide residues in fruit) (Henson, 2003). Nowadays, food production, transformation and trade are being increasingly regulated through such standards and technical regulations, and the major factor in the increased importance of food standards has been the globalization of the food supply chain itself (Swinnen & Maertens, 2007). Thus, these regulations are linked to the globalization of the agri-food system and, as shown here, they have been designed for industrial production models (GRAIN, 2011). In Spain, food safety is regulated through National and Regional State bodies based on the international and European standards (European Commission regulation 178/2002). Food safety policy development and implementation is in the last instance done by Spanish regions that regulate production, processing and distribution of food in each territory (Spanish Royal Decree 1520/1982).

As a result, in Spain different approaches to the regulation of food craft coexist. In 2012, the year in which this research was conducted, there were regions where food craft specific normative existed (i.e. Castile-Leon and Andalusia), while in other regions, such as Catalonia and Galicia, food crafts had to comply with general regulations related to food quality products. Finally, in other regions, like the Basque Country, these products were regulated by the same legislation of generic craft (see table 3). That is, in Spain there was not (and there is not yet) a unified regulation and

thus, food safety is regulated differently depending on the Spanish region in question. In 2012 there were common requirements (see table 4), but other

Region	Type regulation	Regulation name
Andalusia	Specific normative	Law 15/2005, Decree 352/2011
Basque Country	Generic craft	Law 17/2008, future decree
Catalonia	General regulation (food quality)	Agri-food quality law 14/2003, Decree 285/2006
Castile-Leon	Specific normative	Order AYG/654/2008, Decree 53/2007
Galicia	General regulation (food quality)	Law 2/2005 to promote and defend food quality

**Table 3.** Food craft regulation in the Spanish regions analysed up to 2012.

Requirements	Description
Facilities and establishments	Must follow EU and Spanish legislation
Sanitary conditions of products	Must follow EU and Spanish legislation
Manufacturing processes	Should be manual, admitting some degree of mechanization
Structure of the company	Should be "family-type" with collaboration of a specific number of non-family workers

**Table 4.** Common requirements for artisan enterprises in 2012

issues varied depending on the region; for instance, the number of workers in an artisan industry, which considered a medium industry the same as a familiar industry in some regions (i.e. Castile Leon), while in other regions the number of workers was limited (i.e. maximum 10 workers in the case of Andalusia).

Another example of different regulations among Spanish regions in that period was the origin of the raw materials used; while in some regions they must come from the farm or immediate surroundings (i.e. Basque Country and Castile-Leon), in other regions there was no specification, and thus, raw materials could be sourced from long distances (i.e. Catalonia). In sum, artisan people and craft products are subjected to different requirements and administrative controls depending on the region to which they belong, which makes it extremely difficult for consumers to know what kind of regulations and specificities apply to a given product.

### Main obstacles and difficulties found by food artisan women

In the interviews, artisan women exposed the principal obstacles that they find in their daily lives related with their food processing activity. Most of the women expressed that hygienic-sanitary regulation was one of the principle obstacles in order to carry out their projects. Other crucial aspects were agrarian unions support, or the fight against stereotypes and self-confidence barriers.

### The importance of agrarian unions' support

All the interviewed women agreed that the existing regulation to prevent contamination has been designed for big scale production industries in response to agri-food crisis. These regulations clearly harm small-scale projects because they don't take into account aspects such as the production capacity, the seasonality of the production, the origin of the raw materials or the commercialization channels. Another important issue is that these regulations are very general, thus they don't take full account of the cultural diversity associated to every type of production in the different territories. According to participants, depending on the weight of the primary sector and the capacity of agricultural unions to exert political pressure in a given context, these regulations are more or less adapted to small-scale projects.

The principal obstacles of these regulations according to the interviewed women are:

- Regulations are excessively complex and strict. Participant women manifest that in a small-scale project it is difficult to afford the time and effort necessary to

accomplish with all the documents and bureaucracy demanded by the administration.

- Hygienic sanitary normative is ambiguous and thus, they are open to manifold interpretations of sanitary technicians. As a result, the same project can be approved or rejected depending on the technician interpretation even in the same region. This fact has resulted in negative consequences to some of the analysed projects.
- High economic costs of normative implementation. This mostly affects small-scale projects, primarily the livestock and meat sector, which cannot afford these costs with their limited production. The most important costs according to interviewed women are:
  - Bureaucratic costs. They are especially important in starting projects.
  - Infrastructure and equipment costs.
  - Machinery costs. The most named is the autoclave for sterilization .
  - Certification costs. Most of interviewed women prefer alternative participatory certifications than official ones. Nevertheless, they think that some certifications, such as organic certification, are important to gain market access.

Given this background, some of the interviewed women think that these regulations are not clear and imply a considerable financial investment, and thus, they opt for processing food in a situation of “alegality”<sup>2</sup> or illegality. It is important to take into account that these women know where the potential “hazard and critical” points in the transformation process are, while at the same time they are the most interested in producing safe and quality crafts since they and their families consume them. In fact, this issue is controversial because some interviewed women explained that the same technician that could fine them, at the same time buy their products without sanitary registration. Another important aspect that favours “alegality” is the restriction in the traditional processing mode, since there are some artisan techniques which are in conflict with the sanitary normative. This is the case for example of maturing cheese in wood shelves, forbidden by some regulations. It is important to keep in mind that traditional knowledge associated to artisan production refers to traditional formulas developed in every region and linked to specific environments. Women have usually preserved recipes and elaboration processes because of their

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<sup>2</sup> Alegality: we refer to the situation were women have no legal situation as an artisan because no specific legislation exists or because they cannot afford the necessary economic investment to comply the legislation

relationship to family feeding. According to some interviewed women, this knowledge may be lost because of the rural depopulation and because it has not been valued in order to promote its conservation.

### **The importance of agrarian unions' support**

Most of the interviewed women insisted in the important role played by agricultural unions in promoting agricultural activities and helping to develop new agricultural projects, such as food processing. The unions' involvement is needed to help women with technical (and in some cases emotional) aspects, and also to highlight artisan production and support short commercialization channels. Our pilot research has revealed that one of the possible causes in the importance of artisan work in agricultural unions is the relevance of gender issues within every organization. As an example, Sindicato Labrego Galego is an agricultural union from Galicia with an important number of women involved in the organization and they have a Women's Secretariat in the internal structure of the union. Women's visibility in the agrarian union has promoted activities traditionally linked to women, such as food transformation, and it has evolved to the creation of a specific group to work on artisan production within the organic structure of the union. Other unions, such as EHNE, or women associations linked with agricultural unions, such as CERES (COAG) or AMFAR (ASAJA), also work gender issues in collaboration with the unions. However, most agricultural unions don't promote this kind of activities with a gender perspective. This fact generates mistrust between interviewed women in these agricultural unions because artisan production could be promoted as a new market niche (in favour of industrialised and bigger farms), as explained above.

Most of the interviewed women have not received support from the administration to develop their projects. Instead, this support has come from other experiences and some unions. Agricultural unions have helped them in promoting their products and developing local organic markets. They consider that unions are very important to serve as interlocutors with the administration. Thus, it is essential that unions take into account women needs in order to help economic initiatives that have women as protagonists. In that sense, the masculine environment present in most of the agricultural unions doesn't favour women inclusion in these organizations. There is an urgent need to recognize the role of women in agricultural activities and listen women's voices in these organizations.

## **Stereotypes and self-confidence barriers**

Self-confidence barriers are considered one of the principal limitations faced by artisan women when undertaking a small-scale food processing project. Interviewed women link this with the traditional lack of recognition of women's work, not only in the family or the farm, but also by the women themselves when they decide to embark on an artisan project. They consider that this phenomenon is due to the fact that not even women recognize their tasks in the farm as work but as 'help' to the farm agrarian work and the husband. It means that these activities have been perceived as an extension of their cure tasks in this patriarchal logic. For that reason, women give a lot of importance to the exchange of experiences among artisan women and the creation of platforms or organizations dealing specifically with this issue. These platforms allow women to share doubts, knowledge, achievements and struggles.

According to interviewed women, gender roles, both in the farm and the artisan project, is another important issue in the case of women starting projects with their masculine couples. This is not the case for only-women projects or for projects where women are majority, because the division of labour is not conditioned by gender roles in the same way.

Another aspect commented by several of the participants is the necessity to operate under the burden of having to continually prove their worth because they are not only evaluated as peasants/artisans but also as women. Dealing with both reproductive and care tasks, rural women have long working hours. Furthermore, in the family division of tasks, some interviewed participants think that women use to do invisible works, while men assume the public tasks and they are the ones who are recognized.

## **Proposals and claims**

Interviewed artisan women have generated strategies, proposals and claims in order to face the everyday obstacles they find and improve the situation of small-scale artisan production. The situation found by artisan women differs depending on the region where they are located, affecting the strategies and claims they raise. Although in some regions there is a dialogue of artisan women with the administration through agrarian unions, organized groups or themselves, in other regions it is difficult to make visible and improve the situation of the small-scale artisan sector.

**Hygienic-sanitary normative: economic obstacle course**

Nowadays, European hygienic sanitary normative allows the possibility of generating a specific legislation for small-scale artisan production and sale. According to the opinion of interviewed women, this regulation has to take into account different aspects:

- **Scale differentiation:** In some regions, such as Andalusia or Castile-Leon, specific decrees have been drawn in order to regulate food artisan activity and differentiate it from industrial production; while in other regions, such as Galicia or the Basque Country, this specific regulation is a draft or it has not yet been elaborated. Thus, differentiating small-scale and industrial production depends on the political will of every regional administration. Nevertheless, none of these regulations satisfy the interviewed artisan women because they don't really get to differentiate industrial from small-scale production.

The main problem is that they demand us some requisites for the sanitary registry, requirements of installations that involve a great investment that a small farm cannot do, which it is completely out of logic, and what we are asking for is a normative adapted to small farms and to small-scale transformation (vegetable, chicken, eggs and honey producer, Galicia, 07/05/2012).

Therefore, there is a clear contradiction in the administration strategy. On one hand, it wants to protect and promote food artisan production; on the other one, administration demands to small-scale projects requirements designed and adapted to industrial companies. According to some interviewed women, this may occurs because industrial production is pressing to avoid normative changes.

- **Adjustment of production costs and bureaucracy to the scale:** it is necessary to adapt and reduce the bureaucratic burden required to process and sell food artisan products in small-scale projects. This is one of the most appointed claims in the interviews, not only because this bureaucracy is very complicated but also because of the economic cost that it implies. Furthermore, several interviewed women complained that it is not clear where to go and what to do when you want to legalize an artisan product. There is a lack of coordination between the administration departments that regulate these issues (Health, Agriculture and Economy departments) and sometimes artisan women have received contradictory messages from different departments.

- **Adaptation to diversified production:** in general, small-scale projects are characterized by producing different food and processed food products in the same space and different periods (depending on the season). Normative do not take into account this fact because it requires a different space for every product. This requirement is impossible to fulfil in small exploitations with diversified productions, thus, some of these products cannot be sold through legal channels.
- **Collective equipments:** one of the most interesting strategies of interviewed artisan women to overcome the food processing required infrastructures, which imply an important economic cost for small-scale projects, is to create collective equipments. In some regions the creation of community structures such as workrooms or slaughterhouses has been very important. The experience of the interviewed women participating in these collective infrastructures is very positive because infrastructures have allowed the survival of many production activities.

### **Agrarian unions' support is necessary to promote women's small-scale projects**

Agricultural unions have developed important actions in some regions that have supported women's food transformation projects. In that sense, this support has been given mostly in organizations where women are internally active and considered in the structure. Thus, the principal claim to agrarian unions is the necessity of incorporating women and women's voices in these organizations in order to improve the work developed in agricultural unions.

According to the interviewed women agricultural unions should develop the following actions:

- Elaboration of artisan production guides made by the producers, in order to promote small-scale production.
- Technical training in production, management and commercialization of artisan products adapted to small-scale projects.
- Support in affairs related to hygienic and sanitary regulations.
- Mutual support to continue in the project and break self-confidence barriers when starting this sort of projects.
- Promotion of short distribution channels and direct selling, which is directly related with the elaboration of peasant products.



The last point is especially important due to the problem of artisan product distribution for small-scale artisan projects. According to interviewed women, it is necessary to promote and support local, short food channels. There are nevertheless important differences between the analyzed regions. In certain areas of the same region, local products are being promoted through local markets or they are allowed to be sold without certifications. This is the case of Basque country where interviewed women could sell their products in certain local markets but not in others if they don't have the official certifications. In other regions there are great difficulties to sell this type of products through local initiatives. Some agrarian unions are promoting initiatives to favour short food channels, for example the ARCO initiative promoted by COAG union that supports this type of commercialization in order to generate direct and stable relations between producers and consumers with social, economic and environmental principles. Interviewed women think that these relationships favour stable markets and fair prices to peasants and artisans, and quality and safe products for consumers. According to artisan women, most important short food commercialization channels were direct selling in the farm, consumer groups, food fairs and markets, shops and restaurants or boarding houses. It is also interesting to note other initiatives used by some interviewed women that promote commercialization of small-scale artisan products. This is the case of producers' catalogues such as "Female larder", born in 2009 and created by CERES. This initiative pretends to raise consumers' consciousness on the importance of consuming local products and the recognition of rural women's work.

### **Fighting against stereotypes and self-confidence barriers: the necessity of changing the model**

Many interviewed women consider that it is fundamental to change the current agri-food production model. To achieve this it is also important to recognize and dignify the role of rural women. Productive activities linked to women have been ignored and it is necessary to put into value and promote these activities that have been historically linked to local economies in the rural context. For that purpose it is necessary to eliminate inequities between men and women in order to value the model promoted by women that is different from the industrial model established in the society and associated with men. While most men from the rural context joined the agricultural model promoted in the sixties and seventies in Spain in which field was mechanized, monocultures were implanted and the use of pesticides was spread; women continued practising a small-scale model that take profit but also protect the resources in the farm... In the present economic situation of Spain, it is necessary to protect and take advantage of the existing resources developing diversified and

sustainable productions and interviewed women think that this context provides lots of possibilities to them

The current context of crisis offers a lot of options of dignified employment conditions to women. What happens is that we need to consider that we come from a situation in which the type of agriculture we (women) like, in which we feel comfortable and we support is not the one that institutions support (Interviewed subject N° 1, personal interview, 21st March 2012).

Indeed, this research has witnessed that women's association is a useful tool to overcome rural masculinization and women isolation.

## Conclusions

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A pilot study conducted in five Spanish regions has enabled us to observe that food artisan production is still an important economic activity for many rural Spanish women. They are normally linked to small-scale, traditional systems of production and exchange and their food processing is an important sector mostly developed outside of the established agri-food model. It includes diversified productions, small-scale and direct sale oriented in producing quality food with criteria that include proximity, sustainability, creativity and generation of supporting networks. Women participating in the study define artisan food production and processing as a concept linked to feeding and also, as an activity that is culturally and economically important in rural areas. Nevertheless, participant women complain about the difficulties they find to develop their food artisan activity. One of the most important problems is the current hygienic-sanitary normative for producing and selling artisan food products because it has been designed for industrial production and small-scale projects cannot afford the economic costs and bureaucracy linked to these regulations. Also, normative is different in different Spanish regions depending on the importance that regional administrations give to artisan production and selling. Thus, artisan people and craft products are subjected to different requirements and administrative controls depending on the region in which they are located. In some regions there are facilities for the development of this activity while in others women find obstacles for producing and selling their products. Our research has revealed that one of the possible causes in the importance given to artisan work in every region is linked to agrarian unions' role and the relevance given to gender issues inside the organization, but also with the social and economic peasant's networks that have been developed in every region.

Therefore, although the different public administrations involved state their aim to protect and promote food artisan production, they demand from small-scale projects requirements designed and adapted to industrial companies. Thus, it is necessary to change these regulations in order to stimulate an economic and productive rural transformation. In the present economic crisis, the recognition and promotion of food artisan production can have an important impact on rural women and the economic activities traditionally linked to them. Interviewed women warn that is necessary to solve this situation in order to maintain the small-scale artisan productive network and to recognize local artisan activity, an important source of employment in the rural context.

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