

Analysis of Gender Balance in the Agricultural Sector in the Republic of Macedonia

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Glossary of Terms

Acquis

The EU Acquis refers to the entire body of EU laws, rules, resolutions, declarations, regulations, directives and treaties. In other words, adopting the EU acquis means adapting the entire national legislation to the one of the European Union.

Agriculture

Agriculture refers to all forms and activities of food and fiber production through farming and forestry, as well as the preparation and marketing of the resulting products.

Directive (European Union)

is a legislative act of the European Union which requires member states to achieve a particular result without dictating the means of achieving that result

Gender Balance

Gender balance signifies the equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, simultaneously recognising the difference in needs and interests between them, and requiring a redistribution of power and resources.

Positive Discrimination

Positive discrimination refers to decision-making that takes into account gender, race, ethnicity or other factors in order to promote equal opportunities. In other words, through allowing certain advantages to traditionally vulnerable or discriminated groups, positive discrimination seeks to achieve representation balance.

Rural Area

Rural areas are defined geographical units characterized by a relatively small population density and specific socioeconomic conditions, where the primary economic activity is usually agriculture.

Woman Farmer

A female worker that obtains a part of, or the entire income for herself, or for her family, from performing agricultural activities.

1. Introduction

Gender Balance in transition countries, rather poorly developed and with conservative, at times even patriarchal, traditions is a policy issue that needs to be addressed through comprehensive gender mainstreaming approach across all sectors and to be initiated from the top political leadership. Gender mainstreaming¹ is a process of “assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality”.²

Gender balancing in the agricultural sector should be policy priority for any government of a country that has significant number of the people living in rural areas. In Macedonia 40% of the women live in rural areas. They are “unemployed housewives, who take care of the house, the cattle and the fields”³; they “don’t own land, property, and businesses, and lack access to favorable loans”.⁴ The participation of rural women in decision making, agricultural planning and overall production is rarely studied. Currently only two scientific studies exist and reveal the hard conditions for women involved in the agricultural sector. Dr. Jorde Jakimovski and Dr. Naum Matilov from the Institute for Social, Political and Juridical Research found that almost all rural women younger than 30 want to move to the cities, and that 20 percent of older women want to stay in the village, but not work in agriculture. “The unemployment, bad communal infrastructure, and the insecurity of the agricultural markets were identified as the basic problems for

¹ The concept was established as a global strategy for promoting gender equality in the Platform for Action adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing (China) in 1995

² United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), July 1997

³ Women still without fundamental rights in the rural areas of Macedonia. 21. 06. 2003. Radio Free Europe. <http://www.makdenes.org/programs/aktuelnosti/ma/2003/05/3169D7DA-19C2-4679-BACA-01277C23BA5C.ASP>

⁴ International Day of the Rural Women. Ljupka Kamceva. Kanal 5 News. 15. 10. 2007. <http://www.kanal5.com.mk/ShowNews.aspx?ItemID=25548&mid=1500&tabId=1&tabindex=0>

women living in the countryside.”⁵ Also the Union of the Women’s Organizations of R. Macedonia came up with the study entitled “Gender Concept in the Rural Areas of Macedonia,” where the general conclusion was that the rural areas are predominantly patriarchal; while politics and economy are reserved for the men, the role of women is mostly reproductive.⁶

This study wants to fill the existing information gap on the role of women in the agricultural sector and to provide quantitative and qualitative data for formulating sound gender mainstreaming policy in this sector. To do so, the research team of the Centre for Research and Policy Making (hereinafter: CRPM) has reviewed all existing policies (on sectoral level as well as across all sectors- as it is the case with the policy for equal opportunities) and statistical indicators relevant to the area of study. However, the data available was poor to identify any interrelationships between genders and for example access to finance or land; the choice of farming as a profession as well as the decision making role of the women farmers in Macedonia. Therefore CRPM’s team developed a research methodology for generating data that reveal such relationships and allow for further analysis of gender participation in the agricultural sector as well as provide grounds for formulation of practical policy recommendations and advice.

⁵ Few women like the village, even fewer like agriculture. Lj. B. Dnevnik. 02. 10. 2002.
<http://star.dnevnik.com.mk/default.aspx?pbroj=1965&stID=8238&pdate=20021002>

⁶ The patriarchal concept of family still exists in Macedonia. A1 News. 14.06.2004.
<http://www.a1.com.mk/vesti/default.aspx?VestID=33420>

1.1. The Policy Context

Gender equality in Macedonia is guaranteed in the Constitution and incorporated in subsequent laws. Article 50, paragraph 1 of the Constitution provides for equal protection of all citizens stipulating that every citizen may invoke protection of freedoms and rights before the regular courts through procedure based on the principles of priority and urgency. Furthermore, in accordance with Article 54, paragraph 4 of the Constitution, the restriction of freedoms and rights cannot discriminate on any grounds, including gender for which the Constitutional Court provides protection.

The gender equality legislation has been improved in the process of approximation of Macedonian legislation to the EU *acquis*. Greatest progress has been achieved in the area of labor relations where Macedonia incorporated directives addressing issues of equal pay and equal treatment of women and men at work⁷. However the Family Law and the Criminal Law have also been approximated. In addition articles that promote positive discrimination of women were inserted in the Law on Elections of Members of Parliament⁸ and the Law on Local Elections. Another affirmative action was the adoption of the Law on Equal Opportunities that for the first time regulates direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and, what is more, sexual harassment.

The Law on Equal Opportunities For Men and Women⁹ was enacted in May 2006. Although agriculture and rural areas are not explicitly mentioned in the legal text, all ministries and government agencies bear equal responsibility to implement all aspects of the law in their domain. The law aims at eliminating gender inequality in all spheres of society, the private, as well as the public sector, thus agriculture and rural development are most certainly areas where the principle of non-discrimination is the standard.

⁷ Law on Labor relations, *Official Gazette*, No.62, July 28, 2005

⁸ In the Macedonian Parliament there are currently 36 female MPs, www.ipu.org/parline/reports/2313_E.htm

⁹ Official Gazette No. 66/06, p. 1-13

Gender is one of the cross cutting themes that the Macedonian government pursues at national level by promoting equal opportunities focal points in every Ministry and in the administration of the local self-government units. This is one of the priority activities outlined with the National Plan for Gender Equality (NPGE)¹⁰ that enforces the commitments Macedonia undertook with the signing of the Beijing Platform and Action Plan. In addition, one of the strategic goals of the NPGE is to focus future legislative activities on improving the social status and living conditions of women in rural areas. This should be achieved, according to the document, through analysis of the prevailing conditions in the rural areas concerning women's rights and opportunities, dissemination of relevant information among women in rural areas, The same document explicitly admits to the lack of research regarding access to health care for women in the rural areas, and mentions the problem of insufficient access to education by the women in rural areas. Most relevant to this research is the IV strategic goal of the NPGE which specifically addresses the need to increase employment opportunities for rural women. The basic activities that the NPGE envisages to achieve this goal is improved education and training for women (including project management trainings), encouraging rural women to initiate projects and stimulate entrepreneurship among them, regulate the legal status of women farmers and others. As measurable indicators the NPGE mentions significant increase in projects initiated and completed by women, increased number of registered women farmers, increased participation in education and training activities, and a rise in the number of legal acts designed to improve the status of rural women. However one must note that with the reform of the policy making process at the level of Government and with the introduction of regulative impact assessment as compulsory phase of every process for development of new policies the impact of policies on gender equality is not specifically addressed.

International standards on gender equality and nondiscrimination are, however, integrated in the national legislation as Republic of Macedonia has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women -

¹⁰ Government of Republic of Macedonia, National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2007-2012 (Macedonian only version), available at: <http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/NPARR-finalen%20dokument.pdf>

CEDAW.¹¹ Additionally, the Republic of Macedonia has ratified the International Pact on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights¹² and 68 conventions of the International Labor Organization.¹³

As the review of policies in Macedonia shows, both the Constitution and the national laws guarantee complete equality between men and women. The fact that the law does not make any distinction between the legal capacity of men and women means that there are no legal limitations for women to own property, initiate court proceedings, obtain credits, etc. But, despite this, women are often excluded from economic, social and political events. The European Commission report on Macedonia's progress toward EU membership praises the recent achievements whereby significant efforts have been made to implement the NPGE in the municipalities, the record number of women members of parliament (38 out of 120), and the advancements in preventing violence against women¹⁴. On the other hand, the same report mentions the lack of progress in the sphere of social inclusion, and the insufficient progress regarding equal opportunities of employment for vulnerable groups, including rural women. The reasons specified refer to the lack of capacity of the municipalities that have entered the second phase of decentralization to implement gender sensitive policies.¹⁵ The Global Gender Gap Report in 2007¹⁶ for example ranks Macedonia 35 out of 128 countries in the world, noting an overall declining trend, and a growing gap in political representation. This observation is due to the fact that the changes of the law on political parties does not represent a change in social perception nor does it tip the political power in favor of women, at least not in the short term. A wider range of socio-political measures is necessary to effectuate more permanent and profound changes.

¹¹ The Republic of Macedonia adopted by means of succession the February 17, 1994 Convention

¹² Adopted by succession on January 18, 1994

¹³ The Republic of Macedonia has been a member of ILO since 1993. The following ILO conventions have been ratified by the Republic of Macedonia: 2, 3, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32, 45, 48, 53, 56, 69, 73, 74, 80, 81, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 97, 98, 100, 102, 103, 105, 106, 111, 113, 114, 116, 119, 121, 122, 126, 129, 131, 132, 135, 136, 138, 139, 140, 142, 143, 148, 155, 156, 158, 159, 161, 162, and 182.

¹⁴ European Commission, FYROM Progress Report 2008, P.18

¹⁵ Ibid. p.52

¹⁶ World Economic Forum, 2007 Global Gender Gap Report

1.2. The Sector Context

The Agricultural Policy to-date has not been made gender sensitive. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia has however contributed to achieving gender equality in this sector through several incentives. Minister Spasenovski stated in 2007 that the Government would support women's economic activities, especially through the IPARD program, whose criteria are favorable toward women in the application process for agricultural investment funds.¹⁷ The registration costs for farmers was reduced in early 2008, and registered women-farmers are eligible for retiring at the age of 62, unlike men (64), if they had paid the necessary participation for the minimum of 15 years.¹⁸ New tractors, obtained with Japanese aid, were sold at extremely favorable costs by the Government, with special privileges for female (6 were awarded tractors out of a total of 65) and young farmers who applied.¹⁹ The minister for Agriculture stated that women are also privileged when applying for subventions in the agricultural sector, as well as for rural development.²⁰ This has not been confirmed by the participants in the focus groups, nor in the written legal texts that determine the manner of distribution of subsidies.

There are several active projects that are intended to raise awareness and capacity for participation of women in the agricultural sector. In 2003, a regional women's lobby group in Bitola and Resen started the project "Let's walk together towards the target" which was intended to help create a more contemporary profile of the woman in rural areas.²¹ Women's agricultural organizations are also formed.²² In 2005, "Farmer", an

¹⁷ A change in the position of rural women is necessary. Economic Chamber of Macedonia website. 15. 10. 2007. <http://www.mchamber.org.mk/default.asp?tId=41&lan=mk&NewsId=1572&edit=0>

¹⁸ The Government reduced the registration fees for the farmers. Valentina Angelovska. Dnevnik. 14. 02. 2008. <http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/?itemID=2AAE81C06D10F947969646852BEFAC4D&arc=1>

¹⁹ The farmers interested in the distribution of tractors. Igor Manasievski. A1 News. 04. 04. 2008. <http://a1.com.mk/vesti/default.aspx?VestID=91431>

²⁰ The deadline for agricultural subventions extended for one month. 20. 05. 2008. <http://www.kirilica.com.mk/vest.asp?id=7247>

²¹ Women are still without fundamental rights in the rural areas of Macedonia. 21. 06. 2003. Radio Free Europe. <http://www.makdenes.org/programs/aktuelnosti/ma/2003/05/3169D7DA-19C2-4679-BACA-01277C23BA5C.ASP>

organization of stockbreeders from Prilep, executed the project “The woman-farmer – a controller of her own production,” aimed at assessing the involvement of the women in agricultural organizations and further training for women of three Macedonian municipalities.²³ In March 2008, a round table discussion took place on the “Importance of Gender Perspective in the Agricultural Sector”, with the participation of the SFARM project representatives. At the meeting institutional and legislative shortcomings were identified that impede progress on promoting gender balance in the sector. In the period April-June 2008, there were consultations about decentralization, citizen participation, and agricultural credits in rural areas of the municipalities of Kocani and Gostivar, with a special accent on gender-sensitive democratization.²⁴ Later that year, the regional conference “Development of the woman in the rural areas,” which was supported by the Central European Institute and with participation of the Ministries for Labor and Social Policy and Agriculture, took place in Skopje and Jegunovce. The aim was lobbying for financial support from the Central European Institute for women who work in agriculture.²⁵ On 15 October 2008, on the occasion of the World Rural Women Day, the FFRM with a support from SFARM organized celebratory events in Lazhani, Prilep. More than 250 women from all over the country representing several nationalities and religious denominations participated in the event. As a part of this event, a forum was organized entitled: the Role and Importance of Rural Women, and the conclusions were sent to all relevant national institutions.

These activities will be especially beneficial as the official number of women employed in the agricultural sector is very low. The Table 1 below provides an interesting argument for increase of employment in this sector by women.

²² The women-farmers in Macedonia. P. R. Nova Makedonija. 29. 10. 2005.
<http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/star/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=0&tabid=1&EditionID=493&ArticleID=19755>

²³ A project for controlling the production. Nova Makedonija. 20. 10. 2005.
<http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/star/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=3&tabid=1&EditionID=485&ArticleID=19484>

²⁴ Consultations about decentralization, citizen participation, and agricultural credits in rural areas of the municipalities of Kocani and Gostivar. 21.05.2008.
http://www.esem.org.mk/Root/mak/vest_dolga_novo_mak.asp?VestiID=41

²⁵ A regional conference with theme “Development of the woman in the rural areas” finished by visiting the municipality Jegunovce. KISS TV News. 14. 09. 2008.
<http://www.kiss.com.mk/mak/novosti1.asp?id=4647>

Table 1: Employment of women in the agriculture sector

Employed in agriculture, hunting and related services sector	Total	Women	% of women
2004	12455	3029	24.3
2005	9566	2239	23.4
2006	9347	2438	26.1

Source: Statistical yearbook 2007, State Statistical Office of R. Macedonia

The following table (Table 2) however shows the gender structure of households that have individual farming business (a family type) as well as that of companies performing agricultural business activity. The first category includes those that do not have agriculture as their primary profession, but are performing agricultural activities. Therefore the number of those involved in this sector differs from the numbers presented in the previous table.

Table 2: Gender structure of households and companies that perform agricultural activities

	Total	< 25			25-34			35-44			45-54			55-64			> 65		
		Total	women	%	Total	women	%	Total	women	%	Total	Wom en	%	Total	wome n	%	Total	women	%
MK	476613	59902	24210	40.4	72883	30287	41.5	93018	41712	44.8	102492	44984	43.9	78745	34636	44	69573	28002	40.2
Indiv idual	471069	59801	24176	40.4	72341	30147	41.7	91352	41209	45.1	100160	44329	44.3	77917	34503	44.3	69498	27962	40.2
Busi ness	5544	101	34	33.7	542	140	25.8	1666	503	30.2	2332	655	28.1	828	133	16.1	75	40	53.3

Source: Agricultural Census 2007, State Statistical Office of R. Macedonia

The participation of women in the individual/family type of agricultural businesses is balanced with that of men. However the participation of women in companies that perform agricultural activities is lower compared to that of men. The biggest participating age groups are women between 35 - 44 and 45 - 54 years of age. These groups together comprise 42.5% of the total women's labor force in the agricultural sector or 18% of the total labor force in the sector (men and women).

Table 3: Structure and Employment in the Agricultural Sector

	Total	Total no. women	% of women
MK	476613	203831	42.8
Individual	471069	202326	42.9
Companies	5544	1505	27.1

Source: Agricultural census 2007, State Statistical Office of R. Macedonia

The scope and level of participation of women in all activities, however, cannot be observed from this statistical data. Therefore a time-use survey in the sector is highly recommended in order to depict the gender differences in performance of various agricultural activities as well as the time allocation to each of them by gender.

The following table (Table 4) on the other hand shows that companies which perform agricultural activities engage more women as seasonal workers than men. One of the reasons might be that women are more available than men as rural women are usually housewives without formal employment.

Table 4: Seasonal Workers in R. Macedonia by gender

	Total	Male	Female	% females
MK	109606	67686	41920	38
Individual	103187	65337	37850	36.7
Business	6419	2349	4070	63.4

Source: Agricultural census 2007, State Statistical Office of R. Macedonia

An additional factor that explains the low formal employment of women in the companies that perform agricultural activities is education. Table 5 shows that workers that have agricultural specialization and are employed in such companies are mainly male. The number of women that have agricultural specialization and are employed in companies performing agricultural activities has been constantly decreasing in the period 2003-2006. On the other hand though the number of employed male workers is also decreasing, their participation is however increasing when compared to the female workers with specialist agricultural education. Having in mind that people with higher education stand higher on the career ladder and participate in the decision making process more actively leads us to the conclusion that women in the companies that perform agricultural activities are less involved in the decision making process.

Table 5 Employment of men and women with agricultural specialization in farming companies

	Total	Male	Male %	Female	Female %
2003	41571	25310	60.9	16261	39.1
2004	13630	13630	70.8	3983	29.2
2005	11778	8588	72.9	3190	27.1
2006	7319	7319	77.9	1613	22

Source: Statistical yearbook 2003- 2006, State Statistical Office of R. Macedonia

The school level data on the other hand (see Table 6) show that significant number of women, around 40%, is enrolled in agricultural education programs. Also there are no signs of a significant decreasing trend in female enrollment in such programs. So the participation of women with specialized agricultural education in the companies that perform agricultural activities cannot be explained only through the education variable, but further research should be performed as to depict the reasons why women are not attractive for steady jobs in this sector, but are almost exclusively recruited as seasonal workers.

Table 6: Number of enrolled students at the Faculty of Agriculture

	Total	Female students	% of female students
2003/2004	618	226	36.6
2004/2005	675	226	33.5
2005/2006	655	262	40

Source: Statistical yearbook 2003-2006, State Statistical Office of R. Macedonia

2. Research Problem, Questions, Objectives and Methodology

At the moment a comprehensive study of the gender participation in the agricultural sector in Macedonia does not exist. To perform such an analysis one should primarily gather data on the roles of men and women in the sector, the decision-making power that both sexes have in this sector as well as their needs, strengths, threats and opportunities.

When CRPM embarked on the task to produce the first gender participation analysis in the agricultural sector a working hypothesis was set – women participate less than men in all activities performed in the agricultural sector. Facing a shortage of secondary source data pertinent to this research, the CRPM team decided to gather primary data following a list of research questions included in the task's terms of reference.

2.1. Research Objectives

The research objectives of this study are the following:

- To determine the main agricultural activities of males and females; from production of agricultural products, to processing, sale, packaging, storing and etc.;
- To determine male and female roles in the agricultural organizations and other forms of organized work, and advocacy;
- To explore access of men and women to education, training opportunities, and consulting services;
- To explore access of both sexes to agricultural land, agricultural loans and credits and other assets necessary for doing the agricultural business;
- To determine limits and barriers with which both men and women are facing when utilizing the educational and consultative opportunities;
- To determine if their status in the agricultural sector is responsive to their needs and allows for optimal utilization of all human capacities they have.

2.4. Research Methodology

Primary data for this research was gathered through focus groups. Eight focus groups were conducted in four different cities where the agricultural sector represents a significant share in the local economy. All four cities belong to four different regions where the agriculture is one of the top priority sectors. The places that were chosen for the focus groups are one of the major cities in their region. The aim of this approach was to gather farmers from the city surroundings and from different parts of the region for the purpose of making direct inquiries relevant for the research. In the table below, the 4 regions and cities where the focus groups have been conducted are presented:

Table 7: Focus groups location

Region	City where the focus groups were conducted
Poloshki region	Gostivar
Pelagoniski region	Bitola
Eastern region	Kochani
Southeastern region	Strumica

A representative sample was prepared for selection of the participants in the focus groups. The selection of the participants was a process directly conducted on the ground by the Regional Centers of the Federation of Farmers. The representative sample was based on the official statistics regarding the share of each of the subsectors in the agriculture sector seen from national and regional perspective. However, after careful analysis and close consultation with the regional centers of the Federation of Farmers, CRPM uncovered a discrepancy between the official statistics and the situation on the ground. Namely, the official statistics fail to make a quantitative distinction between the various crop-growers or animal breeders, and are therefore misleading. For example, according to the statistical data in the Southeast region there are a large number of horse breeders, while in fact these are merely owners of one or two horses who use them for farm work and not stable-owners who breed many equines. In order to compensate for this ambiguity in the official statistics, we allowed for the regional centers of the Federation of Farmers to use their information about the representation of certain farmers and stockbreeders in their regions, to determine the most suitable participants in the focus groups.

What is important to mention is that in each region, 2 focus groups, one male and one female, were organized. Due to the sensitivity of the issue, the CRPM team decided to organize 2 separate focus groups dividing the participants according to gender. This was the only way to collect relevant information, by providing an appropriate environment where the participants of the focus groups will feel comfortable in expressing their views. Having in mind, that some of the reasons for the women's status in society, inter alia in

the agricultural sector, could be generated by deeply rooted stereotypes and traditions, separate focus groups for women and men was the most suitable approach to this topic.

Furthermore, the CRPM team decided the proportion of women vs. men to be 60:40, since the focus of the research is placed on women's participation and status in the agricultural sector. However, the male perception of the problem is of significant importance, since it could be a generator of some of the problems. Therefore, sufficient percent of men out of the total number of participants of the focus groups was questioned. From methodological point of view several issues were of great relevance:

- Number of participants in the focus groups according gender
- Age of the participants
- Participants status in the agriculture sector (whether are registered farmers or not)
- Educational background of the participants
- Marital status of the participants

The CRPM team has taken into consideration all of this indicators during the research. The data relevant to the demographic and social features of the focus group participants are presented in Annex 1. In the focus groups a standardized questionnaire was used that is presented in Annex 2.

In addition to gathering information about the situation on the ground through the organization of focus-groups, the report relies on primary sources such as statistical data, interviews with relevant policy-makers and stakeholders, as well as media reports, national and international documents. In addition, secondary sources such as situation analyses and analytical reports were also used.

2.5. Research Limitations

A research of this kind inevitably faces a number of limitations that need to be taken into consideration when drawing relevant conclusions and drafting

recommendations. Apart from the obvious time limits and the delicate subject matter, there are issues that arise from the methodological choices applied to the research. The use of focus groups, for example, poses a number of problems: choice of participants (i.e. representativeness of the sample), choice of regions, reliability of information, factual knowledge of the participants regarding broader policy implications and others. We sought to minimize the negative aspects of this method through the application of available statistical data when making the choice of regions and participants. Furthermore, delegating the task of choosing the actual individual participants in the focus groups to the regional offices of the FFRM who are most familiar with the situation on the ground significantly decreased the danger of information bias or misrepresentation.

Dividing the country according to regions was also a task that required special attention. The choice of city centers for the focus groups roughly corresponds with the way the country is divided for the purpose of gathering statistical data by the state statistical office, but the overlap is not complete. Nevertheless, this discrepancy is compensated for by grouping relevant data from the regional centers of SFARM and allowing for a broad choice of participants in the focus groups.

The research process included number of interviews with all relevant stakeholders. Unfortunately the timid culture of our respondents resulted with their statements and views on the sector's state of affairs not to be reported in this study, but is kept in confidentiality by the research team.

3. Research findings

3.1. Registered Farming as a gender issue

Less than half of the female participants responded they have been farmers for more than 15 years. Most of them have started farming during the past 9-5 years, while several have been introduced to it when they got married into a farming family. On the other hand, the vast majority of the male participants said that they had been farmers most of their lives.

While one third of the male participants reported to be registered as farmers, only 7 women (5 of which from Bitola) were registered, while several were considering the possibility to register. Interestingly, when talking about registering, they considered the family as a whole and if their husband is registered, some say that they are registered too. The male-dominance in the farming sector was mostly evident within the group from Gostivar, consisting of ethnic Albanian women. None of them was registered (although the husbands of two of the women were), and they were not aware that they could also register as farmers. As one of them said:

“I’m not registered as a farmer, and as far as I know, in our community only men can register”

Most of the women agreed that it is quite difficult to register as farmers, for several reasons, some of which refer to both sexes and some to women only:

- Some do not know how to register (i.e. do not know where they belong, what needs they have etc.)
- There are too many required documents that need to be prepared
- The expenses are high. One participant from Strumica concluded that the exact registration sum is not clearly specified, different prices are mentioned and at the

end, the final sum turns out to be 5 times higher (about 5-6000 MKD for the procedure only)

- Most have agreed that the traditional norms related to the role of men and women in the home also restrict women to individually register as farmers since it is usually the husband that does that. A woman from Probistip said: "There are cases when the man is employed while the woman is unemployed, but the husband won't let her register as individual farmer"

Only one woman from Kocani had a registered company for agricultural activity under her name.

Out of the women who were not registered, two mentioned that this was not necessary for them since the farming work was their additional activity (both they and their husbands have another job as well), while others appeared not to be interested, considering that it would not be helpful in their work. The un-registered male farmers listed several reasons for this, among which: disagreement with the governmental policies towards the farmers and too high expenses coming from the registration.

Out of the small number of women who are registered as farmers, the majority believes they have made the right decision, since this status carries certain advantages, such as: the possibility to receive subventions from the state, purchase state-owned land, obtain a bank loan, employ workers in their business, receive mechanization etc. Although the expenses for registering and functioning as a registered farmer are rather high, most believe that they are worth paying.

In contrast, most of the registered men said that they had not seen particular benefits from registration. Two listed some benefits: the pension funds (even though when one struggles each day to make ends meet, one is not quite thinking about the distant future), that there is exempt from VAT for some repro materials, and the application for bank-loans is easier.

3.2. Women as farmers

Both men and women agreed that there are many women working as farmers, although most of them may not be registered. Specifically, if a woman lives in a farming family, she automatically becomes a farmer and needs to help in the family's business.

However, the fact that the number of registered women farmers is small is perceived as such for several reasons:

- The ownership of assets was seen as the main reason for this situation. Specifically, 90-95% of the households have the assets registered under the male family members and very few women have capital registered on their name.
- Women are not informed about the possibility to register and the necessary procedures. Women from Strumica and Gostivar were especially vocal on this issue and stated that no one has explained to them what they should do in order to register, the criteria, institutions responsible, etc.
- The patriarchal norms, which are still very dominant in Macedonian families (especially in the rural communities), which cause the husband to be reluctant to transfer the decision-making power to this wife (e.g. run the family business, designate her as co-owner of the family assets, a bank-loan co-signer etc.) Hence, the husband/father is typically the owner of the farming business, while the wife is an 'employee'. This opinion was partially contradicted by one participant from Delcevo who stated that these norms are not as dominant in their community and mentioned that there are many cases of women owning part of the family land, especially if the husband is employed and the wife is not officially employed

Male farmers listed also the following factors that influence the situation:

- the expenses (if the husband is registered, there is no need for additional expenses for the wife);
- their obligations at home (they need to take care of the household – clean, cook, take care of the children);

Most farmers from Bitola and one from Strumica said that the institutions are not functioning and that the conditions in the country are such , that even for men it is hard, let alone women. But it was pointed out that, to some extent the situation is changing.

- “I know one woman in Kocani who owns a big agricultural company and has many employees.”
- “Nowadays many women study at the Faculty of Agriculture, which was an almost exclusively male dominated academic discipline ”

The female participants expressed diverse opinions regarding the issue whether farming is a profession for a woman. Most of them did not appear to have thought about the issue since the life circumstances (e.g. living in a village, marrying into a farming family) and necessities (e.g. losing their job, needing to make additional income) have made them become farmers. Several concluded that farming has been a good source of income for them and that they are grateful they have the possibility to do this job.

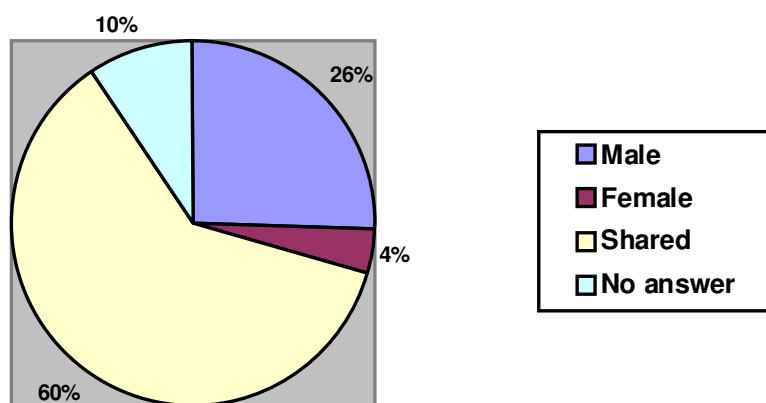
However, the opinion that most shared is that women farmers are still being derogated by the wider community. Hence, many women do not even consider being farmers because, as they said:

- “They do not want to do the difficult things.”
- “They would rather go and work in a textile factory for miserable 6-7000 MKD rather than be farmers.”
- “Younger women say they do not want to be farmers, but instead finish university and do some other profession.”
- “My peers (younger people) see it as humiliation.”

Male participants generally agreed that agriculture is a profession for women and men alike, but that there are some limitations for women, such as hard labor, or the harsh conditions. Some have even pointed out the fact that the vast majority of seasonal workers hired to help in the fields are female.

This finding is in accordance with the findings of another independent study entitled “Gender concept in rural environments in the Republic of Macedonia”,²⁶ where respondents predominantly perceived agricultural activities as equally shared between men and women. Out of one thousand respondents, 26% stated that agriculture is mainly a profession for men, 60% said that it is a profession for both men and women, and 4% said it is reserved for women only.

Chart 1: Is agriculture a typically male, female or a shared profession?



Source: Union of Women’s Organizations of the Republic of Macedonia

3.3. Gender division of farming activities

In general, participants agreed that nowadays women can participate in all aspects of the farming business. Women from Bitola were especially supportive of this opinion and concluded that 90% of the activities are being performed jointly by men and women, and women are now even performing the traditionally male activities.

²⁶ Dimitrijevska Vesna and Tatjana Stojanovska, Union of Women’s Organizations of the Republic of Macedonia. Skopje – 2003, page 19

A similar opinion was held by men, who concluded that there is some division by gender depending on the sector, but many activities are also performed jointly. Two participants from Kocani agreed that the mechanical work is male, while the manual is female, but it was disputed by many others.

However, in most of the sectors the activities are naturally being divided between men and women, a division which comes spontaneously, generally due to the physical differences. Particularly, it is expected from the male family members to take over the more difficult activities, especially the ones requiring heavy lifting, working with heavy machinery, transport, and selling in markets for big-scale commerce. Women are mostly involved in: picking the fruits/vegetables/crop, packing, selling them on the green markets (except for the Albanian women), feeding and milking the animals, cleaning. The bulk of the women agreed that the decisions on the distribution/selling of the products are made by men.

3.4. Membership in farmers' organizations/associations

None of the women from the group from Gostivar (including other women farmers they know) is a member of any farmers' association; only two women from Strumica said they are members of organizations, while the majority of the participants from Bitola and Kocani are members. 8 women from Kocani (and the region) and 3 from Bitola said they are members of the Federation of Farmers (although their type of membership is different since the Federation offers different types of services). Several women (mostly from the Kocani region) are also members of associations of female farmers, while others are affiliated into different sector-specific associations (e.g. association for organic production, organization of vine producers, association of young farmers etc).

However, women associated within farmers' associations typically hold the position of members (with the exception of organizations of female farmers where they hold the top positions), while the higher (decision-making) positions are held by men. On the other hand, more than half of the male focus group participants were members of farming associations, and 9 held higher positions, such as presidents, vice-presidents, or members of management boards.

In general, both men and women agreed that women are insufficiently represented within these organizations, both in terms of number and decision-making power. For example, in the Organization of Vine Producers of Strumica, out of 130 members, only 4 are women. The general opinion was that women are represented with 5-10% within these organizations, with the exception of Bitola and Delcevo where about 30% of the members are women. The low representation of women within these organizations prevents them from having more influence in the decision-making process, and while they might be consulted, they do not have influence on the final decisions.

Both men and women agreed that this situation is mainly due to the traditional norms, i.e. the opinion that men of the family should be members of such organizations is still dominant, causing many women not to even consider joining, since a member of their family is already associated. In addition, since women are much more occupied with household activities, they often do not have time to join associations and participate at meetings. Finally, many women farmers are not informed about the possibilities of joining these organizations and do not see their benefit in doing so. Many male participants added that they believe that women don't want to be members, an opinion which was not shared by the female participants.

3.5. Access to trainings and consultative services

About half of the participants (both male and female) said they have **participated in trainings**, mostly organized by the Federation of Farmers and their respective organizations. However, while all participating women from Bitola reported to have been involved in trainings, none of the women from Gostivar said to have participated although there is an interest for this among some of them.

“I would very much like to participate in trainings for farmers, but here women are not being informed about this. Even if we show interest, they would respond that the training is not made for us and only men can participate.”

“My husband participates in the work of the regional center of the Federation and goes to trainings, but does not allow me to participate.”

The Macedonian women farmers have participated in different trainings: leadership, organic production, market research and presentation, education on specific topics from the Faculty of Agriculture etc. Everyone, with the exception of women from Strumica, said that the participation of women at these trainings has been rather low (although some trainings offered advantage for women), and detected the main reasons for this in the:

- lack of organized transportation
- too many domestic responsibilities
- lack of information on the trainings
- the traditional opinion that men should participate in those trainings, since they are not for women. The male participants supported this opinion by claiming that it is tradition for the man to have bigger responsibilities for knowledge upgrade.

Moreover, women from Strumica added that even if the husband participates, he would be unwilling to share the information with the wife. Several women have heard about the possibilities for trainings for the first time during the focus-group discussions.

They have never been informed that there was such a possibility, despite being members of farmers' association(s).

Regarding the possibilities for receiving **consulting services**, about half of the women said that they mainly receive them through the Federation of Farmers, while the majority of men reported not to have used any official consulting service. Apart from the FFRM, as a source of information, some also mentioned the National Extension Agency and the Open Society Institute, local agronomists and veterinarians, local agro-pharmacy, or through exchange of experiences among themselves in their organizations.

In general, they agreed that both men and women have the same access to consulting services and were not very familiar with the number of women benefiting from these opportunities. While some considered that many women use them, others judged that they are not sufficiently utilized by women. Moreover, two women from the town of Pehcevo who worked as chicken breeders said they try to get information on their own, since even the vets from their town are not much acquainted with some of the issues they face. In addition, two men said that they gain new information from their wives.

3.6. Access to land and bank loans

The access to public farmland was assessed as problematic by both men and women. Only one woman from the area of Kocani has reported to own a **farmland** registered on her name and two men from Bitola have bought public land. Others were quite disappointed regarding the possibilities for receiving farm land from the state for different reasons. Although the Ministry of Agriculture gives priority to women farmers, the main problem are the assets which are registered under the husband/father. Also, the tradition is that the men of the family should register as farmers, while the women remain unregistered, a fact that also prevents them from applying for land. Finally, many reasons

which are not gender-specific were mentioned, such as: nepotism, political affiliation, lack of information, unclear criteria for distribution of the land etc.

However, a positive experience was mentioned in Sveti Nikole, where out of 85 registered women farmers, 70 had acquired about 2000 hectares of public land.

Very few women and very few families in general, reported to have received a **bank loan**. One woman has managed to do this after her husband authorized her, which has made possible for both of them to raise a loan independently from two separate banks. Very few women were acquainted with the possibility for the husband to authorize the wife to be the 'bank-loan applicant' and believed that since they do not own the assets and are not registered as farmers, it would not be possible for them to apply for a loan. On the other hand, most of the male farmers have tried to obtain a loan and seven (five of whom from Bitola) have managed to do this.

Out of the ones that have applied, the majority were successful in securing a loan, although the prevalent opinion was that this remains particularly difficult to achieve. The main problems that farmers face relate to the: high interest rates, absence of a proof for owning the land, difficulties in settling the mortgage (especially having in mind the reluctance of banks to accept mortgage on a village house), difficulty in finding credit guarantors, etc. It was estimated that it is especially difficult to raise a loan higher than 1000 EUR since it is required for the farmer to have worked for several years with profit.

4. SWOT analysis

Strengths	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relatively large number of women working in agriculture - Agriculture is the main economic sector of the majority of regions in the country - Large number of women consider agriculture to be a profitable business - Existence of associations of female farmers - In certain regions, the position of women farmers has improved compared to other regions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No stimulations with subventions for women farmers - Large migration from villages to cities - Dominance of traditional inheritance laws (i.e. the male family members inherit the assets) - Small number of registered women farmers - Patriarchal families – the husband has the final word when it comes to decision-making, gaining knowledge etc. - The weak infrastructural connection of many villages with the cities makes women dependent in terms of transportation - Too many household responsibilities are being left to be performed by women - Insufficient inclusion of women in the farmers' associations and weak decision-making power - Lack of information regarding the procedures for registering as farmers - Politicization and lack of information regarding the possibilities for renting farmland - Inefficiency of the local units of the Ministry of Agriculture²⁷

²⁷ Many of the problems faced when applying for the farm land are generated at the level of local units of the Ministry of Agriculture. Most of the men agreed that they are conducting the administrative work because they do not want their spouses to face the inefficiency of the relevant institutions.

Opportunities	Threats
<p>Preference is given to female farmers when applying for EU programs(IPA-5 component rural development)</p> <p>Trainings provided by foreign donors are gender balanced</p> <p>Agricultural bank loans obtained by women (as plenipotentiary, since the male members of the family are owners of the land)</p> <p>Significant percentage of women with higher agricultural education²⁸</p> <p>Sophisticated agricultural technology could enable more women to conduct many activities which were traditionally reserved for men</p>	<p>Non existence of institutional mechanisms for information of farmers (especially the female farmers)</p> <p>Dying out of villages</p> <p>Improvement of infrastructure is long term process²⁹</p> <p>Breaking deeply rooted stereotypes in the traditional rural areas is long term process</p>

²⁸ These women are great potential which could be integrated in higher decision making levels in the agricultural sector

²⁹ Many men think that their spouses have too many obligations at home, which is the reason why they are conducting all bureaucratic procedures related to their agricultural work. Most of the women do not drive, and in many cases there is a serious lack of public transportation connecting the various villages and the cities. Furthermore, the infrastructure is deteriorated, thus the time needed for one to get to the city is far longer than it could have been if better road infrastructure existed.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

The discussions have confirmed the assumption that the status of women farmers in Macedonia is unfavorable. While women are very much involved in the farming activities of their families, their contribution is often undervalued, they are not considered as equal members of the farming community, hence not invited at trainings as often as men and insufficiently involved in the decision-making bodies. So the starting hypothesis of this research was not confirmed, as women participate highly in the agricultural sector, the formal recognition of this participation however lacks.

Agriculture related legislation invariably omits to explicitly mention the necessity of gender balance and the need to introduce measures that favor equal access for women in the various agricultural activities and programs. On the other hand, the constitution explicitly requires all legislation to abide by the principles of non-discrimination and therefore all discriminatory practices are a priori forbidden. Nevertheless, legal clarity and clauses specifically addressing gender balance should be included in all relevant laws and regulations.

The tradition, especially the inheritance practices, and the mentality were detected as the main reasons for this. This, in conjunction with the lack of information being offered to women, causes them to have none or restricted means to individually manage a farming business. In addition, many of the participants have concluded that the interest among the younger generations for farming is very low, and while women over 40 years old do not mind turning to farming (especially if they have no other sources of income), younger people would rather do some other less paid jobs than be farmers.

The CRPM team has identified several recommendations to address the issues that women face in the agricultural sector. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it offers a starting point for decision-makers and relevant stakeholders who have an interest in ending the existing gender inequality in the agricultural sector.

- Studying further the participation of both sexes in the agricultural sector, especially the time spent on each activity (time-use analysis)
- Introducing gender aware policy making methodology at national and local level
- Introducing new and more efficient methods of disseminating information concerning the possibilities for developing farming activity
- Reducing taxes and expenses for registered farmers, to stimulate women's participation
- Organizing forums with women farmers in different municipalities where they could discuss their problems, liaise, and share information.
- Overcoming the traditional norms according to which the male family members are owners of the household assets. While this issue was pointed out by the majority of women, the male farmers (especially those from Strumica) did not see property ownership as a problem; because everything belongs to the family; the husband does not want to trouble his wife with bureaucratic procedures.
- Developing additional measures (loans, trainings etc.) for encouraging women's participation in agriculture.
- Educational measures for changing the perception of the community regarding women farmers
- Developing strategies for bringing young people back to the village and improving the rural infrastructure

In general female participants were optimistic that the situation will change for the better, but emphasized that the Government and particularly the Ministry of Agriculture should play an active role in this, and men should have more understanding of the problems of women farmers. On the other hand, men concluded that since the global

situation for everybody is hard, it is especially hard for women. Optimism was not highly shared among them and less than half expressed hopes for a better future.

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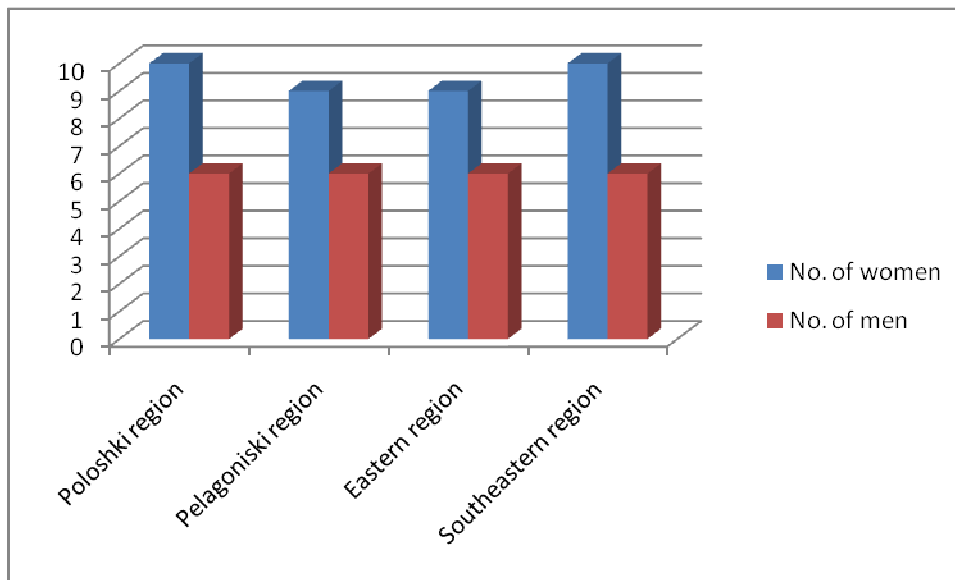
Annex 1: The Research sample

The following data provides information about the demographic and social features of the focus group participants:

- a) The total number of participants in the focus groups is 62, out of whom 38 women and 24 men.

Region	City	No. of women	No. of men	Total
Poloshki	Gostivar	10	6	16
Pelagoniski	Bitola	9	6	15
Eastern	Kochani	9	6	15
Southeastern	Strumica	10	6	16
Total		38	24	62

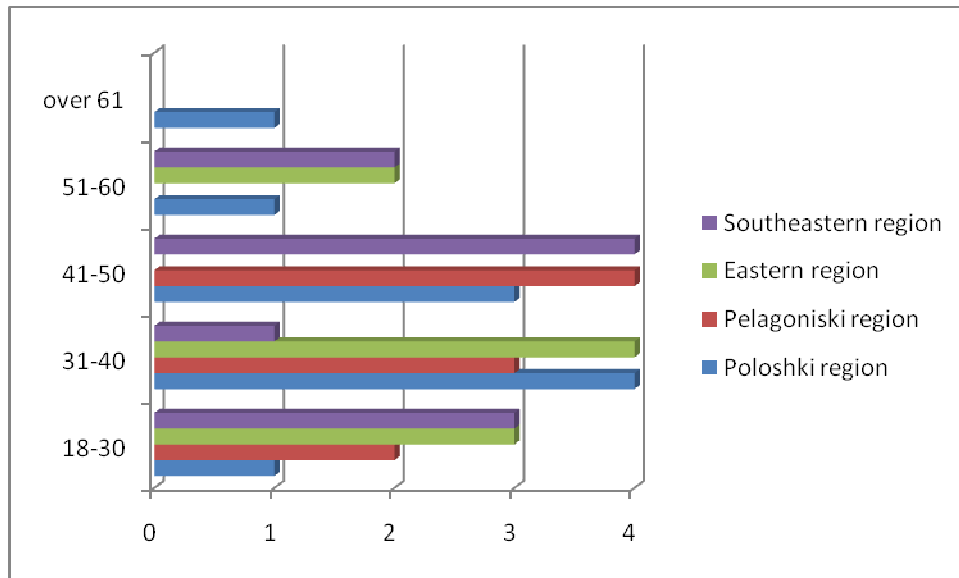
Graphic 1. Number of female and male participants in the focus groups



b) The research aimed to cover all age groups. The following table presents the participants of the focus groups according their age.

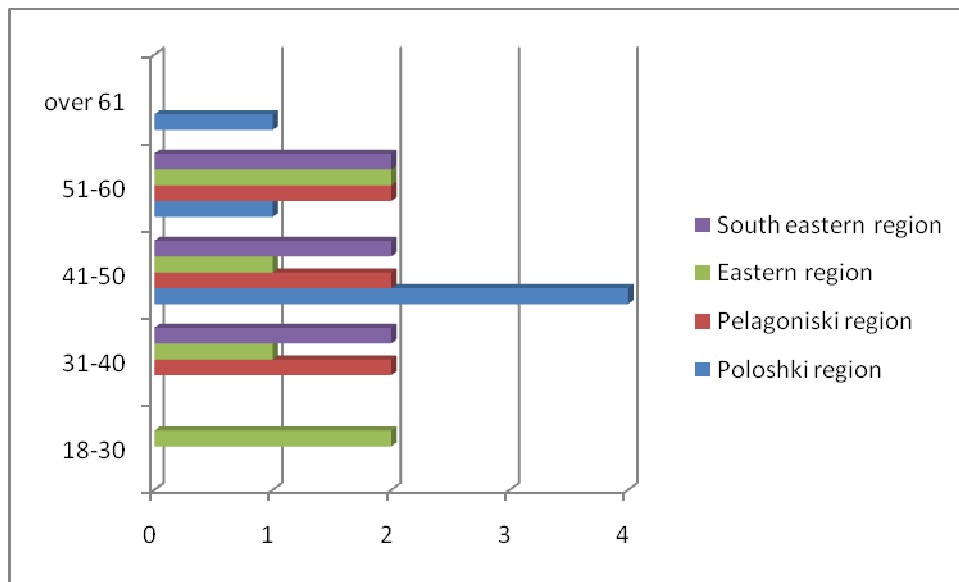
Women	Region	City	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Over 61
	Poloshki	Gostivar	1	4	3	1	1
	Pelagoniski	Bitola	2	3	4		
	Eastern	Kochani	3	4		2	
	Southeastern	Strumica	3	1	4	2	
	Total		9	12	11	5	1

Graphic 2. Female participants divided in age groups



Men	Region	City	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	Over 61
	Poloshki	Gostivar			4	1	1
	Pelagoniski	Bitola		2	2	2	
	Eastern	Kochani	2	1	1	2	
	Southeastern	Strumica		2	2	2	
	Total		2	5	9	7	1

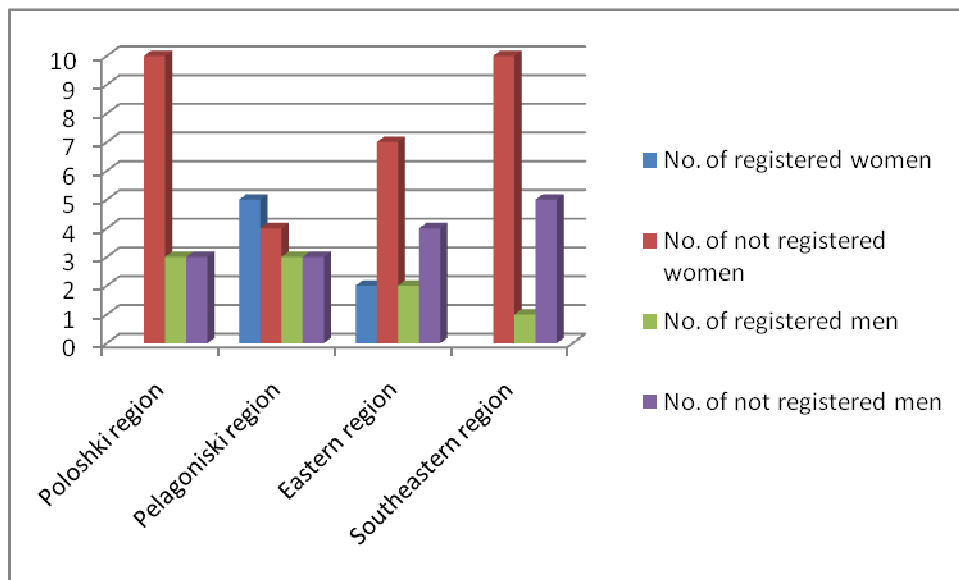
Graphic 2. Male participants divided by age and region



c) The research takes into consideration the perceptions of the registered and not registered farmers. Therefore, it is important the number of registered participants to be presented divided according gender

Region	City	No. of registered women	No. of not registered women	No. of registered men	No. of not registered men
Poloshki	Gostivar	0	10	3	3
Pelagoniski	Bitola	5	4	3	3
Eastern	Kochani	2	7	2	4
Southeastern	Strumica	0	10	1	5
Total		7	31	9	15

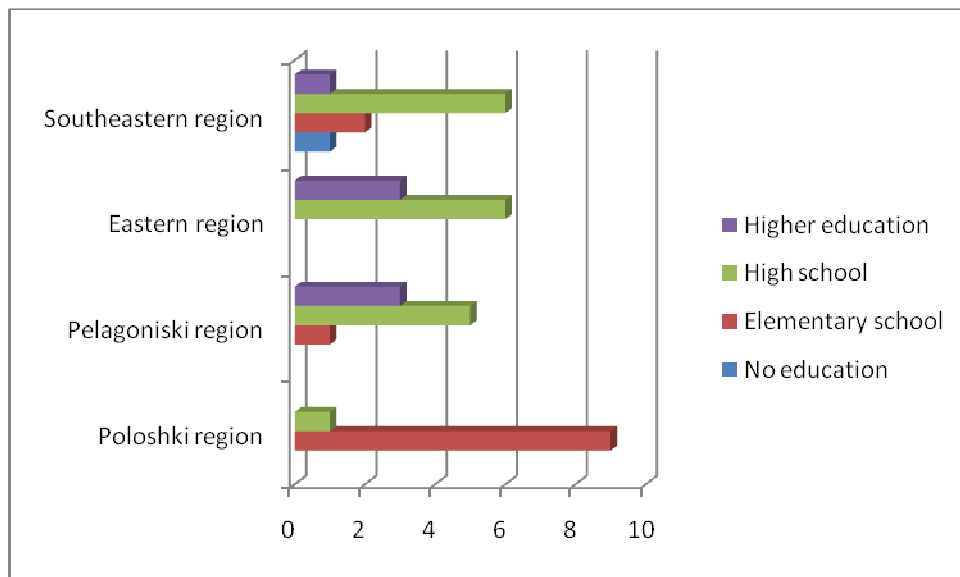
Graphic 4. Registered farmers divided by gender and region in the focus groups



d) Education

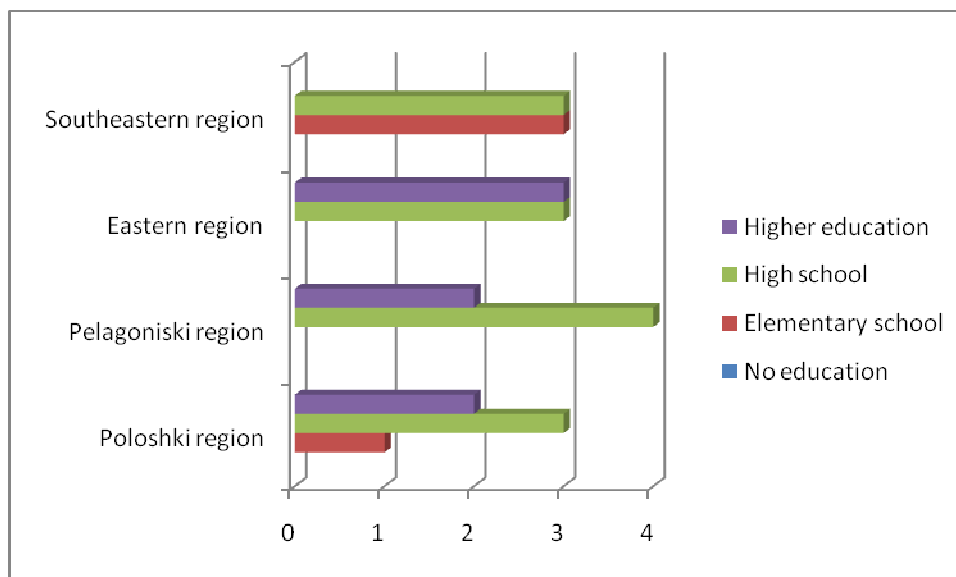
Women	Region	City	No education	Elementary school	High school	Higher education
	Poloshki	Gostivar		9	1	
	Pelagoniski	Bitola		1	5	3
	Eastern	Kochani			6	3
	Southeastern	Strumica	1	2	6	1
		Total	1	12	18	7

Graphic 5. Educational background of the female participants in the focus groups



Men	Region	City	No education	Elementary school	High school	Higher education
	Poloshki	Gostivar		1	3	2
	Pelagoniski	Bitola			4	2
	Eastern	Kochani			3	3
	Southeastern	Strumica		3	3	
		Total		4	13	7

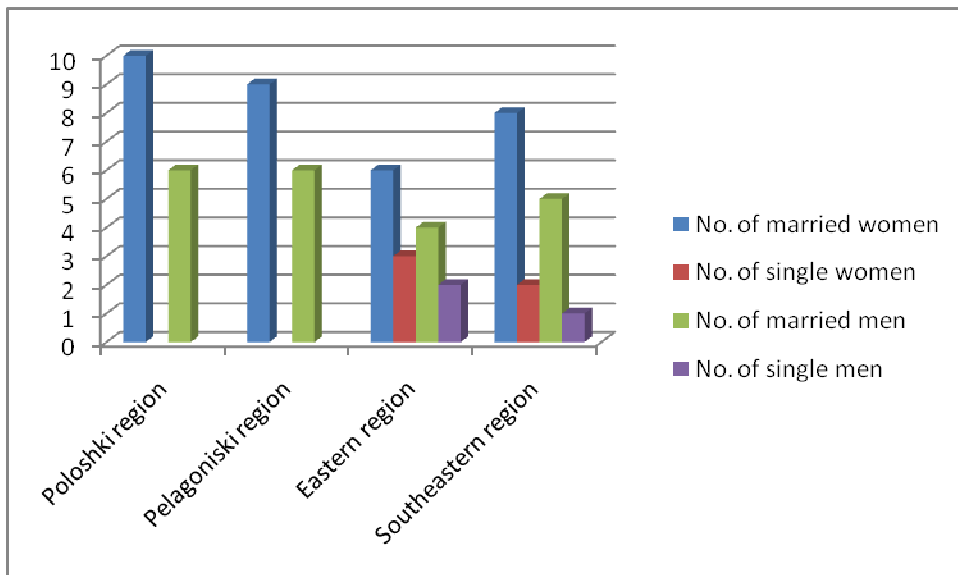
Graphic 6. Educational background of the male participants in the focus groups



e) Marital status

Region	City	No. of married women	No. of not married women	No. of married men	No. of not married men
Poloshki	Gostivar	10		6	
Pelagoniski	Bitola	9		6	
Eastern	Kochani	6	3	4	2
Southeastern	Strumica	8	2	5	1
Total		33	5	21	3

Graphic 7. Marital status of the focus group participants according gender and region



f) Agricultural sectors in which the participants of the focus groups belong to divided according gender

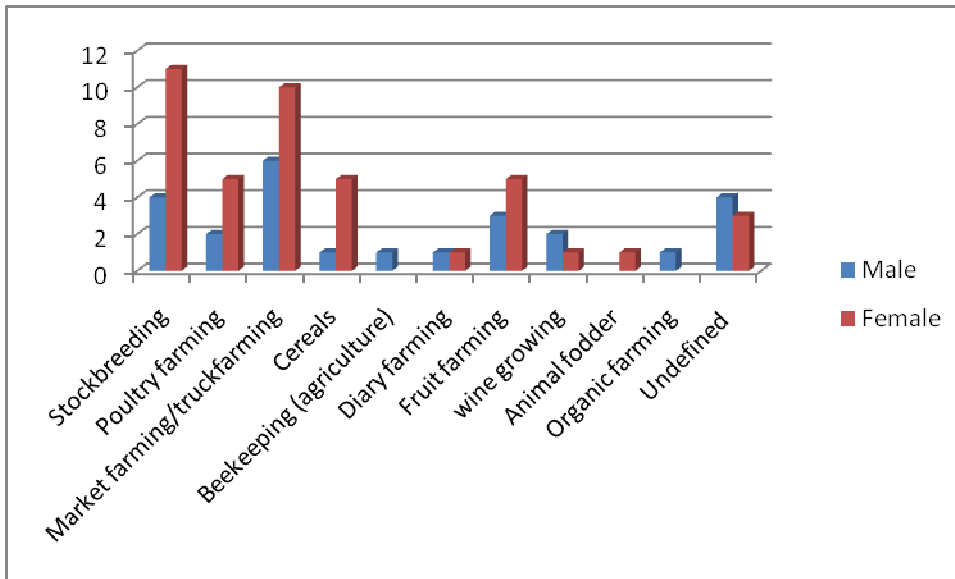
Agricultural sectors	Male participants	Female participants
Stockbreeding	4	11
Poultry farming	2	5
Market farming/truck farming ³⁰	6	10
Cereals	1	5
Beekeeping(apiculture)/	1	
Dairy farming	1	1
Fruit growing	3	5
Wine growing	2	1
Animal fodder		1
Organic farming	1	
Undefined	4	3

IMPORTANT: Some of the participants in the focus groups reported that they are active in more than one agricultural sector. The number of male and female participants is higher in

³⁰ Market/truck farming refers to small scale production of agricultural products to be sold at green markets by private producers.

the table above, since those farmers who are active in more than one sector are presented in all categories in which they work.

Graphic 8. Agricultural sectors in which the participants of the focus groups belong to divided according gender



Annex 2: The Focus Groups Questionnaire

Part A – Activities

1. How long have you been a farmer?
Are you a registered farmer?
How long have you been a registered farmer?
Why have you decided to register/not to register?
Since registering, have you felt any changes in your status (greater/easier access to information, subventions, your interests are represented better)?
2. Do you know any female farmers?
What, in your understanding, the term “female farmer” means?
In Macedonia, there are 16% registered female farmers. Why are there so few?
Is this profession for females? If not, why isn't it?
3. What are the factors that contribute to the low number of female farmers (in general)?
What are the reasons for the low number of registered female farmers (for example, maybe property ownership is an obstacle)?
4. Which agricultural activities do you conduct? (for the moderator: write down which of the participants represents which sector/sub sector so that we can perform a sector analysis)
 - a) Planting
 - b) Plowing
 - c) Reaping
 - d) Processing
 - e) Selection
 - f) Packing
 - g) Market placement
 - h) Storage
 - i) Selling on green markets
 - j) Other_____
5. Do you think that the activities are divided into male and female activities? If yes, why is it so?

Part B – Agricultural organizing

1. Are you a member of any agricultural organization/association/cooperative?
How long have you been a member?
How many organizations are you a member of?
Which ones?
Do you have female colleagues there, and how many?
2. Which position do you hold in the organization/association/cooperative?
Is it a decision-making position (do you have a right to vote for decisions)?
Are there female farmers in the same position as yours?
Do they take part in making decisions?
If not, why (what are the reasons)?
3. What are the activities of women in these organizations?
What do they mostly do?
4. Do you feel that women are represented enough in the cooperatives and other forms of agricultural organizing?
If not, why is it so?
 - a) Lack of information
 - b) Lack of experience
 - c) Degree of education
 - d) Lack of ability to connect with other representatives of the sector
 - e) Lack of trust
 - f) Tradition – the man being a member of the organization

Part C - Access to training and consulting services

1. Have you taken part in any training related to your line of work as a farmer?
Which trainings?
Who organized them?
How do you usually get informed about the training?
Who decides for you to take part in the training (on personal and organizational level/from the collective)?
2. To what extent do women take part in these events?
If little – what are the reasons?
 - a) Lack of information
 - b) Lack of interest

- c) Obligations at home
 - d) The husband doesn't allow it
 - e) The organizer doesn't arrange for transport
 - f) Illiteracy
 - g) It's not a place for women
 - h) I don't know anything about this
 - i) Other_____
3. Do you have access to consulting services?
Who offers them?
Do you use them often?
How do you learn about such possibilities (to be advised by certain experts)?
Do you know any female farmers who use consulting services?
Are there reasons why women use consulting services less/more?
What are these reasons?
- a) They are more/less informed
 - b) They are more/less interested
 - c) Obligations at home
 - d) Literacy/illiteracy
 - e) It is/it is not a place for women

Part D – Access to land

1. What is the access to farmland (public) in Macedonia like?
Who has access to it?
What are the criteria for distribution of public farmland?
Is the distribution just/equal (in general)? (those who already have it obtain more/ those who don't work in the agricultural sector get it/ it is distributed through personal connections, etc.)
Do women acquire farmland? How much (many/few)?
Why is the number of women who have/have not acquired farmland large/small?
What are the reasons?
- a) They are not registered
 - b) They don't have capital (land, stock, money to acquire land)
 - c) They are illiterate
 - d) They are uninformed
 - e) The bureaucratic procedures
 - f) They are not supported by their families
 - g) They don't have banking accounts
 - h) Other_____
2. Have you obtained a bank loan?
Where from?

Was it hard to get the loan? If yes, what were the reasons?

- a) Difficult criteria
- b) A lot of documents
- c) Illiteracy
- d) Lack of information
- e) I don't fulfill the criteria – why?
- f) Other_____

3. Do women face problems obtaining bank loans?
Why?

Part E – General (conclusions if the impression is that the group feels that the situation is not favorable for the female farmers)

1. Why do you feel the situation is such?

- a) Tradition
- b) Mentality
- c) Lack of interest on the side of the women
- d) The public policy doesn't stimulate female farmers (there are no special subventions for women)

2. What should be done to change this situation?

- a) Education
- b) Training
- c) Advertising
- d) Measures to stimulate female farmers
- e) Other_____

3. Is it possible to change the situation?

4. Do you think that women want to work in agriculture at all?
If not, why?