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Abbreviation list

Term	Description
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EU	European Union
ISMEA	Italian Institute for Agricultural and Food Market Services (Istituto di Servizi per il Mercato Agricolo Alimentare)
LAG	Local Action Group
LEADER	Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale (EU Initiative for Rural Development)
NRDP	National Rural Development Programme
PEPAC	Spanish Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy (Plan Estratégico de la PAC)
PSR	Italian Rural Development Programme (Piano di Sviluppo Rurale)
RDP	Regional Rural Development Plan
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Executive Summary

This report analyses the state of generational renewal in agriculture across six key European rural regions. It identifies critical strengths, including the prevalence of family-based farms, the adaptability of younger farmers, and financial support provided by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Weaknesses such as an aging farmer population, limited access to land, and bureaucratic barriers are highlighted as major challenges.

Opportunities exist in climate adaptation, targeted CAP reforms, economic diversification and expansion of rural activities into niche markets. However, the sector faces significant threats from climate change, urbanization, and global market pressures.

Addressing these issues through innovation, improved policy implementation, and intergenerational cooperation is vital for the future sustainability of agriculture and the economic and social resilience of rural areas.

The report also explores good practices and proposals for improvement identified in the six European regions participating in the Down to Earth project. A comparative analysis is carried out to extract lessons learned and recommendations for the improvement of the policy instruments addressed in the framework of the project.

Key recommendations include facilitating land access, strengthening financial tools, and fostering gender equality to support resilient agricultural communities. The findings underline the importance of integrated policies that combine financial, educational, and infrastructural support to ensure sustainable generational renewal, contributing to the economic vitality and environmental sustainability of Europe's rural areas.

1 Introduction

Rural communities in Europe often face compounding risks as climate change, demographic ageing, and land abandonment work synergistically, amplifying their vulnerability. While the specific impacts vary across the European Union, these communities are particularly exposed to cascading effects. Retaining population and encouraging environmentally sustainable practices in key sectors such as agriculture and land management will be crucial to curb environmental deterioration and contribute to risk prevention.

The Down to Earth project, funded by the Interreg Europe programme, gathers a group of organisations working on different aspects related to disaster risk mitigation and rural development in six EU regions. The main objective of the project is to improve the policy instruments of the participating regions to manage, maintain and enhance natural capital to reduce the risk and impact of environmental disasters while generating economic and social opportunities to attract population to rural areas.

Young farmers and new entrants can play a crucial role in driving the green and digital transitions needed to address the challenges posed by climate change, and help build more resilient rural areas. And yet, there are many factors that hinder the installation of young people in the agricultural sector. Understanding the barriers faced by young farmers will help local and regional authorities across Europe design more efficient and effective policies to address the common challenges of depopulation and climate change adaptation.

In the second year of the Down to Earth project, participating partners have carried out an analysis of their local contexts in terms of the barriers faced by young farmers in rural areas. Based on the regional reports produced by partners, this joint report analyses the state of generational renewal in agriculture across the territories covered in the project: Neckar-Alb (Germany), Gorenjska (Slovenia), Western Greece (Greece), Romania, Galicia (Spain) and Campobasso (Italy). To ensure a better understanding of the geographical

context of this report, chapter 2 includes a brief introduction to the six regions. Chapter 3 presents a consolidated version of the SWOT analysis on access barriers to young farmers in rural areas submitted by the project partners and chapter 4 draws the basic legal and policy framework addressing generational renewal in agriculture at different levels in Europe. In the local reports, partners have identified relevant initiatives that have proved successful in their territories, as well as the proposals for improvement of existing policies to tackle the barriers faced by young farmers in rural areas. The joint analysis of these successful regional initiatives (chapter 5) and the proposals for improvement (chapter 6) has allowed the Down to Earth project to draw lessons and recommendations for any public administration seeking to design more effective policies to address the key barriers faced by young farmers in Europe (chapter 7).

2 Local context of Down to Earth regions

The integration of young people into farming is crucial to ensure the sustainability and future of the sector in Europe. The integration of young people into farming in Europe is a multifaceted challenge that requires coordinated actions at local, national and European level. It is essential to implement policies that address economic, structural and training barriers to ensure the sustainability of the agricultural sector and generational renewal.

Young people face multiple barriers that make it difficult for them to enter and remain in agriculture. These barriers include access to land, financing, training and technical assistance, among other challenges. In 2020 in the EU, the majority (57.6%) of farm managers (of either sex) were aged 55 or over, only about 12% of managers were under 40 years old, and of the latter, almost half were between 35 and 39 years old. (Report on generational renewal on future EU farms of October 2023)

Farm size and consolidation. Almost all regions of the Union are experiencing a steady increase in average farm sizes and a concentration of production on larger and fewer farms. These variables, together with others, lead to a lack of land availability with associated high costs, in many cases, agricultural land is in the hands of older owners who do not facilitate the transfer to new generations.

Renewal of family farms. Furthermore, farming is still predominantly a family activity, as in 2020 almost nine out of ten (86.1 %) people working regularly in agriculture in the Union were either the sole holder (farmer) or a family member of the holder, so the lack of generational renewal can lead to land abandonment. For this reason, this report suggests that effective policies to promote access to land are required. This can comprise measures such as tax incentives for the sale or lease of land to young farmers, in order to stop the vicious circle that leads to a lack of generational renewal and land abandonment.

Access to finance. Young people often in rural areas face difficulties in accessing credit and financing due to the lack of guarantees and the risk perceived by financial institutions. For this reason, they propose establishing guarantee funds and specific micro-credits for young people, as well as strengthening access to subsidies and aid from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Bridging the gap in training levels. In 2020, 72.3% of farm managers in the Union had only practical experience, while only 10.2% had received full agricultural training and the remaining 17.5% only basic agricultural training; that young farmers had higher levels of education in terms of full agricultural training (21.4% had received such training compared to 3.6% of those over 65) and had attended up-to-date vocational training courses, including on new and innovative farming methods. Despite this improvement, there is still a gap in the training and technical skills needed to manage modern and sustainable farms. A line of training programmes and technical advice, facilitating access to innovation and new technologies can provide improvement in this area.

Lack of adequate infrastructure and limited access to advanced technologies also limit the competitiveness of young farmers. They therefore promote investments in rural infrastructure and in the digitalisation of the agricultural sector. (Parlamento Europeo, 2023).

Efforts within the framework of CAP. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) proposes a series of direct payments and specific support for young people, which in some cases can represent up to 50% of a young farmer's annual income during the first years. It also proposes a Rural Development Programme (RDP) with specific measures to support the installation of young farmers and the modernisation of their farms. It allocates more than 8 billion euros to the modernisation and sustainability of the agricultural sector in the RDP 2021-2027. (Informe sobre el plan estratégico de la PAC, 2021)

National Efforts. In Spain, in an effort to address the problem of rural renewal, the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has created a Sub-Working Group dedicated to Objective 7 of the CAP 2023-2027, which focuses on facilitating the incorporation of young people into the agricultural sector. A series of recommendations

were proposed such as: financial support measures (for first installation and for young people), promotion of entrepreneurship (with business training programmes and agricultural business incubators), development of rural infrastructures and adoption of new technologies. (Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación, 2024)

2.1 Regional dimension

Overview of regional contexts. The following matrix analysis based on the regional contexts reported by the six regions, highlights barriers that deter youth and young farmers from the rural regions in Galicia, Neckar Alb, Gorenjska, Romania, Western Greece, and the Municipality of Campobasso to settle and participate in the social and economic life of the regions. These challenges reflect a complex interplay of demographic, economic, and structural factors unique to each region but share common themes that underscore systemic issues in rural development across Europe.

Galicia

Galicia faces a narrow agricultural base with small sector size as a significant barrier, restricting economic scalability and modernization. Generational renewal is stifled, creating a demographic gap as ageing farmers dominate. Employment shortages in rural areas further reduce opportunities for youth, while financial and entrepreneurial barriers inhibit innovative solutions and necessary investments to rejuvenate the agricultural economy.

Neckar Alb

Depopulation is not a problem in the Neckar Alb region, but the other challenges are considerable. The dominance of ageing farmers is a significant barrier to innovation, renewal and sustainability of the sector. Combined with the small size of the agricultural sector and limited generational turnover, these obstacles create a less supportive environment for young people in rural areas. Income prospects for young farmers are uncertain and in many cases provide little incentive. The lack of stable cohorts of new

entrants to farming education suggests that not enough new entrants are considering agriculture as a viable career.

Gorensjka

In Gorensjka, the issues stem from structural disparities and resource limitations in mountain areas. Although specific negative markers were less pronounced in this dataset, regional reports often cite difficulties in accessing modern farming technologies and infrastructural deficits that affect overall productivity and sustainability. These factors collectively deter youth engagement while economic diversification and innovative activities in siculture, tourism, crafts are marked as significant contributing factors to rural development opportunities.

Romania

Romania's rural regions experience pronounced demographic pressures, including ageing populations and insufficient generational renewal. This is exacerbated by fragmented agricultural holdings, which limit profitability and discourage large-scale investments. Financial barriers and limited entrepreneurial support further restrict opportunities for young farmers to establish themselves, compounded by a limited outreach of modern farming education and mentorship programs.

Western Greece

Western Greece struggles with similar challenges, where rural depopulation and ageing demographics dominate the landscape. Limited income prospects and financial constraints dissuade youth from pursuing farming. Additionally, the inadequate development of agricultural education and innovation initiatives leaves young farmers ill-equipped to address modern challenges or capitalize on emerging opportunities in the sector.

Municipality of Campobasso

The Municipality of Campobasso faces barriers rooted in economic polarization, ageing of rural population, and the need to increase the value base of rural entrepreneurship. The

general reports suggest that limited access to credit, infrastructural shortcomings, and insufficient generational renewal create a compounded effect that diminishes the appeal of rural livelihoods to youth.

Policy Implications

The findings underline the need for region-specific interventions to address barriers systematically. Enhancing financial and entrepreneurial support, expanding access to education and training tailored to modern agricultural practices and the outreach of innovative training and education programs, while also fostering innovation in rural economies are critical. Effective policy frameworks must prioritize generational renewal and integrated sustainable development strategies to revitalize rural areas and make them attractive to younger populations.

	Neckar Alb	Galicia	Gorensjk a	Romani a	Western Greece	Municipalit y of Campobass o
Depopulation	N/A	(--)	(-)	(-)	(-) 70 percent of land faces disadvantag es	(-)
Economic efficiency of production and services provision in rural lands			(-)		(-)	
Size of agricultural holdings	(-)	(-)	(+) 55 percent size in class size 3-20 hectares		(-)	
Small size of agricultural sector	(-)	(-)	(-)		(-)	
Decreasing number of agricultural holdings	(-)		(-)		(-)	(-)
Decline of land surface in active productive use			(-)			(-)

Rising production costs			(-)		(-)	
Ageing farmers and fewer young farm managers	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	
Generational renewal	(-)	(-)			(-)	(-)
Outmigration and flight of youth from rural areas		(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)
Income levels in region and country					(-)	
Income prospects from farming vocations	(-)	(-)			(-)	
Export trade surplus in agriculture products					(++) feta, evoo, olives, fruit and veg.	
Shortages of agricultural workforce				(-)	(-)	
Regional employment levels (unemployment)				(-)	(-)	
Farming education	(-)	(-)	(-)	(+)		
Siviculture sector			(+)			
Soil quality differences	(-/+)				(-)	
Access to arable land for young farmers			(-)			
Diversification of activities in rural areas (tourism, ICT, crafts)						
Access to knowledge on market trends, new crops, production techniques for climate resilient agriculture			(-/+)			
Polarised growth in urban and/or coastal areas		(-)	(-)			(-)
Role of women in agriculture		(++)			(-)	(-)
Employment shortages	(-)	(-)			(-)	
Finance and entrepreneurial barriers		(-)			(-)	

Social isolation of youth in rural areas		(-)			(-)	(-)
Loss of cultural identity/continuity		(-)			(-)	(-)
Regional quality of life			(+)			
Urban/rural quality of life imbalances		(-)			(-)	
Ecological loss in rural ecosystems, habitat loss, land decline						(-)
Gender imbalances in land ownership and farm management		(-)	(-)		(-)	(-)
Economic empowerment of women and youth through education and job opportunities		(+)			(-)	

Table 1 Matrix of barriers and enabling factors reported in the regional reports by Project Partners. The symbol (+) indicates positive impact (-) indicates negative impact.

3 SWOT analysis

This chapter presents the consolidated version of the SWOT analysis on access barriers to young farmers and youth in rural areas based on the reports submitted by the Down to Earth project partner regions, summarizing the main observations. The individual regional SWOT analyses are included in the annexure.

3.1 Strengths

Family-based farming traditions provide a strong foundation for generational renewal. In regions such as Galicia and Gorenjska, family farms are the backbone of the agricultural economy, facilitating knowledge transfer and ensuring continuity in farming practices. Western Greece mirrors this trend, with over 93% of farms operated by families, creating a reliable basis for rural livelihoods and agricultural stability.

Young farmers demonstrate adaptability and an openness to innovation. In regions such as Gorenjska and Galicia, younger generations are leading the way in integrating modern technology, eco-farming practices, and direct marketing through agri-tourism. In the Neckar Alb region, vocational training integrated into farming education has cultivated a technically skilled workforce prepared to navigate modern agricultural challenges.

Policy frameworks, such as CAP, offer essential financial and technical support. Across regions like Romania and Neckar Alb, CAP subsidies, training programs, and modernization grants provide crucial support for young farmers entering the sector. In Galicia, CAP also includes incentives targeted at young women, promoting gender equity and fostering a more inclusive agricultural sector.

Supplementary income activities strengthen financial resilience for small farms. In Gorenjska, farmers benefit from eco-tourism and food processing activities, while in Western Greece, cooperative networks help small farms connect with larger markets. These diversified approaches ensure economic stability, even during periods of market volatility.

Commitment to environmental sustainability supports long-term viability.

Protected areas like Natura 2000 in Gorenjska support eco-friendly farming practices, enhancing biodiversity and aligning with consumer preferences. In Romania, sustainable forest management serves as both a source of income and a mechanism for preserving natural resources.

3.2 Weaknesses

An aging farming population threatens the sustainability of the agricultural sector.

In regions such as Neckar Alb and Galicia, over 60% of farmers are over 55, and many have no clear succession plans. In Campobasso, the generational gap is even more acute, with only 20% of cultivated land managed by farmers under 40, raising concerns about knowledge transfer and the future of farming.

Access to arable land is increasingly limited by urbanization and high costs. Urban encroachment in Western Greece continues to reduce available farmland, while Galicia faces challenges with fragmented landholdings that inflate operational costs. In Romania, unclear land-use regulations exacerbate these barriers for aspiring young farmers. In the Neckar-Alb region priority areas for agriculture have been designated to protect agricultural areas in the region and the total agricultural area has increased between 1999 and 2020, however increasing costs are a significant factor.

Bureaucratic hurdles discourage participation in essential support programs.

Administrative complexities in regions like Campobasso and Galicia delay farm transfers and deter young farmers from accessing subsidies and other financial aid, compounding their challenges in entering the sector.

Financial constraints limit opportunities for young farmers to invest and expand.

In Greece and Romania, young farmers often lack access to credit due to perceived risks by

financial institutions. In Gorenjska, high land taxes further discourage small-scale farming, reducing the sector's overall economic vitality.

Education and training gaps impede the adoption of modern practices. Many farmers in Greece and Romania lack formal agricultural education, limiting their ability to integrate innovative techniques. In Gorenjska, weak collaboration between research institutions and farmers delays the implementation of cutting-edge solutions.

3.3 Opportunities

Climate adaptation creates opportunities for sustainable and innovative farming. Regions like Galicia can position themselves as climate reserves by introducing species resilient to changing weather patterns. In Western Greece and Gorenjska, integrating climate-smart practices into eco-tourism could provide dual benefits for the environment and local economies.

Policy reforms under CAP can better support small farms and young farmers. Enhanced CAP measures, as seen in Galicia and Gorenjska, offer a chance to attract more youth to agriculture by providing targeted financial assistance and streamlined administrative processes. Neckar Alb's focus on intergenerational cooperation could further facilitate smooth farm transitions.

Technological integration can drive productivity and competitiveness. Research institutions in Galicia and Neckar Alb are well-positioned to collaborate with local farmers, fostering the adoption of advanced farming methods. In Campobasso, digital tools and training programs can help modernize farming operations and improve efficiency.

Niche markets offer lucrative opportunities for young farmers. In Gorenjska and Galicia, youth are exploring organic farming and direct sales, which cater to growing consumer demand for sustainable products. Western Greece's cooperative networks could help small farms expand their reach into specialized, high-value markets.

3.4 Threats

Climate change poses significant risks to agricultural productivity. Anomalies and extremes in weather patterns, including droughts and floods, are already disrupting farming operations in regions like Gorenjska and Western Greece. Small farms with limited resources are particularly vulnerable to these challenges, threatening long-term viability.

Urban encroachment reduces the availability of fertile farmland. Infrastructure projects and urbanization in Western Greece and Romania continue to shrink the agricultural land base near population centres, creating additional barriers for young farmers looking to enter the sector and expand their operations.

Economic volatility and global market pressures undermine local farming. In Galicia and Greece, small-scale farmers face stiff competition from cheaper imports, which depress prices and limit profitability. Rising costs for agricultural inputs, exacerbated by global supply chain disruptions, further strain already thin profit margins from rural activities.

A declining interest in farming exacerbates generational renewal challenges. In Campobasso and Romania, farming is often viewed as an unattractive career path, discouraging younger generations from pursuing it as a viable livelihood. This social disinterest limits the sector's ability to attract and retain new talent.

Insufficient support for small farms risks closures and biodiversity loss. CAP measures often favor larger enterprises, leaving smaller farms in Galicia and Gorenjska under-resourced and unable to compete effectively. Without intervention, these closures could lead to a decline in biodiversity and rural heritage.

4 Legal and strategic framework

The legal and policy framework addressing generational renewal in agriculture operates at the European Union (EU), national, and regional levels. These legal texts and policies aim to promote sustainable agriculture, attract young farmers, and ensure the long-term viability of the sector by addressing specific challenges and regional priorities.

4.1 European Union framework

The common agricultural policy (CAP) 2023–2027 forms the backbone of EU agricultural support. It incorporates ten key objectives, including promoting generational renewal, environmental sustainability, and competitiveness. As detailed in Regulation (EU) 2021/2115, CAP emphasizes results-oriented strategies tailored to member states' needs.

Key initiatives include:

- Direct payments and young farmer schemes: A minimum of 3% of national direct payment funds is allocated to young farmers. This funding, available in regions like Galicia and Gorenjska, helps address financial barriers faced by new entrants.
- The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD): This fund supports projects focused on modernizing farms, fostering innovation, and promoting sustainable practices. Programs such as Leader and Horizon Europe encourage collaboration between farmers, cooperatives, and research institutions.
- Sustainability and climate goals: CAP integrates measures for climate adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable land management, essential for regions like Western Greece and Romania, where climate impacts are acute.

4.2 National frameworks

Germany: Germany's CAP strategic plan includes EU funding of about €30 billion for the period 2023-2027 to support generational renewal, sustainable practices, and regional competitiveness among others. Young farmers benefit from tailored grants and

mentorship programs, with particular success in the Neckar Alb region, where vocational training enhances skills and encourages farm succession.

Italy: Italy's national rural development program (PSR) provides comprehensive support for young farmers. Through the Young Farmers Act, start-up grants, tax incentives, and training programs are available. In Molise, these measures are complemented by the regional rural development plan (RDP), which focuses on rural entrepreneurship and land accessibility.

Romania: Romania's sustainable development strategy 2030 integrates agricultural goals with broader economic priorities. The national rural development programme (NRDP) offers financial tools for rural infrastructure, land consolidation, and farmer training.

Gorejska: key initiatives in the region of Gorenjska focus on linking farming with sustainable forestry and eco-tourism.

4.3 Regional frameworks

Galicia, Spain: Galicia has successfully implemented measures under Spain's CAP strategic plan. The Xunta de Galicia oversees land banking initiatives that prioritize young farmers and include tax incentives to lower land acquisition costs. Gender-sensitive programs provide additional funding for women farmers, fostering inclusivity in the sector.

Gorenjska, Slovenia: The regional development program emphasizes biodiversity and innovation in agriculture. Local action groups (LAGs) support young entrepreneurs in developing diversified income streams, such as eco-tourism and organic farming. This aligns with national efforts to promote climate-smart practices and modern farming techniques.

Western Greece: Legal reforms in Greece address historical land fragmentation and accessibility issues, key barriers for young farmers. CAP measures in this region prioritize grants for modernization and technical training, helping young farmers adapt to climate challenges and enhance productivity.

Molise, Italy: The Molise Agricultural Development Agency (ARSARP) plays a crucial role in implementing the RDP. Tailored programs provide access to subsidized credit and modern technology, addressing challenges such as limited land availability and low profitability of small farms.

Key legal measures

1. **Direct payments and start-up grants:** CAP provides financial support to new farmers, with Galicia and Gorenjska demonstrating success in facilitating land access and reducing start-up costs for young farmers.
2. **Innovative and climate-resilient agriculture:** In Western Greece, grants under CAP encourage the adoption of renewable energy and sustainable land-use practices. Similar programs in Gorenjska promote eco-tourism and biodiversity preservation.
3. **Gender equality and inclusivity:** CAP's gender-sensitive provisions ensure additional funding for women farmers, a critical factor in Galicia, where female participation has increased through targeted incentives.
4. **Capacity building and knowledge transfer:** Training programs in Neckar Alb integrate vocational education with farming, equipping young farmers with modern techniques. In Romania, mentorship initiatives ensure the transmission of practical knowledge and skills to new entrants.

4.3.1 Challenges identified in legal frameworks

Access to land and credit: Despite legal provisions, high land prices and limited financing options remain significant barriers. In Romania, unclear land-use regulations further complicate these challenges, while Galicia's fragmented holdings inflate costs and reduce efficiency.

Bureaucratic complexities: Regions like Campobasso and Galicia face lengthy administrative processes for accessing CAP funding, discouraging participation and delaying farm transfers.

Uneven regional implementation: In Slovenia, disparities in funding and technical support highlight the need for more consistent application of CAP measures at the regional level.

5 Good practises & other experiences

This chapter focuses on the joint analysis of the initiatives identified by project partners in their territories that have proved successful in addressing some of the barriers faced by young farmers in rural areas. Understanding the building elements of the initiatives that have already proved successful in the past can help design better policies in the future.

5.1 Methodology of the analysis of good practices

The analysis of the good practices identified by the partners of the Down to Earth project allows us to know which aspects are relevant for each of the regions. The analysis model included the elaboration of model sheets for each of the good practices described in the regional reports.

The methodology used is based on the definition of typologies of actors and barriers, so that the analysis can be based on a standardised and orderly interpretation of the different good practices in order to draw uniform conclusions.

Thus, Table 1 establishes three major categories of actors linked to the topic addressed. Additional sub-types are also established for each category to allow for a deeper analysis.

Table 2 shows the main access barriers faced by the actors, establishing at the same time sub-types of barriers that allow for a detailed interpretation.

The standard sheets for each good practice are based on this double categorisation (actors and barriers) but also include fields such as location, references and key aspects (understood as the set of main characteristics that define each good practice). Each of the sheets includes two specific sections that relate the types of actors and types of barriers to the activities of the good practice described.

Typologies of actors	
Type	Subtype

Individuals	<p>Young successors</p> <p>New entrants</p> <p>Experts, technicians and researchers</p>
Collectives	<p>Professional associations</p> <p>Cooperatives and joint management bodies</p> <p>Welfare and cultural associations</p> <p>Local community</p> <p>Migrant community</p>
Regulators	<p>State administration</p> <p>Regional administration</p> <p>Local administration</p>

Typologies of barriers	
Type	Subtype
Demographic	<p>Ageing of the agricultural population</p> <p>Lack of successors and rural exodus of young people to urban areas</p> <p>High retirement rate without generational replacement</p>
Social	<p>Gender inequality in access to resources and land</p> <p>Lack of inclusion of minority groups and migrants</p> <p>Raising awareness among young people about the prestige of agricultural activity</p> <p>Lack of mechanisms for cooperation and mutual assistance</p>
Economic	<p>Limited access to credit and finance, poor financial stability</p> <p>Low farm incomes</p> <p>High set-up costs for new farmers</p> <p>Difficulties for the economic diversification of farms</p>
Educational	<p>Lack of technical and vocational training</p> <p>Need for mentoring and ongoing training programmes</p> <p>Shortage of specific education in rural areas</p>
Environmental	<p>Climate change impacts and biodiversity loss</p> <p>Pressure for sustainable agricultural practices and soil and water resources degradation</p> <p>Changes in land use</p>

Territorial	Limited access to land in rural areas Depopulation of agricultural areas Lack of adequate infrastructure and public services
Institutional	Lack of effective cross-cutting policies Insufficient support from government institutions Excessive bureaucracy and lack of non-agricultural incentives for new farmers

5.2 Analysis of good practices by region.

5.2.1 Galicia

Mobile Slaughterhouse of Galicia		
Localization: Autonomous Community of Galicia	Key elements: 1. Profitability and sustainability of farms: reducing transport costs, thus increasing the profitability of small farms and improving meat quality. 2. Animal welfare: minimising prolonged transport, improving slaughter conditions. 3. Environmental impact: reducing carbon footprint by reducing animal transport and promoting sustainable livestock farming practices 4. Social and regional impact: generating local jobs and offering an accessible service in less populated rural areas, serving, so far, 59 farms in 38 municipalities. 5. Transferability and innovation: model adaptable to other regions, and possibility of improving its capacity with a future cutting room.	
References: https://ovmediorural.xunta.gal/gl/t/ramites/matadoiro-mobil		
Key players		
Type of Actor	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Individuals	Young successors and new entrants	They participate in generational renewal and in the use of the mobile slaughterhouse for their farms.
Collectives	Cooperatives and joint management bodies	They coordinate the shared use of the mobile slaughterhouse and facilitate its logistical management.

Regulators	Regional administration	They implement policies and fund initiatives that support the use of the mobile slaughterhouse.
Main barriers		
Barrier Category	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Economic	High set-up costs for new farmers	It reduces costs by enabling small producers to access slaughtering services without large investments.
Territorial	Limited access to land in rural areas	It encourages demand for land in remote areas by facilitating the slaughter of livestock locally without having to face the expense of travelling to distant industrial slaughterhouses.
Institutional	Excessive bureaucracy and lack of non-agricultural incentives for new farmers	It simplifies processes by collaborating with local administrations to reduce bureaucratic barriers.

The taste of Ancares

Localization:

Cervantes, Lugo

References:

www.osabordosancares.com

Key elements:

1. **Farmers empowerment:** strengthening the position of local livestock farmers by increasing their profitability through direct control of marketing channels.
2. **Environmental sustainability:** promoting extensive livestock farming and transhumance, contributing to the conservation of the environment and the reduction of the risk of fires.
3. **Generational renewal:** encouraging the participation of young people and women in livestock farming through training programmes and specific incentives.
4. **Innovation in marketing:** implementing new strategies such as an online shop, own butcher's shop and traditional ready-made dishes

	5. Regional and social impact: generating local employment and promoting social cohesion, benefiting 215 cooperative members and maintaining 750 indirect jobs.	
Key players		
Type of Actor	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Individuals	Young successors	The initiative promotes generational renewal, encouraging young people to become involved in livestock farming.
Collectives	Cooperatives and joint management bodies	Working with local cooperatives to strengthen the regional economy.
Collectives	Local community	Employment generation and promotion of social cohesion in rural areas.
Main barriers		
Barrier Category	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Economic	High initial investment	Participating in cooperative models reduces the initial economic investment needed by providing equipment and access to an established market.
Technological	Lack of technology	Innovation in marketing and collaboration with universities to improve processes
Structural	Access to land	The project promotes sustainable land use and landscape conservation.

Creation of a Regional Support Centre for Rural Development (A Fusquenlla)	
Localization: Moeche, A Coruña	Key elements
References: https://www.xunta.gal/es/hemeroteca/-/nova/130300/xunta-refuerza-apoyo-centro-comarcal-desarrollo-rural-fusquenlla-moeche-contribuyendo	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Valorisation of local products: the project focuses on the transformation of local agri-food products such as vegetables, preserves and jams, enabling small producers to add value to their products. 2. Sustainable development: sustainable socio-economic development is promoted in the region by supporting local producers and encouraging local agricultural production. 3. Intermunicipal collaboration: four municipalities participate (Moeche, San Sadurniño, Valdoviño and

	<p>Cedeira), with financial support from the Local Action Group (LAG) Seitura 22 and the Provincial Council of A Coruña.</p> <p>4. Training and advice: they offer technical advice and training to producers to improve the processing and marketing of their products.</p> <p>5. Transferability potential: the A Fusquenlla model can be replicated in other rural areas with similar characteristics, fostering innovation and economic development.</p>	
Key players		
Type of Actor	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Individuals	Young successors and new entrants	It provides opportunities for young producers by offering training and advice in agri-food processing.
Collectives	Local community	It boosts local economic development and strengthens the social fabric by enhancing the value of local products.
Regulators	Regional administration	It has the financial support of the LAG Seitura 22 and the Provincial Council of A Coruña to implement the project.
Main barriers		
Barrier Category	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Economic	High initial investment	Facilitates access to shared facilities and equipment, reducing costs for smallholders
Structural	Lack of infrastructure	Provides shared facilities for the processing and marketing of products.
Social	Lack of coordination between actors	It promotes inter-municipal collaboration and joint work between producers.

5.2.2 Romania

Sub-Measure 6.1: Support for the installation of young farmers	
Localization:	Key elements
Romania	

<p>References:</p> <p>https://portal.afir.info/informatii_generale_pndr_investitii_prin_pndr_sm_6_1_sprijin_pentru_instalarea_tinerilor_fermieri</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Generational renewal: it facilitates the replacement of older farmers by younger farmers, ensuring the continuity and sustainability of farms. 2. Financial support: it provides direct financial support to cover the initial investment needed for the installation of young farmers. 3. Agricultural competitiveness: it promotes the modernisation and improvement of farm management, increasing their capacity to compete in the market. 4. Rural development: it encourages young people to settle in rural areas, fostering the economic and social stability of these regions 5. Innovation and sustainability: it supports sustainable agricultural practices and the use of innovative technologies to ensure responsible and efficient production.
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Key players

Type of Actor	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Individuals	Young successors	It facilitates the installation of young people as farm managers, encouraging generational renewal and fixing population in rural areas.
Individuals	New entrants	It supports new farmers with financial and training incentives to start their activities in the agricultural sector.
Collectives	Professional associations	Farmers' associations provide technical support and advice to implement Sub-Measure 6.1 grants.
Regulators	State administration	It develops and supervises financial support programmes for the installation of young farmers.

Regulators	Regional administration	It manages and coordinates the implementation of specific aid at regional level to facilitate the installation of young farmers.
Main barriers		
Barrier Category	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Demographic	Lack of successors and rural exodus of young people to urban areas	Submeasure 6.1 facilitates generational renewal by supporting the installation of young farmers, helping to stem the exodus to the cities and revitalising the agricultural sector.
Social	Gender inequality in access to resources and land	The sub-measure promotes the inclusion of young women in the agricultural sector, offering equal opportunities in access to resources and funding.
Economic	High set-up costs for new farmers	It provides financial support to cover installation costs, making it easier for young people to set up their farms without major financial barriers.
Educational	Lack of technical and vocational training	It includes training and mentoring programmes to equip young farmers with the technical knowledge and skills needed to manage their farms.
Territorial	Depopulation of agricultural areas	It encourages young people to settle in rural areas, helping to curb depopulation and promoting local socio-economic development.

DR-12 – Investments in strengthening the holdings of young established farmers and newly established farmers

Localization:

Romania

Key elements:

<p>References:</p> <p>https://portal.afir.info/informatii_generale_pndr_investitii_prin_pndr_sm_6_1_sprijin_pentru_instalarea_tinerilor_fermieri</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agricultural infrastructure: funding to improve facilities such as warehouses, irrigation systems and stables, optimising production and storage of resources. 2. Machinery and equipment: investment in modern machinery to increase efficiency and reduce manual labour. 3. Working capital: support to cover essential operating expenses such as farm inputs, seeds, fertilisers and farm fuel. 4. Soil improvement: investments in land reclamation, preparation and conditioning to ensure sustainable and quality production. 5. Agricultural digitalisation: support to implement digital technologies such as sensors, drones and farm management software to optimise processes.
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Key players

Type of Actor	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Individuals	Young successors	Measure DR-12 provides financial support to strengthen farms managed by young farmers, ensuring their long-term viability.
Individuals	New entrants	It facilitates investments to improve the farms of new farmers who have completed the implementation of the business plan under “Sub-Measure 6.1, helping them to establish themselves competitively in the market.
Collectives	Cooperatives and joint management bodies	It supports cooperatives that bring together young farmers, allowing them to share resources and improve management and production practices.

Main barriers

Barrier Category	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Economic	High set-up costs for new farmers	DR-12 provides financial support for necessary investments to reduce high installation costs and improve farm viability.

Territorial	Limited access to land in rural areas	It facilitates investments that enable young farmers to acquire or improve available land, promoting an efficient occupation of rural territory.
Educational	Lack of technical and vocational training	It includes support to implement modern practices and improve technical skills, facilitating efficient and sustainable farm management.

5.2.3 Western Greece

Support program for installation of young farmers in Western Greece		
Localization: Western Greece	Key elements:	
References: https://www.pde.gov.gr/gr/enimerosi/deltia-tupou/item/19537-epipleon-563-ek-stin-perifereia-dytikis-elladas-gia-to-programma-egkatastasi-neon-georgon-entassontai-alloi-158-neoi-agrotes.html	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Generational renewal: it encourages the incorporation of young farmers to renew the agricultural sector, ensuring the continuity and dynamism of farms in rural areas. 2. Investment support: it provides targeted financial support to modernise and strengthen farms through the acquisition of machinery, infrastructure and technology. 3. Sustainable rural development: it drives socio-economic growth in rural areas through investments that improve agricultural productivity and the quality of life of young farmers. 	
Key players		
Type of Actor	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Individuals	Young successors	The programme facilitates the installation of young farmers, guaranteeing generational renewal and preventing rural abandonment.
Individuals	New entrants	Provides financial and technical support to new farmers to establish sustainable farms in Western Greece.
Regulators	Regional administration	The regional authorities manage and monitor the programme to ensure its

		effective and locally adapted implementation.
Main barriers		
Barrier Category	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Demographic	Lack of successors and rural exodus of young people to urban areas	The programme encourages young people to stay in rural areas through financial support and career development opportunities.
Economic	High set-up costs for new farmers	It offers grants and funding to cover the initial costs of setting up and modernising farms.
Educational	Lack of technical and vocational training	It includes training and mentoring programmes for young people to acquire skills necessary for efficient farm management.

5.2.4 Gorenjska

Association of hill and mountain farmers of Slovenia	
<p>Localization: Slovenia</p> <p>References: https://www.agriculturejournals.cz/pdfs/age/2012/06/04.pdf</p>	<p>Key elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mountain farming: it represents farmers working in mountainous and hilly regions, facing specific challenges due to topography and climate. 2. Generational renewal: it promotes generational renewal by facilitating the installation of young farmers and successors to ensure the continuity of agricultural activity. 3. Sustainable rural development: it promotes practices that balance agricultural production with environmental conservation and the well-being of rural communities. 4. Agricultural support policies: it facilitates subsidies, financing and public policies that favour farmers in disadvantaged areas. 5. Agricultural diversification: promotes complementary activities such as agro-tourism, handicrafts and local products to increase the profitability of farms.

Key players		
Type of Actor	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Individuals	Young successors and new entrants	The association supports young farmers with training programmes, financing and technical assistance to facilitate generational renewal.
Collectives	Professional associations and cooperatives	It facilitates collaborative networks with associations and cooperatives to improve marketing and access to shared resources.
Regulators	State and regional administration	It works with administrations to influence policies to support mountain regions and ensure a fair distribution of subsidies.
Main barriers		
Barrier Category	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Demographic	Ageing rural population and lack of young successors.	It promotes generational renewal programmes and facilitates access to land for young farmers.
Economic	Limited access to credit and high set-up costs for new farmers.	It advocates targeted funding policies and subsidies to reduce entry costs.
Educational	Lack of technical training and ongoing mentoring programmes.	It offers life-long learning and training programmes for new and successor farmers.

Association of Slovenian Rural Youth	
<p>Localization: Slovenia</p> <p>References: www.zspm.si</p>	<p>Key elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Rural youth: it represents young people living and working in rural areas, defending their specific interests and needs. Generational renewal: it facilitates the process of farm succession to ensure the continuity of agricultural activity. Sustainable rural development: it promotes practices and policies that ensure the balanced and long-term development of rural communities.

	<p>4. Agricultural education and training: it offers technical training and mentoring programmes to improve the skills and competencies of young farmers.</p> <p>5. Agricultural entrepreneurship: it encourages and supports youth-led business initiatives in the agricultural and agri-food sector.</p>	
Key players		
Type of Actor	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Individuals	Young successors and new entrants	The association facilitates programmes and support to prevent rural exodus and encourage the participation of young farmers.
Collectives	Professional associations	It works with associations and cooperatives to strengthen support networks and promote rural entrepreneurship.
Regulators	State and regional administration	It works with administrations to improve policies to support rural youth and reduce bureaucratic barriers.
Main barriers		
Barrier Category	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Demographic	Lack of successors and rural exodus of young people to urban areas	The association works to motivate young people to stay in rural areas and pursue agricultural careers, fostering a sense of community and local opportunities.
Economic	High set-up costs for new farmers	It promotes financial support policies and subsidies to facilitate access to land and reduce installation costs for young farmers.
Educational	Lack of technical training and ongoing mentoring programmes	It offers training, education and mentoring programmes to ensure that young farmers acquire necessary technical skills.

5.2.5 Neckar-Alb

District Farmers' Association Reutlingen: Support for Farmers

<p>Localization: Münsingen, Reutlingen</p>	<p>Key elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social counselling: it offers support services for farmers and their families on social security, farm transfers and other issues. 2. Farm succession: it facilitates the process of farm management transfer. 3. Operational assistance: it helps in processing applications for agricultural and household assistance, including health and retirement insurance. 4. Legal advice: it provides guidance on financial and legal matters. 5. Agricultural infrastructure: it provides assistance to complete the necessary documentation to apply for subsidies and it contributes to the maintenance of essential public services for farms.
<p>References: www.bauernverband-rt.de/</p>	

Key players

Type of Actor	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Individuals	Young successors and new entrants	It offers advice on farm transfers, support in setting up new farm businesses and guidance on social issues.
Collectives	Professional associations and cooperatives	It collaborates with associations and cooperatives to strengthen support networks, share resources and facilitate discounts and additional services.
Regulators	State and regional administration	It works with administrations to ensure compliance with subsidy documentation requirements and improve policies to support the agricultural sector.

Main barriers

Barrier Category	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Demographic	Lack of successors	Advice on farm transfer: free initial advice on the transfer of agricultural holdings within and outside the family, as well as on setting up a business.
Economic	High set-up costs for new farmers	It provides assistance with funding applications, subsidies and legal advice to

		reduce the costs of installation for new farmers.
Educational	Lack of technical and vocational training	It offers advice and training to improve farmers' skills in relation to contractual and taxation issues.

ALBGMACHT e. V.: Cooperative product marketing

<p>Localization: Albgemacht, Münsingen (Reutlingen)</p> <p>References: www.albgemacht.de/</p>	<p>Key elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Regional brand: it manages a brand that brings together high quality local products from the Swabian Alb Biosphere area. Biodiversity: commitment to the preservation and promotion of biological diversity in agricultural production areas. Animal welfare: it guarantees animal husbandry practices that ensure ethical and sustainable conditions for animals. Natural processing: transformation of raw materials using natural methods. Fair trade: respectful and fair collaboration between producers and customers, with annual independent controls to guarantee transparency and quality.
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Key players

Type of Actor	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Collectives	Professional associations	It acts as a professional association that facilitates the marketing of agricultural products under a common brand, promoting sustainable practices.
Individuals	New entrants	It provides opportunities for new farmers interested in meeting sustainability criteria and joining a structured marketing network.
Regulators	Regional administration	It is supported by regional administrations to ensure compliance with biodiversity and animal welfare standards in the region.

Main barriers

Barrier Category	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Environmental	Pressure for sustainable agricultural practices and degradation of soil and water resources	It promotes sustainable agricultural practices that help conserve natural resources and biodiversity.
Economic	High set-up costs for new farmers	It facilitates the marketing of regional products, helping farmers to earn better incomes and reduce installation costs.
Social	Lack of mechanisms for cooperation and mutual assistance	It promotes collaboration and fairness between members, clients and suppliers

Xäls eG. Neckar-Alb ecological cooperative

Localization:

Tübingen, Neckar-Alb

References:

www.xaels.de

Key elements:

1. **Value generation:** commitment to regional economic development through ecological and sustainable agricultural practices that protect the environment for future generations.
2. **Collaboration network:** establishment of a network of producers, processors, traders and consumers to promote cooperation and fair trade in the region.
3. **Direct marketing:** use of direct sales methods, such as farm shops and vending machines, to distribute organic products in areas with weak infrastructure.
4. **Local/regional sustainability:** promotion of small-scale agriculture with ecological and social criteria, ensuring that member companies operate in the Neckar-Alb region.
5. **Mutual assistance:** promoting cooperation between members to ensure a decent livelihood, support in business succession and exclusive distribution under the Xäls brand.

Key players

Type of Actor	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
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Collectives	Cooperatives and professional associations	Xäls facilitates collaboration between producers, processors and traders to ensure sustainable practices and fair prices.
Individuals	New farmers and successors	It supports new farmers and successors by providing them with a stable marketing network and direct sales methods.
Regulators	Local and regional administration	It works with local administrations to strengthen logistics infrastructure and secure the value chain in regional markets.
Main barriers		
Barrier Category	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Economic	High set-up costs for new farmers	Xäls provides a common marketing structure and facilitates access to local markets, reducing upfront costs.
Territorial	Limited access to land in rural areas	It promotes the use of direct sales methods and local networks to support farmers in regions with limited access to land.
Social	Lack of mechanisms for cooperation and mutual assistance	It promotes collaboration and mutual assistance to ensure equal opportunities and a fair distribution of resources among members.

5.2.6 Campobasso, Molise

"Pacchetto Giovani" Initiative - Molise Region	
<p>Localization:</p> <p>Molise</p> <p>References:</p> <p>https://psr.regione.molise.it/node/712</p>	<p>Key elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Generational renewal: promoting the entry of young farmers to replace an ageing farming population. 2. Start-up grants: initial financial support to cover the costs of setting up a new agricultural enterprise. 3. Sustainable rural development: improving the economic and environmental viability of farms in rural areas. 4. Business development plan: a comprehensive document detailing strategies and objectives for the growth and sustainability of the new agricultural enterprise.

5. Combating rural depopulation: strategies to retain young people in rural areas and revitalise local communities through agriculture.		
Key players		
Type of Actor	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Individuals	Young successors and new entrants	The initiative provides financial support and training to facilitate the entry of young people into the agricultural sector.
Collectives	Professional associations and cooperatives	It works with associations and cooperatives to foster support networks and ensure the sustainability of new agricultural enterprises.
Regulators	Regional and local government	It involves regional and local administrations in implementing measures to support and monitor rural development.
Main barriers		
Barrier Category	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Economic	High start-up costs and lack of access to finance	It provides start-up grants to cover the costs of setting up new agricultural enterprises.
Demographic	Ageing of the agricultural population and rural depopulation	The initiative encourages generational renewal by supporting young farmers under the age of 40, helping to revitalise rural areas.
Educational	Lack of technical and business training for young farmers	It requires the submission of a Business Development Plan, promoting training and strategic planning for young farmers.

Best Practices for Supporting Start-Ups and Extra Agricultural Activities in Rural Areas

Localization: Molise	Key elements: 1. Economic diversification: promotion of non-agricultural activities such as rural tourism, handicrafts and innovative services to strengthen the rural economy.
References: www.psr.regione.molise.it/programma2327	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Financial support: specific grants and financial aid to facilitate the installation and development of new businesses in rural areas. 3. Rural infrastructure: improving access to services, transport and marketing networks to support new entrepreneurs. 4. Generational renewal: promoting the establishment of young entrepreneurs in rural areas to address population ageing and depopulation. 5. Social inclusion: guaranteeing equal opportunities for women and young people through training programmes and support for business start-ups.
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Key players

Type of Actor	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Individuals	Young entrepreneurs and new farmers	It provides financial support and training to facilitate the establishment of new businesses in non-agricultural activities.
Collectives	Professional associations and cooperatives	It promotes collaboration between associations to diversify the rural economy through rural tourism, crafts and innovation.
Regulators	Regional and local government	It manages and monitors support programmes, ensuring that funds and resources are allocated in an effective and sustainable manner.

Main barriers

Barrier Category	Subtype	Relationship with the GP
Economic	High start-up costs and lack of access to finance	Best practices offer initial financial support and grants to cover start-up costs for new enterprises.
Territorial	Limited access to local infrastructure and markets	They promote the use of local infrastructure and direct marketing methods to overcome geographical barriers.

Social	Gender inequality and lack of support for young entrepreneurs	They promote the inclusion of women and youth through training programmes and business support networks.
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5.3 Conclusions of the analysis of good practices

Key actors

- **Individuals:** young farmers, new entrants and rural entrepreneurs are essential for generational renewal and economic diversification. There are numerous initiatives that facilitate their entry into the farm and non-farm sector through financial support, technical training and ongoing mentoring.
- **Collectives:** associations and cooperatives offer collaborative networks and shared resources. Social economy entities facilitate access to markets, infrastructure and legal services, helping to overcome bureaucratic barriers and promoting sustainable practices.
- **Regulators:** state and regional administration allocate funds and simplify bureaucratic procedures. Inter-institutional collaboration and monitoring ensure the success and transferability of these initiatives.

Main barriers

- **Economic:** High start-up costs, lack of finance and income instability make rural entrepreneurship difficult. Programmes exist that offer subsidies and investment support, but these are often insufficient for long-term success.
- **Social:** gender inequalities, exclusion of minorities and low prestige of agriculture affect youth participation. Empowerment and social inclusion programmes foster a new culture of rural innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **Territorial:** limited access to land and infrastructure hinders the development of new projects and ventures. Direct marketing and digital technologies help

overcome these barriers, while improved public services make rural areas more attractive.

Aggregation of key elements

The key elements address essential aspects for overcoming barriers in the agricultural sector and facilitating generational renewal.

Financial support and investment are crucial to cover start-up costs and modernisation, but must be complemented by measures to facilitate access to land. Sustainable rural development promotes farming practices that strengthen the economy and social cohesion. The profitability and viability of farms ensure long-term economic sustainability by reducing costs and increasing incomes.

The implementation of agricultural innovation and digitalisation optimises processes and facilitates decision-making. Improving rural infrastructure and services facilitates work and raises the quality of life. Ensuring animal welfare and reducing environmental impact are necessary practices to meet today's demands. Economic diversification and technical education strengthen the rural fabric.

Finally, effective policies and collaboration between stakeholders and public-private partnerships are essential to build a resilient and sustainable agricultural sector.

6 Proposals for improvement

Down to Earth partners, in collaboration with key stakeholders in their regions, have put together a series of proposals to improve their local, regional and national policies addressing the barriers faced by young farmers in rural areas. A joint analysis of these proposals for improvement has been carried out with the objective of identifying the common elements that form the basis for our recommendations.

5.1 Methodology for the study of proposals for improvement

a) **Analysis:** qualitative synoptic table of the relationship between barriers (table 2) and generic proposals for improvement for each region.

b) **Diagnosis:** a systematic comparison of the table of proposals for each region with the specific SWOT analysis is carried out. Results are represented in a matrix showcasing:

1. Overlapping proposals with weaknesses
2. Overlapping proposals with strengths
3. Proposals that coincide with threats
4. Matching proposals with opportunities

c) **Projection:** possibilities for implementation. Table of proposals common to all regions aggregated by quantitative interpretation.

Each improvement proposal can be associated with different themes. The greater the relationship between the barrier and key subtopics, the greater the possibility of overcoming it, as it can be tackled on several fronts.

Each of the identified barriers can be tackled with different solutions, which is why a cross-cutting approach is necessary. Theoretical factors that may be relevant to the issue are taken into account. Various characteristics and factors influence labour markets, labour trends and employment potential in rural areas, as well as the capacities to innovate and create new forms of governance:

- Agrotechnology
 - Bioeconomy
 - Circular economy
 - Culture
 - Education and training
 - Governance
 - Multifunctional agriculture
 - New business models
 - New participants
 - New services
 - Smart rurality
 - Traditional products
 - Types of business

5.2 Study of the proposals for improvement

6.1.1 Analysis: relationship between barriers & proposals for improvement in each region

Galicia

Barrier	Proposal for improvement
Limited access to credit and finance, poor financial stability	Increase subsidies and low-interest loans.
Limited access to land in rural areas	Improve access to land through land banks and land transfer policies.
Lack of technical and vocational training	Implement mentoring and technical training programmes for young farmers.
Economic Diversification	Promote activities such as agro-tourism and direct sales to increase income.
Lack of cross-cutting policies	Improve rural roads, irrigation, digitalisation and public services.

Romania

Barrier	Proposal for improvement
Funding	Increase funding for specific programmes for young farmers.
Access to Land	Facilitate land banking policies and leasing options.
Lack of technical and vocational training	Develop training programmes in collaboration with universities.

Rural Infrastructure	Improve roads, transport and internet in rural areas.
Public-Private Partnerships	Promote cooperation between government, private sector and NGOs.
Funding	Increase funding for specific programmes for young farmers.

Western Greece

Barrier	Proposal for improvement
Funding	Increase funds and facilitate investment processes.
Water Infrastructure	Build dams and improve irrigation infrastructure.
Digitisation	Introduce digital agricultural support mechanisms and training.
Resilience to Climate Change	Strengthen reconstruction and adaptation programmes.
Economic Diversification	Promote local energy and biomass communities.

Gorenjska

Barrier	Proposal for improvement
Specific Support	Specific support programmes for young farmers.
Rural Quality of Life	Improve access to health, education and digital infrastructure.
Sustainability	Encourage ecological and traditional agricultural practices.
Cooperation and Partnership	Encourage partnerships between farms and research centres.

Neckar-Alb

Barrier	Proposal for improvement
Awareness-raising	Promote debate on generational renewal in forums and events.
Support Institutions	Strengthen networks of institutions that support new farmers.
Integrated Policies	Develop policies that combine agriculture and regional tourism.
Integrated Policies	Develop comprehensive planning instruments
Consultancy	Expand farm succession advisory services.

Campobasso, Molise

Area	Proposal for improvement
Financial Support	Facilitate access to grants, loans and European funds.
Education and Technology	Invest in agricultural technology and training centres.
Community Empowerment	Strengthen local communities to preserve cultural heritage.
Economic Diversification	Encourage non-agricultural activities such as rural tourism and handicrafts.

6.1.2 Diagnosis: comparative model of proposals for improvement vs SWOT analysis

A relationship is established between the factors identified in the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats and Strengths) and the specific proposals for improvement for each region.

Galicia

SWOT	Description	Proposals for Improvement
Weaknesses	High installation costs	Financial support: Grants and low-interest loans
Weaknesses	Lack of technical training	Training and capacity building: Mentoring programmes and technical courses
Threats	Rural depopulation	Infrastructure: Improvement of services and rural roads
Threats	Excessive bureaucracy	Innovation: Simplification of administrative processes
Strengths	Sustainable practices	Innovation: Promoting sustainable agricultural technologies

There are a number of weaknesses that affect the agricultural development of young people. These include the high costs of setting up and maintaining farms, as well as the lack of technical training to manage modern practices. In addition, lack of coordination between actors in the sector hinders access to resources and knowledge. To address these barriers, financial support needs to be strengthened through grants and accessible credit, as well as mentoring and technical training programmes.

The main threats include rural depopulation, lack of successors and excessive bureaucracy that complicates access to support. To mitigate these risks, rural infrastructure needs to be improved, and administrative processes simplified.

Galicia has strengths such as sustainable agricultural practices and cooperative networks that facilitate marketing. These can be enhanced through sustainable technologies and agricultural innovation. There are clear opportunities to promote environmentally friendly practices and to take advantage of the region's natural resources and tourism potential.

Romania

SWOT	Description	Proposals for Improvement
Weaknesses	Lack of funding	Funding: Increase funding for young farmers
Weaknesses	Gender inequality	Education: Inclusion and training programmes
Threats	Rural exodus	Access to Land: Land Bank Policies
Threats	Lack of effective policies	Public-Private Partnerships: Collaboration with NGOs and Government
Strengths	Government support	Financing: Access to subsidies and loans
Opportunities	Mentoring programmes	Education: Development of mentoring programmes

The main weaknesses include lack of finance and gender inequality in access to resources and land. Many young people are unable to obtain credit due to stringent requirements, while women face additional barriers in accessing finance and land. To overcome these weaknesses, it is necessary to increase available funding and encourage inclusive education programmes that promote gender equality.

The most relevant threats are the rural exodus of young people and the absence of effective support policies. Land banks and greater collaboration with associations and governmental entities are proposed to facilitate access to resources.

Despite these challenges, Romania has government support and a strong tradition of family farming. These strengths can be leveraged through subsidies, affordable credit, and mentoring and technical training programmes.

Western Greece

SWOT	Description	Proposals for Improvement
Weaknesses	High installation costs	Financing: Increasing investment funds
Weaknesses	Lack of technical training	Training: Specialised technical programmes
Threats	Rural depopulation	Infrastructure: Upgrading of transport and irrigation networks
Strengths	Financial support programmes	Financing: Resource optimisation
Opportunities	Adaptation to climate change	Digitalisation: Implementing sustainable technologies
Weaknesses	High installation costs	Financing: Increasing investment funds

Western Greece faces barriers such as high installation costs, lack of adequate infrastructure and a shortage of specific technical training for young farmers. These weaknesses limit the ability to establish profitable farms. It is recommended to set up

specific investment funds for young people and to offer technical training programmes tailored to the needs of the sector.

A major threat is rural depopulation and the ageing of the agricultural population. To counter this trend, it is crucial to improve transport and irrigation infrastructures, thus facilitating more attractive living and working conditions in rural areas.

Western Greece has strengths such as financial support programmes and the strategic role of agriculture in its economy. These should be optimised to ensure that resources reach those who need them most. In addition, opportunities exist in digitisation and adaptation to climate change, thus improving the sustainability and efficiency of farms.

Gorenjska

SWOT	Description	Proposals for Improvement
Weaknesses	Limited access to credit	Specific Support: Funding Programmes
Threats	Rural youth exodus	Rural Quality of Life: Improving services and infrastructure
Strengths	Cooperation networks	Sustainability: Encouraging collective farming practices
Opportunities	Lifelong learning programmes	Continuous Training: Courses and mentoring
Weaknesses	Limited access to credit	Specific Support: Funding Programmes
Threats	Rural youth exodus	Rural Quality of Life: Improving services and infrastructure

In Gorenjska, the main weaknesses include limited access to credit and an ageing agricultural population. Many young people are unable to access finance. To overcome these barriers, it is proposed to create specific financial support programmes for young farmers.

Threats, such as the rural exodus of young people to urban areas, must be addressed by improving services and infrastructure in rural areas. This includes access to education, health and services.

Despite these barriers, Gorenjska has strengths such as cooperation networks and active agricultural associations. These strengths can be enhanced by encouraging collective and sustainable agricultural practices. In addition, opportunities for further education and

mentoring should be taken advantage of by implementing specialised courses and training programmes.

Neckar-Alb

SWOT	Description	Proposals for Improvement
Weaknesses	High installation costs	Advisory: Financial support services
Threats	Lack of succession	Awareness-raising: Promoting generational debate
Strengths	Technical advice	Support Institutions: Strengthening advisory networks
Opportunities	Integrated regional policies	Integrated Policies: Combining agriculture and tourism

The main weaknesses identified are limited economic perspectives for newcomers and high set-up costs in access to resources and opportunities. These challenges limit the entry of new farmers.

To take advantage of the opportunities, integrated regional policies combining agriculture, local trade and tourism should be developed. In addition, there is a need to strengthen institutional support networks and provide financial advisory services to facilitate the farm succession process.

Campobasso, Molise

SWOT	Description	Proposals for Improvement
Weaknesses	Lack of funding	Financial support: Access to grants and loans
Threats	Rural depopulation	Community Empowerment: Strengthening local communities
Strengths	Initial financial support	Education: Training centres
Opportunities	Rural tourism	Economic Diversification: Promote agro-tourism and handicrafts

The most important weaknesses include lack of finance and poor infrastructure in rural areas. These barriers limit the opportunities for young farmers to establish and maintain sustainable farms.

Rural depopulation is a constant threat affecting the region and contributing to the abandonment of agricultural land. Despite this, Molise has strengths such as the initial financial support available to young farmers.

Opportunities for improvement include promoting rural tourism and economic diversification through activities such as agro-tourism and handicrafts. Facilitating access to grants and loans, investing in training centres and agricultural technology, and preserving cultural heritage would strengthen local communities.

6.1.3 Projection: considerations for implementation of the proposals

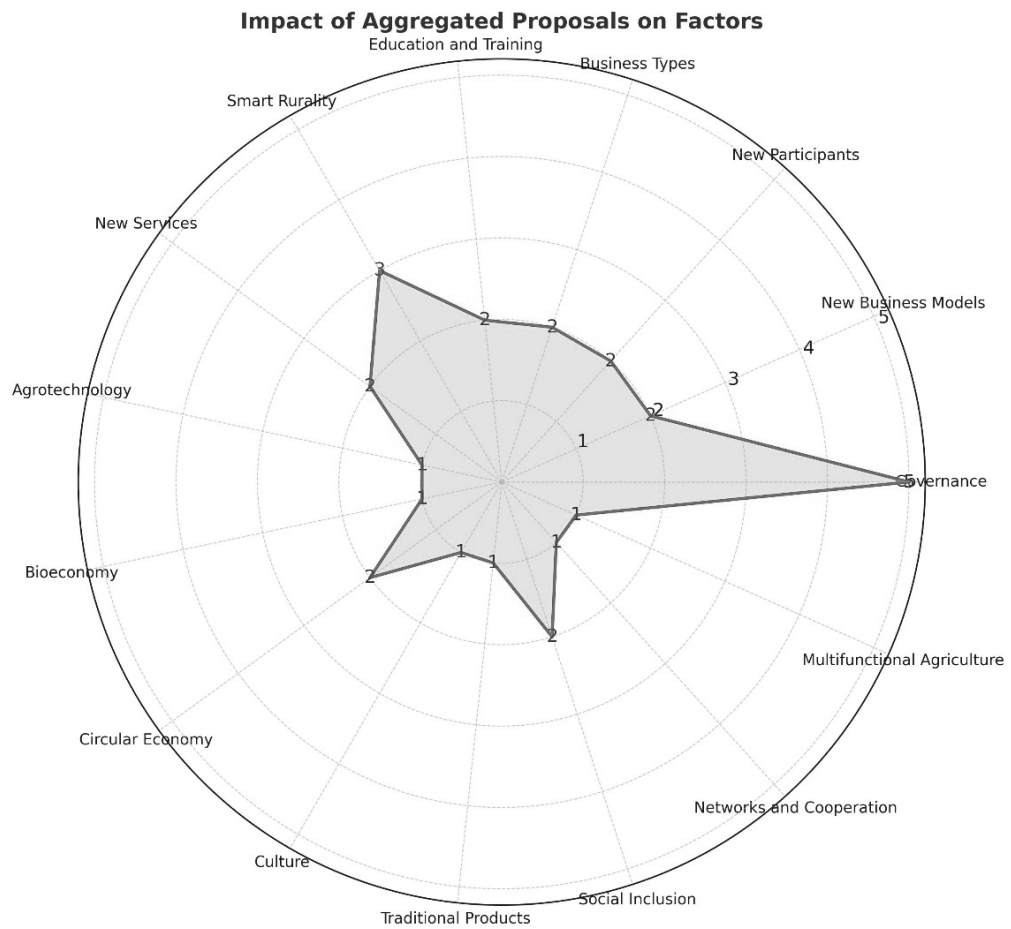
Summary of the main proposals for improvement for all regions, including:

- Main proposals for improvement: the most common proposals for improvement suggested by the regions analysed.
- Relevant factors: basic aspects that need to be taken into account when designing policies for overcoming barriers from a cross-cutting perspective.
- Considerations for implementation: brief description of the projected potential of each of the improvement proposals.

Main proposals for improvement	Relevant factors	Considerations for implementation
Increase subsidies and facilitate low-interest loans for young farmers.	Governance, New business models, New entrants, Types of business	Financial support is crucial to accelerate generational renewal and ensure the economic sustainability of new farmers. Direct support and soft loans facilitate entry into the agricultural sector. Success of this type of support can be increased if it is accompanied of appropriate advice and counselling to guide the use of the funds and the development of the business model.
Develop land bank policies and facilitate land leasing.	Governance, New entrants, Types of business	The implementation of effective land banking policies and support from local authorities facilitates equitable access to land for new entrants. The participation of support entities that can facilitate the incorporation processes is advisable.
Implement mentoring, technical training and continuous training programmes.	Education and training, Intelligent rurality, New services	Technical training and ongoing support are essential for new farmers to adopt innovative and sustainable practices. Training must be practical and tailored to market needs. It should also focus on specific needs of young farmers,

		for instance, incorporating new technologies that can make land mobility easier.
Improve rural roads, access to irrigation, utilities and digital connectivity.	Smart rurality, New services, Governance	Improving rural infrastructure encourages new farmers to take root and facilitates the marketing of local products.
Incorporate advanced agricultural technologies and promote the digitalisation of the sector.	Agrotechnology, Bioeconomy, Circular Economy, Smart Rurality	The adoption of digital technologies and agroecological practices is key to a sustainable transition.
Promote rural tourism, agro-tourism and other non-agricultural activities.	Culture, New business models, Traditional products, Circular Economy	Economic diversification, such as agro-tourism and marketing of traditional products, adds value to farms and strengthens economic resilience.
Promote gender equality and facilitate women's and young people's access to resources.	Education & Training, Governance, Social Inclusion	Promoting social inclusion and gender equality increases the participation of new farmers and strengthens local communities.
Strengthen associations, cooperatives and institutional support networks.	Networks and Cooperation, Governance, Multifunctional agriculture	Cooperative networks and institutional support are essential for the success of new farmers and the creation of strong local food systems.

Key factors for policy improvement:



The radar graph shows the factors that need to be tackled in order to implement the main proposals summarised in the table above. Each point on the graph represents the level of confluence between a proposal and a factor and the main orientations on the issue for the future, highlighting the link between the proposals for improvement and aspects such as governance or smart ruralty. This shows that non-productive aspects are increasingly decisive for the improvement of rural processes.

7 Lessons learnt & recommendations

7.1 Lessons learnt from the analysis of good practices and proposals for improvement:

The experiences analysed in Down to Earth allow the identification of several key lessons to address the barriers that limit generational renewal and the entry of new farmers.

Financial support is essential, but it alone does not guarantee the success of new farmers. It needs to be complemented by access to land, adequate training and efficient infrastructure. Programmes that integrate these elements tend to have better results and more lasting impact.

Policies and technologies that facilitate **access to land** are key to attracting and retaining young farmers. Initiatives such as land banks and flexible leasing options have proven effective in many regions.

Continuous **education and training** allow traditional knowledge to be combined with modern practices. This improves both productivity and sustainability. Mentoring and specific training programmes are especially useful for new farmers.

Investment in infrastructure is another key pillar. Improving roads, irrigation systems and digital connectivity facilitates farm management and improves the quality of life in rural areas.

Ensuring **gender equity** and fostering social inclusion strengthens farming communities, creating fairer and more participatory environments.

Cooperation and support networks make it possible to share resources and increase the resilience of farms, promoting sustainable models. Private advisory services can be facilitators of these renewal processes.

Finally, **integrated policies** that address several areas simultaneously are proving to be more effective in boosting agricultural sector development.

7.2 Recommendations for improving policy instruments in the context of Down to Earth

1. Facilitating access to land

Ensuring young farmers and new entrants can access land is essential for revitalizing rural areas and supporting the next generation of agricultural producers. Specific instruments such as land banking policies and long-term leasing contracts are essential to provide secure and affordable access to land. At the same time, policies must prioritize the prevention of land concentration and land grabbing, ensuring that access is directed toward young farmers and new entrants rather than large-scale corporate interests. To ensure the success of these policies, it is also important to avoid excessive administrative burdens: simplification of procedures and specific aid to cover the fees of technical services that facilitate the development of projects are crucial steps.

2. Promoting financial support programmes

Expand and diversify financial support programmes to address the high upfront costs of establishing and modernising farms. This can include offering low-interest loans, start-up grants and public insurance schemes to mitigate credit risk for farmers in vulnerable areas. Incentives should also be tailored to support innovative income diversification activities, such as agro-tourism, artisanal production, and renewable energy initiatives.

3. Strengthening continuous training and counselling

Developing training and mentoring programmes tailored to the needs of new farmers is essential to address their specific needs and challenges. Advisory networks can play a crucial role providing the technical and management support needed ensure sustainability of farm businesses. Strengthening collaboration between agricultural advisers and public administrations will further enhance this effort. This integrated approach will help equip young farmers with the knowledge, skills, and support systems they need to succeed.

4. Promoting gender equality and social inclusion

Foster an inclusive agricultural sector by prioritising targeted support for women and minority groups. Tailored measures should be designed to empower these groups and address existing disparities. Promoting diverse participation in agriculture not only enhances innovation and resilience but also strengthens rural communities. Ensuring equal opportunities for all farmers will contribute to a more equitable and sustainable agricultural sector.

5. Developing rural infrastructure

Investing in essential infrastructure and services such as roads, digital connectivity and energy networks will ensure that rural areas are equipped to meet modern agricultural demands. Improved infrastructure facilitates market access, enhances productivity and reduces the isolation of rural communities, making farming more attractive to young farmers and new entrants.

6. Fostering the relationship between urban and rural areas

Promote stronger connections between urban and rural areas to create mutually beneficial opportunities. Initiatives such as community gardens, local markets and short supply chains can link urban consumers with rural producers, boosting demand for local and sustainable products. Educational activities and cultural exchanges that highlight the value of agricultural work can foster understanding and collaboration between urban and rural population, creating synergies and contributing to social cohesion.

7. Supporting new business models

Promote multifunctional agriculture, agro-tourism, artisanal activities, and other innovative models that diversify income sources and enhance the economic resilience of new farmers. Encourage local production through territorial brands that add value to traditional and sustainable products. Additionally, launch a programme for farm testing and experimentation, allowing prospective farmers to gain hands-on experience in agricultural work before fully committing to agricultural activity. This initiative will help

new entrants better understand the sector and develop the skills needed for long-term success.

8. Strengthening the role of local authorities

Local authorities can play a pivotal role in enabling the establishment of new farmers by creating favourable conditions and support mechanisms. This includes improving public services in rural areas, fostering local markets and including local products into public programmes and institutional supply chains to create consistent demand.

9. Cooperation and mentoring networks

Support the creation of cooperatives and mentoring networks to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and resources. Cooperation strengthens resilience and fosters entrepreneurship. Additionally, fostering mechanisms to connect farms that are preparing to close with new farmers interested in joining can ensure the continuity of agricultural activity, while also creating opportunities for young farmers to access established resources and infrastructure.

10. Promoting agri-technology and the bioeconomy.

Encourage the adoption of advanced agricultural technologies with the introduction of robotics, AI and other technologies that improve production processes. Develop sustainable practices that reduce the environmental impact of farming and increase farm efficiency, linking agriculture, livestock and forestry in integrated and circular models. Providing targeted funding, training, and infrastructure for these innovations will enable farmers to adapt to modern challenges, enhance competitiveness, and contribute to a greener rural economy.

11 Developing integrated and cross-cutting policies:

Ensure inter-institutional coordination between local, regional and national levels for effective land policy implementation. Prioritise holistic approaches that simultaneously address financial, educational, infrastructural and social barriers. Regular monitoring and

evaluation of policy outcomes are essential to adapt strategies proactively and ensure they respond effectively to evolving challenges and opportunities in rural development.

8 Conclusions

The analysis reveals the challenges and opportunities faced by young farmers. Financial barriers, limited access to land, lack of technical training and infrastructure deficiencies are common obstacles that require targeted but planned cross-cutting interventions.

Financial mechanisms such as grants and low-interest loans help cover high installation costs, but are not sufficient on their own. Access to land remains critical, especially in regions with fragmented or concentrated land ownership, for various reasons. Solutions such as land banks and leasing policies can facilitate the entry of new generations into agriculture.

Technical training is key to enabling the adoption of sustainable and innovative practices. Programmes that integrate traditional knowledge with agri-technology can improve productivity and environmental management. In addition, adequate rural infrastructure is essential to compete in markets.

A noteworthy aspect is the importance of social inclusion and gender equity in promoting resilient agricultural communities. Women and minority groups face additional barriers and policies that encourage their active participation lead to more equitable and sustainable outcomes. Networks and cooperative models also proved to be effective in fostering collaboration, sharing resources and strengthening community resilience.

Ultimately, it is important to stress the interconnectedness of financial, educational, infrastructural and social factors in the success of young farmers. Integrated policies that address these dimensions holistically are more likely to achieve long-term sustainability and generational renewal in agriculture.

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Down to Earth

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10 Annexes

10.1 Issues reported per region

10.1.1 Neckar Alb

In the Region of Neckar Alb depopulation is not an issue, since the population has steadily increased over the last 50 years. (Neckar-Alb)

Small overall size of the agricultural sector. The agricultural sector in the Neckar-Alb region is relatively small compared to the manufacturing and the service sectors. While the manufacturing sector (including construction) and the service sector accounted for about 39 % and 60 % of the gross value added in 2021, respectively, only about 0.4 % of the gross value added in the region came from the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector (IHK 2024-Neckar Alb). Overall the number of farms is slowly decreasing and there is consolidation of farmed areas under fewer farm owners (Neckar-Alb).

Demographic challenges and continuity of farming enterprises. There are demographic challenges that affect generational renewal in the Neckar-Alb region. Only 8 % of the farmers of agricultural holdings in Baden-Württemberg were below 34 years in age, whereas 48 % were 55 years or older (cf. LEL 2024a). From a demographic point of view, this indicates that there is a large number of farmers in the region who are approaching the end of their careers and who have to think about handing over the farm to younger generations. On the other side, there are only few young farmers who have taken over agricultural holdings in the last years. Accordingly, there seems to be a considerable gap in the region between the number of farmers who enter the sector and those who retire from the sector. (Neckar-Alb). In 66 % of the farm enterprises with an owner of 55+ years old it was not clear who will continue to run the farm after the farm owner will retire. (Neckar-Alb)

Social challenges. There is declining family participation in farm's workforce.

Economic challenges. Although the statistics indicate that both the operating results and the income of farms in Germany rose on average in the financial year 2022/2023, the prospects for new entrants to agriculture in the Neckar-Alb region are uncertain. One obstacle for new entrants is the risky income prospects in the agricultural sector that farmers face. The mean income per farm worker in Baden-Württemberg was not only stagnating over the last few years but was also one of the lowest in Germany. This has several reasons but can at least partly be attributed to the small size of the farm landholdings compared to other federal states.

Educational challenges. Farmers in Neckar-Alb follow vocational training and dual route to farming profession with studies and apprenticeships. Important also are other green professions responsible for land management.

Territorial challenges. The various farming areas of the region face soil quality differences. Remoteness of farms, accessibility and transport costs are also important considerations for farmers in remote areas and new entrants facing increased start up and running costs.

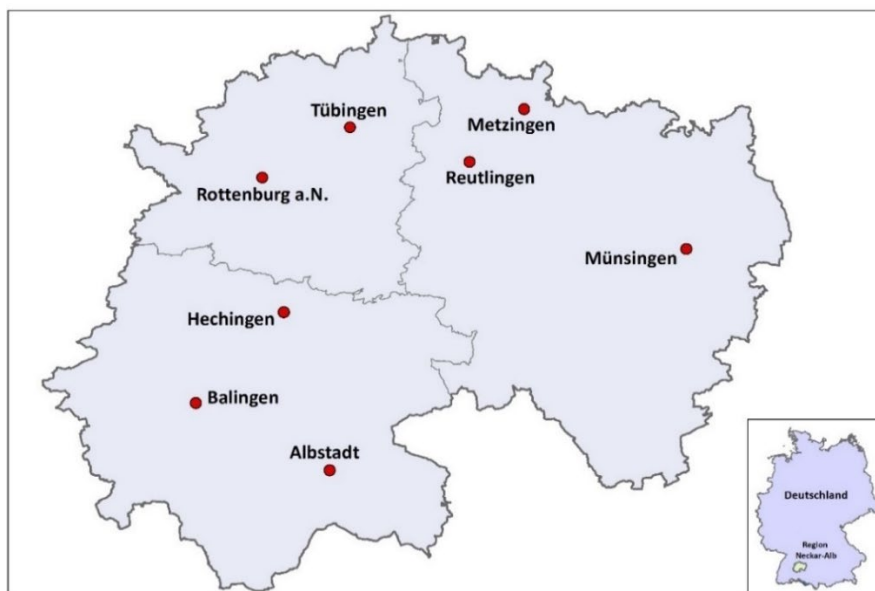


Figure 1: The Neckar-Alb region. Source: RVNA 2023

Number of farms and area of farms 2020

Number of farms / agricultural enterprises	2,074
With legal status of sole proprietorship	1,776
Proportion of main occupational farms	25.3 %
Proportion of sideline farms	74.7 %
Total agricultural area	98,711 ha (2020)
Mean farm size	47.6 ha (2020)

Table 2: Number of farms, proportion of main occupational and sideline farms, total farm area and mean farm size 2020. Source: Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg 2024c; Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg 2024d; compilation by RVNA 2023

Farm size distribution 2020	Number of farms	Proportion
< 5 ha	101	4.9 %
5 to below 10 ha	393	18.9 %
10 to below 20 ha	472	22.8 %
20 to below 50 ha	496	23.9 %
> 50 ha	612	29.5 %
Total number of farms	2,074	100 %

Table 3: Farm size distribution in the Neckar-Alb region 2020. Source: Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg 2024d; compilation by RVNA 2023

Agricultural land use* 2020	Agricultural area	Proportion
Permanent grassland and pastureland	52,992 ha	53.7 %
Cropland	45,395 ha	46.0 %
Orchards	102 ha	0.1 %
Vineyards	24 ha	< 0.1%
Total Agricultural Area	98,711 ha	100 %

*Definition according to AgrStatG of 2010: Agricultural holdings with 5 ha or more of utilized agricultural area (UAA) or production units.

Table 4: Land used for agriculture in the Neckar-Alb region by main type of use 2020. Source: Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg 2024h; data provided by the agricultural structure survey, agricultural census, main land use survey; compilation by RVNA 2023

Land ownership and tenancy* 2023	Proportion
Proportion of owned self-managed agricultural land	34.9 % (2023)
Proportion of tenanted agricultural land	60.7 % (2023)

Proportion of agricultural land obtained free from charge	4.4 % (2023)
Total agricultural area	100.0 %

*Agricultural holdings with 5 ha UAA or more or with minimum production units; representative results taken from the agricultural structure survey/agricultural census.

Table 5: Landownership and tenancy in Baden-Württemberg 2023. Source: Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg 2024e; compilation by RVNA 2024.

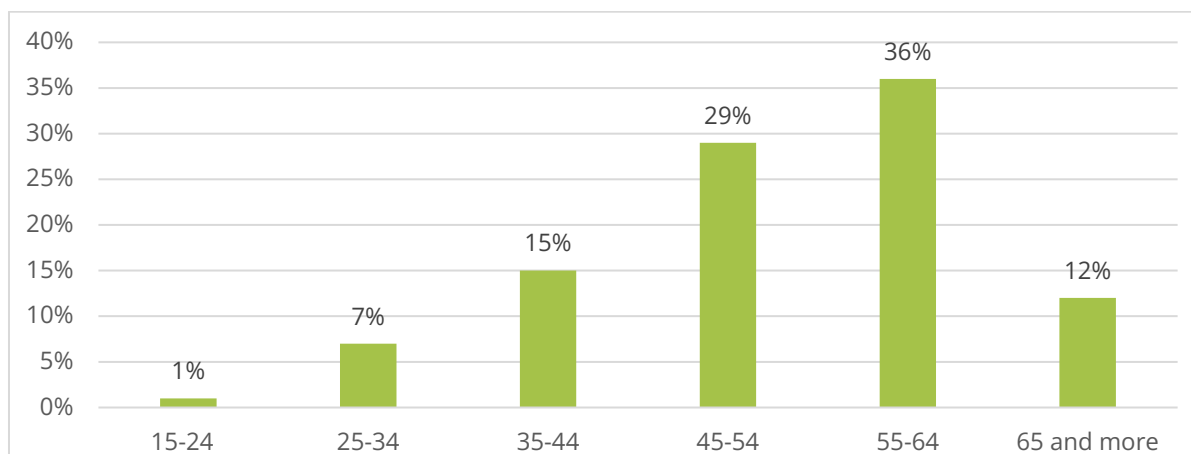


Figure 2: Age groups of farmers of agricultural holdings in Baden-Württemberg 2020. Source: RVNA 2024 based on data by LEL Schwäbisch Gmünd 2024a, Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg, Landwirtschaftszählung 2020

Secured farm succession in agricultural enterprises 2020			
	Individual enterprise with owners > 55 years		
Reference Area	Number	With farm succession	Without a secured farm succession
Reutlingen	385	126	259
Tübingen	149	62	87
Zollernalb	304	96	208
Neckar-Alb Region	838	284	554

Table 6: Agricultural enterprises with farm succession in the Neckar-Alb region 2020. Source: Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder 2024. Regionaldatenbank Deutschland.

Development of the number of farms and the area farmed 1999-2020				
	1999	2010	2016	2020
Number of farms	3,126	2,232	2,098	2,074
< 5 ha	193	117	100	101
5 to under 10 ha	881	455	412	393
10 to under 20 ha	790	546	477	472

20 to under 50 ha	734	531	509	496
> 50 ha	528	583	600	612
Total area farmed [ha]	95,370	96,688	98,416	98,711
Mean farm size [ha]	30.5	43.3	46.9	47.6

Table 7: Development of the number of farms and the area farmed in the Neckar-Alb region 1999-2020; Source: Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg 2024c; compilation by RVNA 2024.



*Employed persons at the place of work by economic sector (ETR)

Figure 3: Number of employed persons in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector in the Neckar-Alb region 2000-2022. Source: RVNA 2024 based on data by Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg 2024g. Data by Arbeitskreis Erwerbstätigenrechnung der Länder

Labour force in agricultural businesses 2020	Proportion
Family workers	49 %
Permanent employees	18 %
Seasonal workers	33 %

Table 8: Labor force in agricultural businesses in Baden-Württemberg 2020. Source: LEL Schwäbisch Gmünd 2024b; data provided by the Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg 2024f, Landwirtschaftszählung 2020.

Mean profit and mean income of main occupational farms 2022/2023	
Mean profit per farm	70,446 Euro
Mean income per family labour force (profits plus staff costs)	41,543 Euro

Table 9: Mean profit and income from farming in Baden-Württemberg 2022/2023. Source: BMEL 2024a.

Development of mean annual income per worker in main occupational farms in Baden-Württemberg and Germany 2017/2018 – 2021/2022

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Baden-Württemberg	31,992	31,165	32,015	31,076	35,031
Germany	37,618	33,169	37,369	34,052	46,118

Table 10: Mean annual income per worker in main occupational farms in Baden-Württemberg 2017/2018-2021/2022, calculated as the sum of profits and personnel costs. Source: SWR3 Data lab 2024; data provided by BMEL, Buchführungsergebnisse Landwirtschaft (v.y.)

Number of apprentices in agriculture in Baden-Württemberg 2018-2022

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Baden-Württemberg	3,614	3,594	3,648	3,740	3,622

Table 11: Number of apprentices in agriculture in Baden-Württemberg 2018-2022. Source: Statistisches Landesamt Baden-Württemberg 2024f; data from Berufsbildungsstatistik; compilation by RVNA 2024.

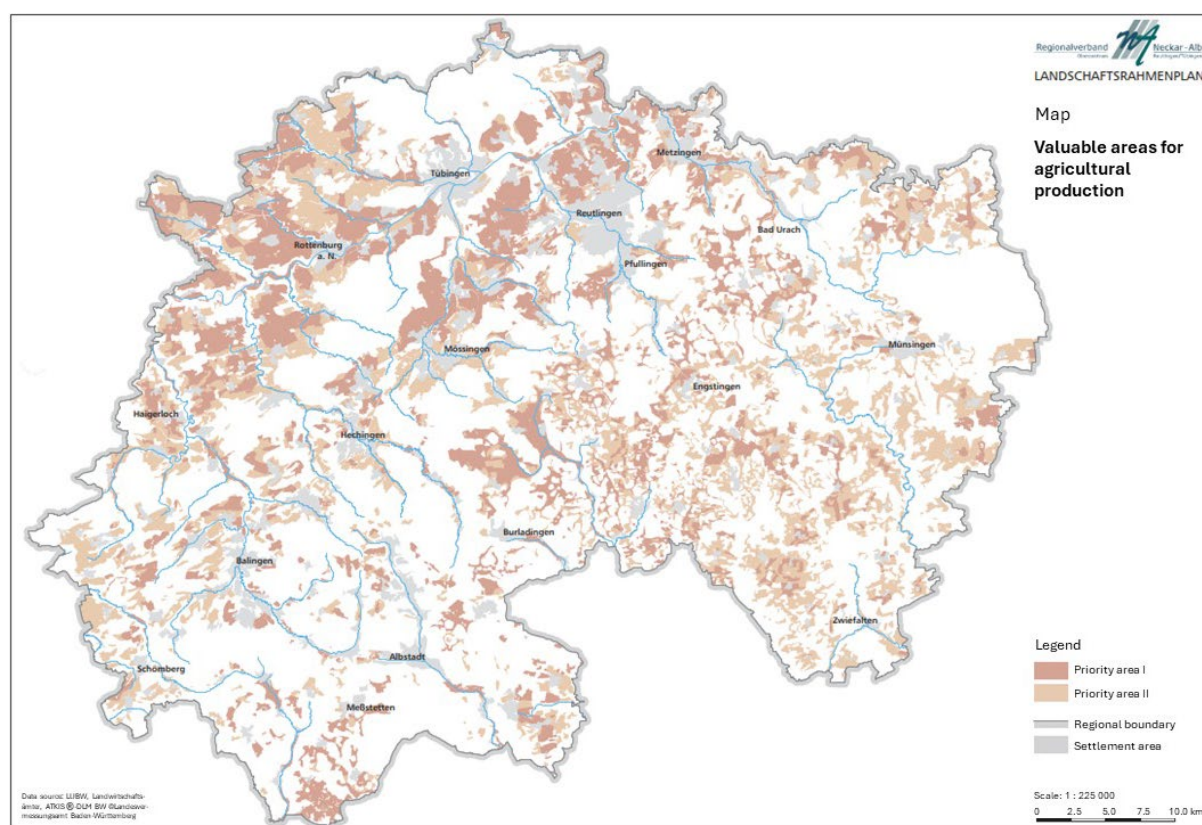


Figure 4: Valuable areas for agricultural production in the Neckar-Alb region. Source: RVNA 2011, Landschaftsrahmenplan Neckar-Alb 2011, data provided by LUBW and Landwirtschaftsämter, translated



Figure 5 SWOT Analysis of the Neckar Alb Region

10.1.2 Galicia

In Galicia the rural environment faces a series of challenges that significantly affect the quality of life and sustainable development of its communities. In a context marked by progressive depopulation, the advanced age of farmers and the lack of generational replacement, there is a need to understand the barriers faced by young people to access and remain in this environment.

Demographic analysis. In Galicia, 67% of farmers in 2020 were over 55 years old, and only 7% were under 35 years old, according to the Galician Institute of Statistics (IGE). This demographic disparity highlights a worrying lack of young people in the agricultural sector, suggesting that a large part of the agricultural workforce is close to retirement. This ageing of the agricultural population poses significant challenges for the sustainability of the sector.

Depopulation. In Galicia, as in other nearby societies, a series of transformations typical of demographic change have taken place in recent years. These changes are manifested

in the demographic structure and dynamics, with important repercussions in various areas, such as the personal, social, economic, political and environmental spheres. The report on the demographic situation in Galicia by the *Galician Demographic Dynamisation Observatory* states that these changes "call for actions and measures with an impact, if the aim is to maintain the levels of well-being and quality of life of the population in the medium and long term". (Rodríguez Galdo, 2023). The European Commission's report on the effects of demographic change expresses the need to match "behavioural, technological innovations and changes in policies and institutions, because they have considerable potential to neutralise the negative consequences and realise the opportunities that are opening up around demographic change; but their implementation will require financial resources and strong national and global leadership". (Informe de la Comisión Europea sobre los efectos del cambio demográfico, 2020)

Causes and consequences of rural depopulation. In Galicia, the phenomenon of rural depopulation is the result of a series of complex causes, whose consequences profoundly impact the social, economic and environmental structure of the region. While there still exists an outdated view that traditionally associates Galicia with a predominantly rural region and the Galician countryside with an imaginary "backwardness", however, through recent studies it is demonstrated that Galicia is defined as an urban region, where most of the population is concentrated in urban and peri-urban areas and that there is a long tradition of innovation and experimentation in rural Galicia.

Concentration in urban agglomerations and coastal areas. The distribution of the population in Galicia shows a marked concentration in the cities of the Atlantic axis, while a high degree of fragmentation and dispersion persists in the settlement system, especially in rural areas. It also describes the profound process of demographic transformation that Galicia has undergone, with an ageing population and a geographical distribution that reflects a phenomenon of rural depopulation and concentration in urban areas. Between Lugo and Ourense they account for barely 22% of the Galician population in 57.9% of the surface area and, moreover, a third of their inhabitants live in their respective provincial capitals. The negative effects of the excessive concentration of

population are aggravated by their dispersion. From an environmental point of view, the depopulation of rural areas leads to the disappearance of agricultural activity, resulting in the abandonment of cultivated land and increasing the risk of forest fires.

Ageing. The ageing of the rural population has intensified, with most municipalities experiencing moderate or severe ageing, posing significant challenges for generational renewal and sustainable development in rural areas. At the national level, the generational changeover (Garrido Fernández & Pollnow, 2021) expresses a trend towards ageing in rural areas.

Threat to generational continuity in farming. A large proportion of current farmers are not assured of generational succession, and in many cases none of their children intend to go into farming, either because they have another professional activity or because they do not find it attractive to run their parents' farm. He also states that the majority of farmers do not want their children to take over the management of the farms, preferring them to devote themselves to other professions. (Garrido Fernández & Pollnow, 2021)

Reduction of rural workforce and size of people in employment. According to data from the Galician Rural Development Plan (PDR 2014-2022) the Galician working population represents 57.5% of the total. This report mentions a detailed study of employment data, which shows that the employment rate is lower in rural areas (sparsely populated areas ZPP, intermediate areas ZIP), compared to large Galician cities (densely populated areas ZDP). The unemployment rate is 20.7%, with special incidence in the areas with intermediate population density (ZIP), being of special concern the youth unemployment rate, which exceeds 45% (ICC7). (Consellería do Medio Rural e Mar, 2013)

Increasing role of women in the agricultural sector. There is growing importance of women in agricultural activity, who account for 53% of the total.

Youth impact. The depopulation of rural areas in Galicia has a significant impact on young people, affecting various aspects of their lives and their future. This phenomenon influences the educational, employment, social and personal opportunities of young

people, conditioning their development and well-being. The main effects of rural depopulation on Galician youth are detailed below:

Access to education. Population decline in rural areas has led to the closure of many local schools due to a lack of students. This forces young people to move to urban areas to continue their education, increasing costs and logistical difficulties for rural families. In 30 years, Spain will have about 800,000 fewer students between the ages of 3 and 14. The drastic drop in the birth rate in recent decades predicts a future in which there will be fewer and fewer students and, therefore, fewer schools. (España 2050: Fundamentos y propuestas para una Estrategia Nacional de Largo Plazo, 2021). "If the school closes, the town closes," stated the general secretary of the Organisation of Ibero-American States (OEI), Mariano Jabonero. (Diario de León, 2024).

Job opportunities and local employment shortages. Young people face difficulties in finding stable and well-paid jobs in their home communities. The Red Localis report stated that "Increasing job opportunities in small municipalities and/or resizing their local infrastructure, guaranteeing a greater and better offer of services, is a complex task. This is due to the fact that rural areas are dominated by primary sector activities, such as agriculture and livestock farming, and there is little presence of the secondary or service sector. Without a significant change in the exploitation of these resources, employment opportunities will remain limited and less attractive." (Losa Muñiz & Vaquero García, 2020). Lack of employment drives young people to migrate to urban areas or even outside Galicia, contributing to the vicious circle of rural depopulation. In the interviews conducted, the word sacrifice appears repeatedly.

Limits to entrepreneurship. Barriers to entrepreneurship in rural areas, such as limited access to finance, training and support networks, discourage young people from starting their own businesses. This further reduces local economic opportunities and perpetuates youth dependence on urban employment.

Social isolation. Rural depopulation can lead to social isolation of young people, as the shrinking population reduces opportunities for social interaction and the development of meaningful relationships. The lack of services and recreational activities also contributes

to this isolation. This isolation can have negative effects on young people's mental and emotional health, increasing the risk of problems such as depression and anxiety.

Loss of cultural identity. Migration of young people to urban areas can lead to a disconnection with their cultural roots and local traditions. The transmission of cultural knowledge and practices between generations is disrupted, which can result in a long-term loss of cultural identity.

Future trends in territorial imbalances. The growing gap between rural and urban areas in terms of opportunities and quality of life creates territorial inequalities that affect rural youth. These young people may feel that they have fewer opportunities and resources compared to their urban peers. This perceived lack of a future in rural areas can discourage young people from investing in their education and professional development, perpetuating the cycle of migration and depopulation.

Generational succession is a vital condition for sustainable development. Young people are essential for innovation and the adoption of new technologies, which are crucial for the modernisation and economic diversification of rural areas. Without a young population willing to take over from the next generation, many traditional economic activities, such as agriculture and livestock farming, risk disappearing or stagnating in obsolete methods. Youth bring with them new ideas and perspectives that can transform traditional agricultural practices into more efficient and sustainable processes, promoting the green economy and quality agriculture. In addition, young people are more likely to be entrepreneurial and explore new business niches, which is crucial for revitalising rural economies and reducing dependency on limited economic sectors. The absence of young people not only affects innovation and the economy, but also endangers the long-term viability of rural communities. Without a young population to ensure the continuity of the workforce and the maintenance of essential services, many communities face an uncertain future and a risk of disappearance.

Population trends and projects. Projections indicate that, if no measures are taken to attract young people to the agricultural sector, in the next 20 years more than 70 % of Galician farms could disappear due to the retirement of their current owners. According

to the report of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, without adequate generational replacement, the number of farms could be drastically reduced, which would affect not only agricultural production, but also the economy and rural culture of Galicia. (Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación, 2022)

Furthermore, an analysis of the population pyramid shows that there is little generational turnover. Under the age of 20, the percentage of women is 14.54 %, while 28.9 % are aged 65 and over.

Women's role in rural areas. Women have traditionally assumed responsibility for household and care tasks, as well as being involved in agricultural work. Women's labour contribution has been underestimated. The type of work carried out on the family farm by most rural women in past generations (and also today, although to a lesser extent), which consisted of marginal and seasonal tasks alongside domestic work, has led to their lack of recognition and their exclusion from conventional economic statistics. (Rico González, 2007). In turn, this division of labour has limited women's opportunities for training and employment outside the rural environment. According to the report "Rural Areas: Working for Women", in recent decades, the educational level of women has caught up with, and even surpassed, that of men.

Land ownership and management. In Spain, farm ownership has been predominantly in the hands of men, due to inheritance rules that favoured men, however, in Galicia women represent 48% of farm management.

Social change in gender opportunities. In recent decades, important social changes have taken place that are transforming traditional gender roles in rural Galicia. These changes are influencing the way in which young people, especially women, access and participate in rural life. Increased access to education for women has been one of the most significant factors in the transformation of gender roles. Rural girls now have more opportunities to pursue higher education and access vocational training programmes.

Economic empowerment. Programmes and public policies that support the economic empowerment of rural women, such as specific support for women entrepreneurs in

agriculture, are helping to change traditional roles. Although significant barriers such as occupational segregation and gender stereotypes in the domestic sphere still exist, the younger generation is showing a greater awareness of equality. This gradual change suggests a more promising and equitable future for women in rural areas. Newer initiatives, as well as access to micro-credits, business management training and support networks promote women's active participation in the management of farms and rural businesses.

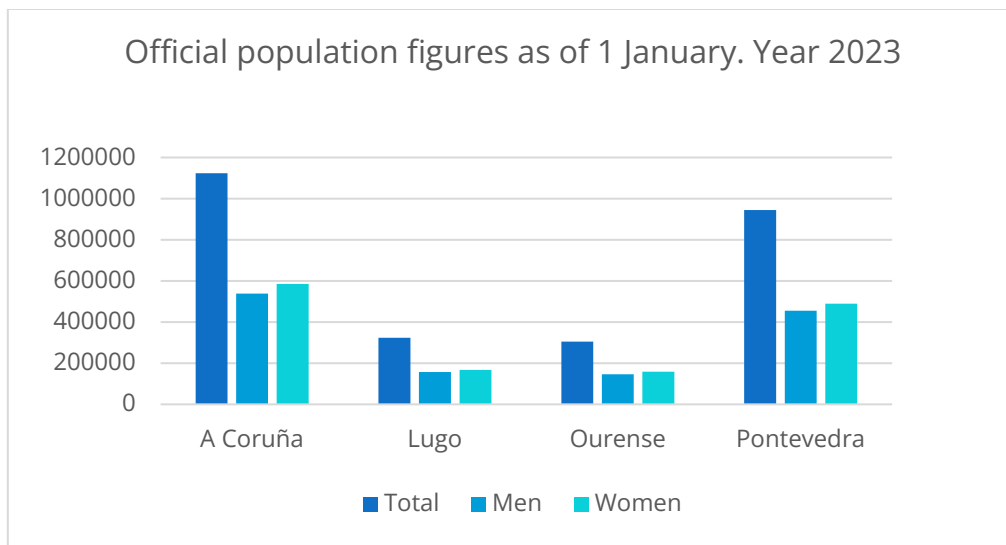


Figure 6: Official population figures, 2023.

Source: INE. Municipal census of inhabitants. Retrieved from: <http://www.ine.es>

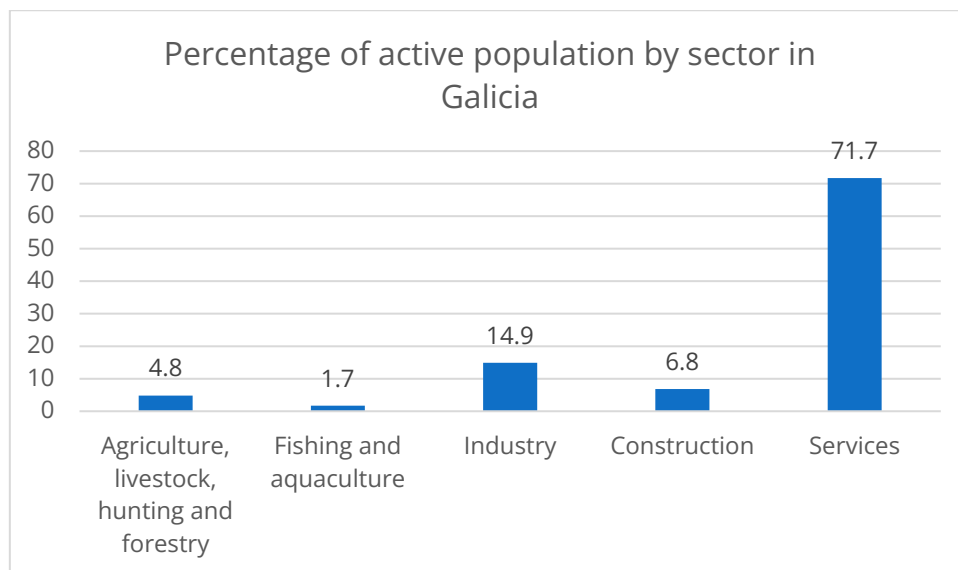


Figure 7: Percentage of active population by sector in Galicia, 2023

Source: IGE, 2023

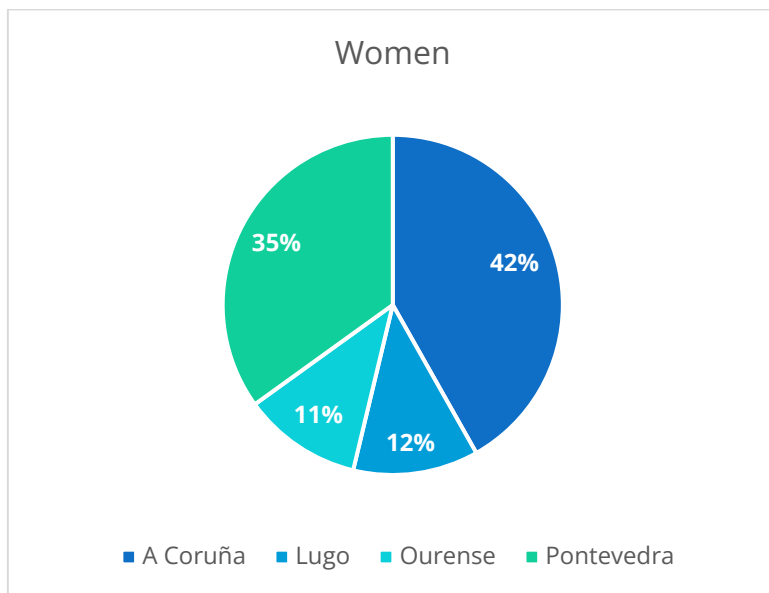


Figure 8: Percentage of women by province in Galicia, 2023

Source: IGE: Municipal Register of Inhabitants (IGE), year 2023.

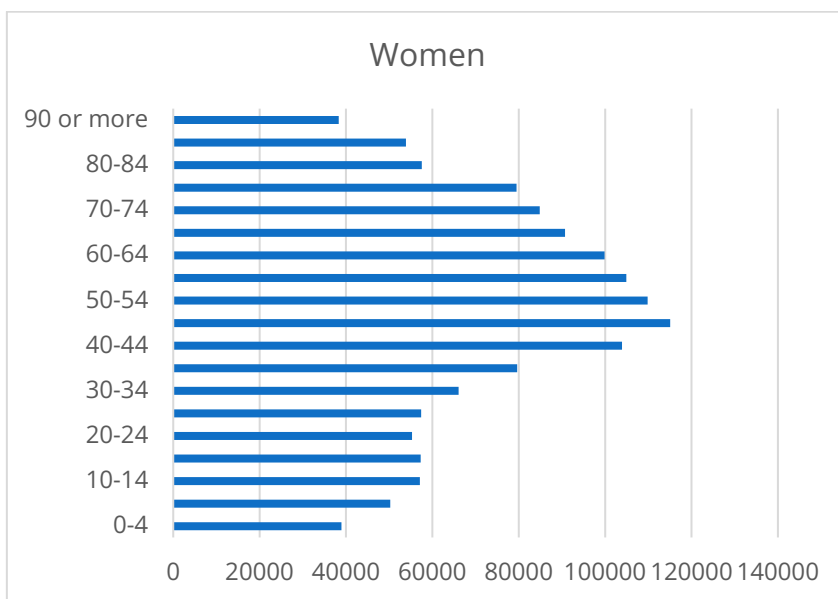


Figure 9: Female population pyramid by age in Galicia, 2023

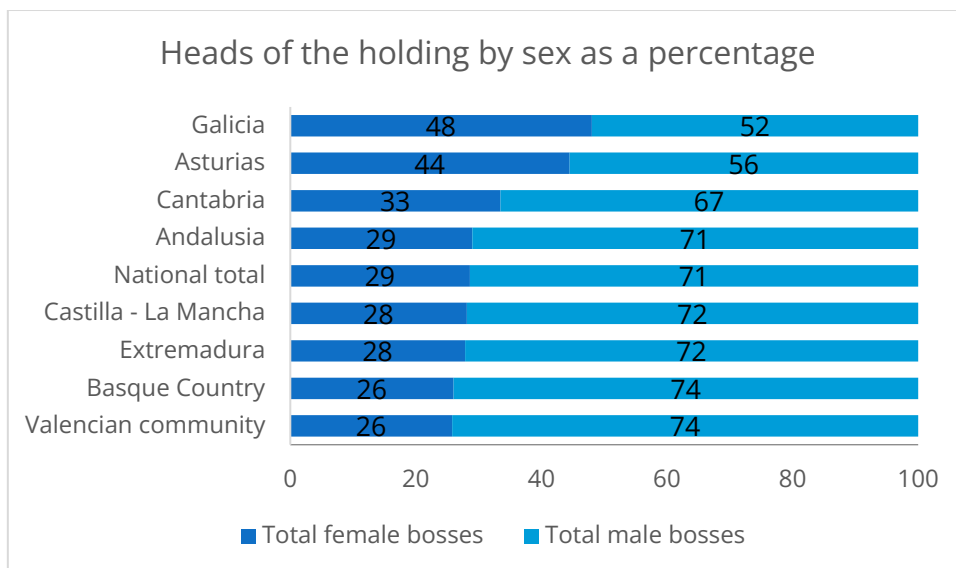


Figure 10: Heads of holding by gender, 2020.

Source: INE: Agrarian Census, year 2020.

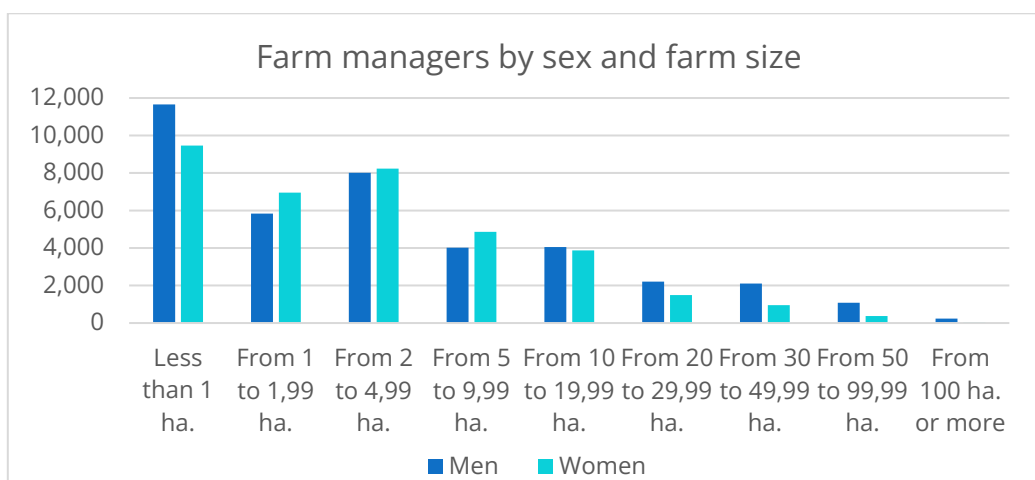


Figure 11: Farm managers by sex and farm size, 2020.

Source: INE: Agrarian Census, year 2020.

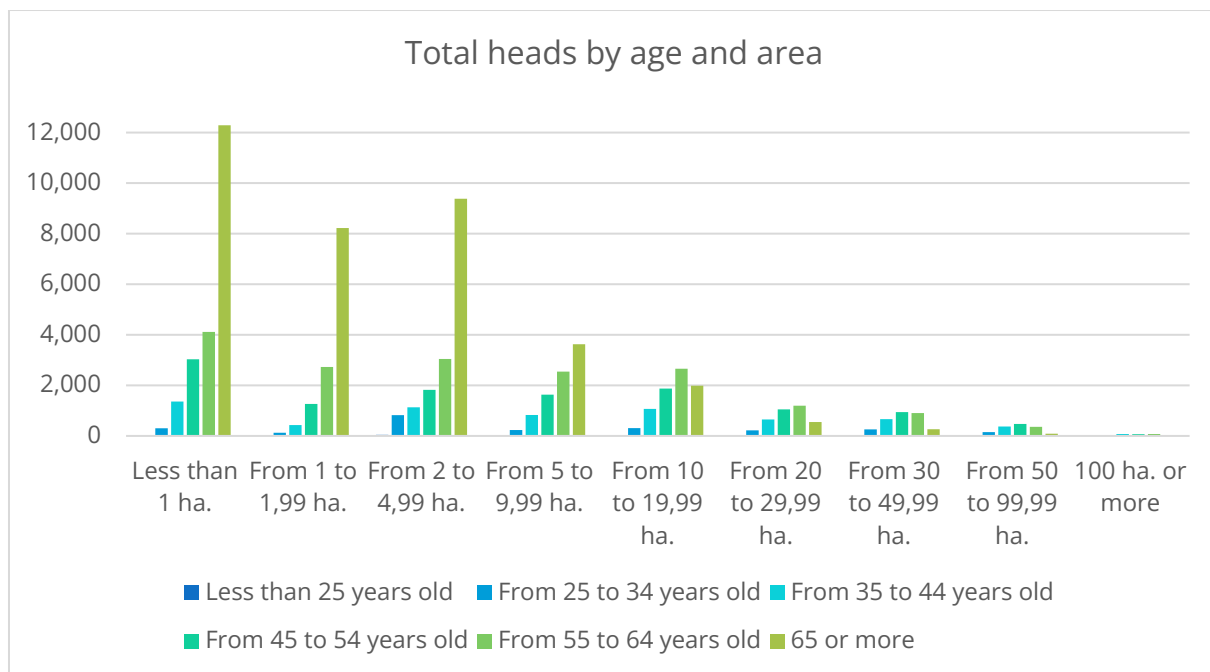


Figure 12: Farm heads by age and farm area, 2020.

Source: INE: Agricultural Census, year 2020.

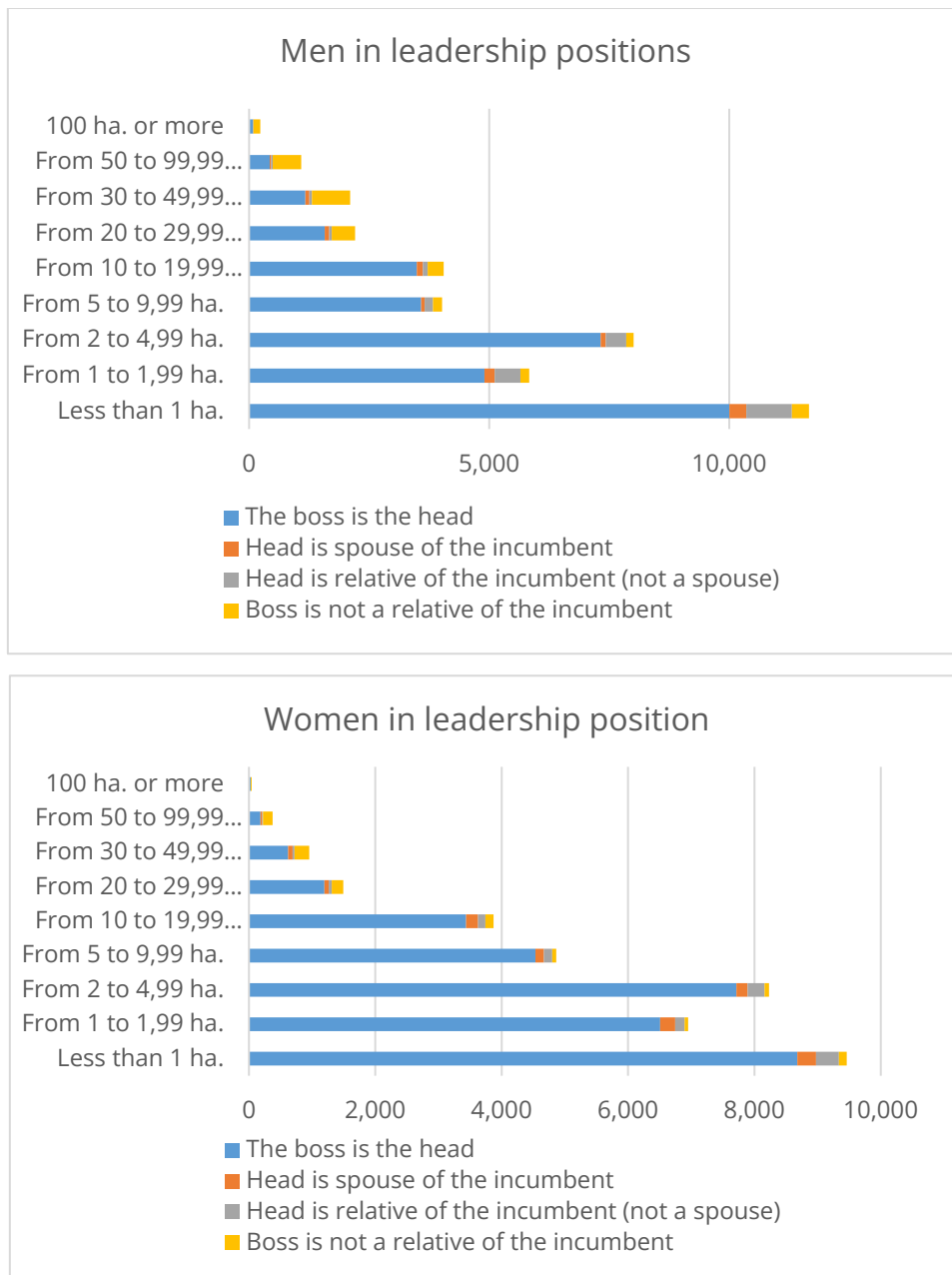


Figure 13: Head of holding by sex, area of holding and relationship to the holder, 2020

Source: INE: Agrarian Census, year 2020.

Strengths

Input and Output Generation
The strategic and integrated approach of the CAP in Spain, which ensures a specific budget for generational replacement.
The predominant model and size of farms in Galicia (small family farms) facilitates access to young people through intra-family succession.
Existence of specific financial support for young farmers, such as the establishment of young people on farms.
Adaptability, use of new technologies and increased training: Young people tend to be more familiar with modern and digital technologies, enabling them to implement more efficient and sustainable farm management systems. In addition, the younger generations have a higher level of education and specialised training in agronomy, veterinary science and other related areas, providing them with advanced technical knowledge. Training in areas such as business management and marketing allows them to develop more effective strategies for marketing their products.
Increased propensity for innovation: Young people are more aware of the need for sustainable agricultural practices and environmental conservation. They are more likely to adopt ecological and organic practices, as well as to innovate in methods that reduce the environmental impact of their activities. Youth tend to be more entrepreneurial and seek new business opportunities within the agricultural sector.
Greater flexibility and willingness to take risks: Their willingness to take risks allows them to explore and develop new markets and products, which can revitalise the sector. They can adapt quickly to market changes and new regulations, showing great resilience in the face of adversity. Their flexibility allows them to adjust their production and marketing methods according to market trends and demands.
Motivation and Passion for the Sector: Young people who choose to stay in farming tend to have a strong motivation and passion for agriculture, as well as emotional ties to the place where they farm, which drives their dedication and long-term commitment.
Additional financial incentives for young women farmers, reinforcing the gender perspective in the sector, which can help the modernisation of farms including improvements in energy efficiency, animal welfare and biosecurity.

Access to land
Existence of CAP interventions aimed at modernising and improving farms, promoting efficiency and sustainability.
The existence of available land with adequate agrological quality. Although there is not an unlimited amount of land available of good agricultural quality, there are large areas suitable for agricultural, livestock and forestry use that are currently in disuse and/or at risk of abandonment.
Existence of policy instruments favouring access to land for young farmers, including prioritisation in the allocation of payment entitlements from the national reserve, the land bank and the agrarian land reclamation law (see chapter 4).
Opportunities
Output and Input Generation
Possibility of adopting measures in the CAP on intergenerational cooperation programmes, to ensure a smooth transfer of agricultural knowledge and practices.
The existence of the small farm model, which acts as a complement to the family economy and is directly linked to the traditional production model based on smallholdings, facilitates young people's access to agricultural activity.
Possibility to develop policies that encourage the planned retirement of older farmers, ensuring an orderly and effective transition, and to expand incentives for the retirement of older farmers, facilitating access to land for new generations.
The Galician public administration has the capacity to develop policies in various areas that directly affect the incorporation of young people, such as generating support measures for access to housing for young people in rural areas, policies to generate employment in the agricultural area for young people, promoting the inclusion of young people from different backgrounds, encouraging diversity and new ideas in agriculture.
There is a demand from young people for training and mentoring programmes to ensure continuous and high quality training, so there is a favourable context for developing a comprehensive agricultural extension policy.
Land

Strengthen existing policies to facilitate access to land, such as land or farm banking, including tax incentives and subsidies for young people.
In the current climate change scenario, Galicia has potential as a climate reserve for many species.
The territorial structure and the predominant family farming model in Galicia are adapted to current trends in agroecology. In other words, these models allow for a more sustainable management of the territory.
In the absence of cooperation between landowners and young farmers, there is an opportunity to foster this cooperation by promoting favourable lease or purchase agreements.
Galicia has a large network of cooperatives and associations, so there is an opportunity to generate measures to facilitate their access to land for projects involving young people.
Actors
There is a research ecosystem in Galicia focused on transfer, especially in sub-sectors such as wine. This is an opportunity to extend it to other subsectors.
Existence of associative and business structures that strengthen sectors and sub-sectors (e.g. clusters or designations of origin in wine).
Due to the demand from young farmers, there is a context for increasing the technical and professional support available to improve their operational and commercial capacity, ensuring their access to high quality information and assistance.
Promote collaboration between public and private institutions to provide comprehensive support to farmers at all stages of their careers.
Given the importance of the bioeconomy (mainly in the agri-food and forestry sector) in rural areas, it is an opportunity to promote collaboration between the agricultural, forestry, technological and industrial sectors in order to generate new strategic alliances and synergies so that the entire value chain can take advantage of the available potential.
Weaknesses
Output Generation

Lack of sufficient incentives and support for the retirement of older farmers, which makes it difficult for young people to access land.
Bureaucracy and complexity in farm transfer processes, discouraging older farmers from participating.
Tendency to postpone the retirement age, hoarding land in order to concentrate CAP subsidies.
Input Generation
Bureaucratic barriers are the first cause identified in the survey by young people as a difficulty in entering farming.
Economic and financial barriers for young people wishing to enter the agricultural sector.
Dependence on external inputs in some sectors, which makes it difficult for young people to access.
Lack of experience and know-how among young farmers, which may affect their long-term viability.
Gender inequality in access and participation of young women in the agricultural sector. Women suffer from undervaluation, paternalism and problems in reconciling work and family.
The same specific financial support for young farmers that is identified as a strength can become a weakness when the economic sustainability of the farm depends on it.
Depopulation in rural areas, leading to lack of access to services, education, leisure and isolation.
Difficulty of access to housing: although there is a lot of empty housing, it is not on the market or is not in a suitable condition.
There is a lack of quality employment in rural areas, the supply is low and the jobs that do exist are poorly paid or too demanding.
Negative image of the sector, in some places it is still considered a failure to stay in the place of origin, and a success to be able to migrate to "the city".
Land

Galicia's territorial fragmentation makes access to land difficult despite having a broad territorial base, generating high costs and limited availability.
Disconnect between landowners and young farmers, making it difficult to transfer ownership.
Lack of effective implementation of policies to facilitate access to land for young farmers.
Actors
Lack of technical support and agricultural extension is the second barrier identified by young people who have entered the agricultural sector in the survey conducted for this report.
Threats
Output Generation
Ageing of the farming population, which may result in a significant loss of knowledge and experience.
Lack of interest among young people in entering the agricultural sector, aggravating the problem of generational replacement.
Input Generation
Competition with other economic sectors that can offer better conditions and opportunities for young people.
Economic instability and fluctuations in the agricultural market that may discourage investment by young farmers.
Climatic and environmental challenges affecting the viability of new farms.
Risk of social and professional isolation when settling in rural areas, limiting opportunities and personal development.
Land
Urbanisation and changes in land use without any established territorial planning. This results in the loss of quality land and pastures to monoculture tree plantations.
Land grabbing by large companies.

Production models that generate pressure on natural resources, affecting the long-term sustainability of farms.
Disadvantage due to competition with large farms in other regions with economies of scale.
Actors
Dependence on government subsidies and support that may be unstable or insufficient.
Lack of integration and effective collaboration between the different actors in the agricultural sector.
Tools
Obsolescence of tools and technologies used on farms in some sectors, difficulty in accessing modern tools and technologies.
Insufficient investment in research and development to improve the tools and resources available in the agricultural sector.

Figure 14 SWOT Analysis for Galicia

10.1.3 Gorenjska

Slovenia’s national development strategy envisages the overall green sustainable development, while specific development objectives are part of the regional development plan of Gorenjska region 2021-2027. In national agriculture development program 2021-2027 green sustainable development plays an important role, including preservation of the biodiversity, support to innovation on farms and in agriculture SME-s, supporting cooperation among research and practical solutions in agriculture, forestry entities., which are crucial for the country’s agricultural sector and overall development. Although young farmers and young in countryside is seen as an asset due to important development challenges and barriers, young farmers are struggling to have economic viable businesses. Barriers are mainly connected to economic efficiency of the production/services, access to arable land, access to finances, access to knowledge especially the one connected to necessity to change in activities on farms (due to changes on the market prices, due to necessity to change crops/change in agriculture practices due to climate change.

World of youngsters can be of a vital importance for the running and future CAP and National agriculture program, Regional development program and local community plans, where strategic challenges of young farmers should be addressed.

40% of the population lives in urban centres. 39.7% of the population of Gorenjska lives in urban settlements (Kranj, Jesenice, Tržič with Bistrica pri Tržiču, Radovljica with Lesce, Škofja Loka). The Jesenice - Radovljica - Kranj - Šenčur - Škofja Loka development axis is the most dense population centre.

Quality of life in the region. On average, the residents of Gorenjska region rated general life satisfaction with the highest average score at the regional level, with 7.9 (on a scale from 0 to 10). The level of serious material deprivation was the lowest in the Gorenjska region (0.7%). The at-risk-of-poverty rate was the second lowest at the level of the regions; 9% of people lived with incomes below the poverty risk threshold. The risk of social exclusion was also the third lowest, at 10.2%. The lowest was the share of households that had an apartment in poor condition, that is, with a leaking roof, damp walls, foundations or floors, broken window frames or floors. In 2022 there were 12% of such households.

Agriculture sector as a minor economic sector and smaller business branch. Agriculture sector in Gorenjska is rather small, partly also due to limited conditions for production of food. Some strong companies dealing with production of food restructured in last 30 years, while number of registered supplementary activities on farms grew, the same goes for micro companies dealing with production of food. In many ways sustainable green tourism, being strong economic branch in the region, support and enable diversified agriculture production/food production. While agriculture association represent the main intermediate in the process of selling crops and products directly from farms, also direct selling to customers on farms or at micro companies is important aspect of selling the goods and obtaining the income. Percentage share of gross added value in agricultural activities in relation to the total gross added value for Slovenia in 2022 was 2,1, which is the same as in Gorenjska. According to the new methodology (data for Slovenia) (national office for statistics), the average agricultural holding in Slovenia manages 6.9 hectares of agricultural land in use, in Gorenjska 7,5 ha (data 2020).

Decline in number of holdings. The number of holdings by data of National office for statistics decreased for 2 % in comparison to 2020. The total area of agricultural land in use in the monitored agricultural holdings has increased by more than 2% compared to 2020. According to the data in 2023 (National office for statistics) there were 68.331 agricultural holdings in Slovenia, from that 4.141 in Gorenjska. Agricultural land in use in Slovenia in 2023 was 474,633 ha, of which 30,898 ha in Gorenjska. Compared to the data in 2010, the number of agricultural holdings decreased by 8% (by 6,315), while compared to the year 2000, they were down by 21% (by 18,136 agricultural holdings).

Decline in agricultural land in productive use. In 2020, agricultural producers used slightly more than 474 thousand hectares of agricultural land in use. Compared to data from 2000, the **total area of agricultural land in use decreased by more than 11 thousand hectares** or by a good 2%. In the last twenty years, the area has decreased in all types of use of land, except for arable land, which is 5 thousand hectares more (+3%). Areas of permanent plantations are have decreased by 7% and areas of permanent grassland by 5% in the last twenty years.

Changes in the size structure of agricultural holdings also show that the process of concentration continues to a moderate extent. Namely, the number of farms in the size class above 20 hectares of agricultural land in use is increasing more and more; in 2020 5.6%, in 2010: 4.4% and in 2000: 2.1%, Thus, the number of farms with more than 20 hectares of agricultural land in use more than doubled compared to 2000, while the number of farms in the smaller size classes decreased by around a quarter. The majority of agricultural holdings cultivate agricultural land in use in the size class between 3 and 20 hectares (55% of all agricultural holdings).

Rising production costs. Due to war in Ukraine, costs for production of crops risen significantly, the same goes for production of meat and food (e.g. rise of prices fertilisers, oil, energy, wheat), while also the imported goods shake the market additionally on daily basis.

Forests constitute an important source of income. The Slovenian market for forest wood assortments is becoming more and more dependent on the conditions in

neighboring countries and on the wider European and world market. In 2022, the forest wood assortments market in Slovenia and around the world was also affected by the restriction on the export of roundwood and roughly processed wood from Russia, which came into effect on January 1, 2022. The war in Ukraine was followed by a ban on the import of forest wood assortments from Russia and Belarus, which it was adopted by the EU as part of the sanctions in June 2022, as a result of which the export of wood to the EU from these two countries stopped. In the Gorenjska countryside, wood has traditionally been an important raw material for the timber industry as well as one of the most important renewable energy sources. Facts such as the preservation of tradition, sustainable forest management, socio-economic importance and energy self-sufficiency prove this. The extraction, processing and use of wood for energy purposes offers new opportunities for farm income and job creation in rural areas. In the Gorenjska region, interest in the modern use of wood has recently increased significantly. Forestry and farming cooperatives, individual entrepreneurs and owners of larger forest estates are all turning their attention to this activity.

Other lines of business – vital income for rural population. While only some family owned farms can assure full employment for at least one family member, the combination of diversity given by possibilities of supplementary activities on farms, by employment in other branches that prevail in countryside (e.g. services connected to tourism, ICT, craftsmanship in many branches,...) and regular employment elsewhere, while work on farm is an afternoon job represents the necessary diversity of income in rural families. Since in Slovenia also rural areas were not left neglected when it comes to national/local policy connected to entrepreneurship, support to development of diverse economic branches, also in countryside employment/self employment can be found, which ease the pressure on young from farms in time when decisions about future life path and future development of farm has to be taken.

Challenges related to human/economic resources

Age of farmers (retirement). In Slovenia mostly elderly persons are owners of the farms, although there is a good support from CAP for young farmers that would like to take over

from their parents. Young also usually finish the faculty and find employment elsewhere therefore the farms are taking over in the case that young decided to devote their life to farming (as supplementary activity or as full job). Usually also due to taxes young prefer that elderly remain the owners of the farms (there are taxes connected to the ownership of the land, forest roads) that are rather high; additionally the costs for monthly insurance (for paying the social and health security are rather high if you are owner (since it is calculated based on ownership of the land)). According to the statistical data for Slovenia there were 68.331 farmers in 2020. From that only 8.618 (12,6%) were under 45 years old, 12.128 (17,7%) were between 45 and 55, and a majority (almost 70%) 47.585 were 55 or more. In Gorenjska, in 2020 there was 4.141 farmers. 576 (13,9%) were 45 years old or less, 854 (20,6%) were between 45 and 55, and 2.711 (65,5%) were 55 years old or more. Although there is a small difference, Gorenjska's proportion of older farmers is slightly smaller compared to the national level.

The dominance of older farmers suggests potential challenges in the near future for Slovenia's agricultural sector, particularly in terms of labor shortages, farm succession issues, and the need for modern agricultural techniques and technologies that younger generations are often more open to adopting.

The retirement age of persons in Gorenjska is around 65 years of age, for both men and women. According to the Slovenian national statistic office less than 3 % of employees work in agriculture (that goes both for employees in agriculture companies and on farms). There are many so called part time farmers with supplementary activities on farms (although the main income comes from other sources (regular employment, owners of SME-s,..))

Family labor still accounts for more than 95% of all available agricultural labor. The share of owners-managers is 44%, while the share of other household members is 51%. Employment in agriculture, measured in full-time labor force (PDM), in Slovenia decreased in 2022 compared to 2020. In 2022, total employment in agriculture was estimated at 72,917 thousand PDM, which is 1,130 thousand PDM less than in 2020, when it amounted to 74,047 thousand PDM. This decline indicates a slight decrease in the labor force in the

agricultural sector during this period, which could be the result of changes in the structure of agricultural activity, the aging of the rural population or other socio-economic factors.

Low income. Income both for those already retired or workers working in the agriculture is rather low and below average salaries earned in other branches. The average neto salary in Slovenia for 2023 was 1.445,12 EUR, in Gorenjska 1.419,52 EUR. Average bruto retirement payed monthly in Slovenia was 932,38 EUR, in Gorenjska 935,06 EUR, while in agriculture is much lower (due to the fact that monthly payment of farmers is based on the calculation (ha of the farm)).

Unemployment in Gorenjska. The unemployment In Slovenia/Gorenjska is rather low, below 3.5 %, therefore it is obvious that young people find employment elsewhere or combine their employment with part time work on farms. Among the working people with permanent residence in this region, 28.9% went to work elsewhere, most (88.0%) in the Central Slovenia region. This was the fourth largest share of labor migrants among the regions. The unemployment rate is the highest among elderly (above 55 years old) and at young that are still seeking their first employment or left the school due to different reasons. There is no much big difference between unemployment in urban and rural areas due to the fact that countryside areas are geographically not far away from bigger industrial and service centres. The unemployment rate is the highest among people with lower education there is still a lot underemployment in the countryside (people are not registered as unemployed people at Employment service) although their income is not sufficient for a quality life. Since in many cases support comes from broader family, the real social status especially of underemployed women in countryside is in many aspects hidden and not revealed.

Labour force in Gorenjska/agriculture and with agriculture connected branches.

The labour force in Gorenjska/Slovenia is rather well educated, in average secondary school prevail, although in last 20 years most of the young generations are finishing the faculties; therefore the average data of finished secondary school is result of the education of the older generations. Additionally young generations in many cases after

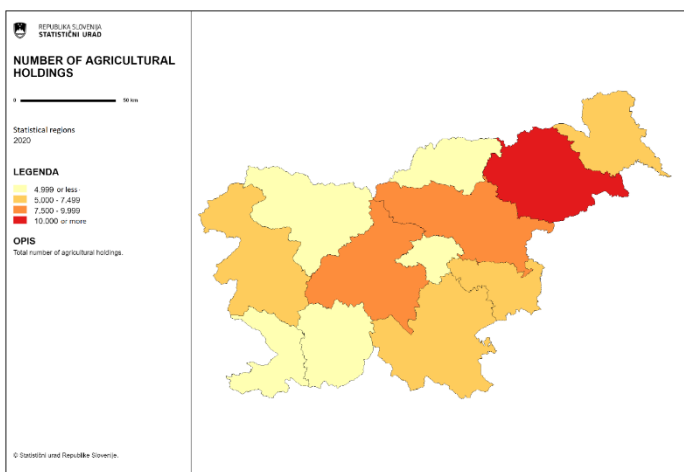
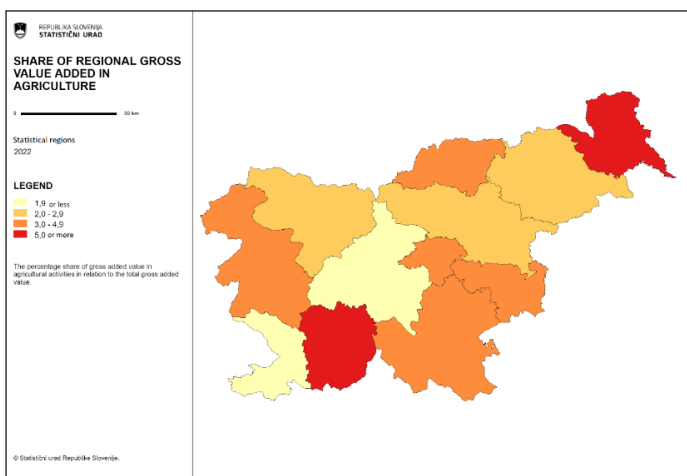
finishing education find their employment/selfemployment in other sectors as their expertise lies (based on initial education).

In Gorenjska, only 10% of the population has more than secondary education, and in agriculture, 85% of operators have no relevant qualifications. At the same time, new opportunities are emerging in rural areas, requiring adaptation or new types of skills (nature conservation, sustainable resources, social activities, innovative agriculture application,... etc.) and entrepreneurship education in the broader sense. The need for new education and training is evident throughout the Gorenjska region, although broad accessibility to education exist in the region (Also via Biotechnical education centre, Higher and High school for catering and tourism). Additionally you can obtain the certificate for farming also based on the experiences (certified qualification), the same goes for supplementary activities on farms.

Since most of the families have more or less 1 child, the aging and shrinking of the population is affecting agriculture even more than other propulsive sectors (where appealing wages, good conditions for work, innovation) attract employees also from other region in Slovenia, Europe. Therefore the agriculture and with agriculture connected production/including supplementary activities on farms and companies working in the field of agriculture, forestry, fishery, production of meat, cheese, vegetable products is not among one of the most desired professions to be.

Supplementary and innovative activities. In 2020, 8,205 agricultural holdings were engaged in supplementary activities, which means that 12% of all agricultural holdings had at least one supplementary activity reported. The majority of agricultural holdings that perform supplementary activities on the farm are engaged in forestry. Among the rest, we have to mention activities related to food processing, tourism and fruit and vegetable processing. Although some young entrepreneurs and young farmers showed the way; they are highly innovative and they are successfully finding market niches that enable them higher income and steady growth of their small businesses.

Men still dominate the employment structure in agriculture, forestry and fishing in Slovenia/Gorenjska also due to still needed physical work and usage of heavy machinery.



Strengths

- 1. Strong family-based farm ownership and cooperation:** Family-run farms, particularly in Gorenjska, have a strong tradition, providing stability and a long-term commitment to farming. Generational support within families helps foster innovation and allows young farmers to experiment with new ideas while benefiting from family investment.
- 2. Established local value chains and brands:** Regional cooperation has led to the creation of local brands, particularly in tourism and food production, which support small-scale producers in marketing their products.
- 3. High level of environmental preservation:** Over 40% of Gorenjska is covered by **Natura 2000** sites, ensuring the protection of biodiversity and promoting

eco-friendly agricultural practices. This environmental commitment creates opportunities for sustainable farming and eco-tourism.
4. Recognition of local food quality: There is a growing recognition of locally produced food, supported by national and regional initiatives promoting sustainable and green farming, which enhances local food producers' marketability.
5. Growing supplementary activities: Supplementary activities such as eco-tourism, food processing, and direct sales provide additional income streams for farmers, contributing to the financial sustainability of smaller farms.
6. Variety of income: usually young from farms and families with farms have diversity of income (in many cases not only from farming), which allow families the security and young therefore have the necessary time that the decision mature (to take over the farm).
7. Good education level of young: young generations usually finish at least secondary school, while also on farms it is evident that more and more young with finished faculties take over the farm and develop innovative sources of income, that assure viability of farm.
8. Good quality of life: in countryside due to proximity of bigger suburban, urban areas and investment of local communities/ state in quality of life also in countryside, rural areas have good access to education, services of general interest including broadband, schools, health and other services connected to quality of life, therefore young families/young mostly do not migrate outside the region/country or they return after finishing the education/or when they start the family.
9. Sustainable green tourism support the endeavour of families/young living on farms; existing sustainable green tourism with potentials to further enrich cooperation with rural farms/young in countryside and support them with enriching cooperation in local value chains/marketing
Weaknesses
1. Dependence on family support: Without external support, young farmers struggle to finance farm expansion or modernization, particularly on smaller farms, where innovation is often limited by financial constraints.
2. Limited access to arable land: The availability of arable land is decreasing due to urbanization, and what remains is often expensive or located in difficult-to-cultivate areas such as hillsides.
3. Low level of ecological farming: Although eco-farming is supported, it remains a small proportion of the total farming activities in Slovenia. The uptake of ecological farming practices remains low, with less than 5% of national farmland dedicated to organic agriculture.
4. Lack of specific youth-targeted support programs: While some CAP funds are available for young farmers, many find that the available programs do not meet their specific challenges, particularly when it comes to innovation and starting new supplementary activities.

<p>5. Barriers to accessing innovation and technology: Cooperation between research institutions and young farmers remains limited, which hampers the transfer of innovation and knowledge necessary to address modern challenges such as climate change and evolving market demands.</p>
<p>6. Barriers to better acknowledgement of diversity of income on farms/in rural families: due to mainly small farms, further acknowledgement of necessity of diversity of income in rural families/on farms has to be taken into account leading to possible change of decree for supplementary activities on farms/combination of income coming also from other economic branches that offer selfemployment/employment in countryside.</p>
<p>7. High taxes, payment to state for ownership of land: there are rather high taxes, contributions based on the ownership of the land that hinder the economic vitality of smaller farms and lead in many cases to decisions(hobby farm only while costs for development of farm is payed from salaries earned in other economic branches).</p>
<p>8. Too low support from CAP; payments/ha is rather low in smaller farms/it is not adequate, the same goes for other CAP measures/mainly they cannot participate in calls/due to vague profitability of investments/services.</p>
<p>9. Loss of arable land due to urbanisation: Although Slovenia has strict national regulations for protection of arable land, forests,... pressure of urbanisation and locally/regionally important public investment lead to significant loss of land, therefore urgent measures to maintain the still not urbanised land is urgently needed.</p>
<p>10. Sustainable green tourism is too much affected by mass tourism: in Natura 2000 and in some rural areas that are already known as tourism destinations, we are coping with growing numbers of visitors, affecting the quality of experience therefore it is essential to further push the limitations connected to number of visitors in certain smaller locations (spread of visitors).</p>
<p>11. Climate change affect: It is clear that rapid climate changes are influencing the countryside in many ways; drought, unforeseen rain with landslides, floods, problems with crops (due to drought, wet conditions,...). Climate change is so far not fully embedded into the policies on EU, national, regional, local level.</p>
<p>Opportunities</p>
<p>1. Youth engagement and innovation: Younger generations are showing greater interest in innovation, particularly in combining traditional farming with modern technology, eco-farming, and supplementary activities like agri-tourism and direct sales.</p>
<p>2. Climate change adaptation: The challenges posed by climate change, such as shorter growing seasons and erratic weather patterns, create opportunities for innovation in farming practices, including the cultivation of new crops and the adoption of sustainable farming techniques.</p>
<p>3. Expanding eco-tourism: The integration of eco-tourism into rural development strategies provides significant opportunities for farms to diversify</p>

<p>their income streams, especially in regions like Gorenjska, where natural beauty and biodiversity are key assets.</p>
<p>4. Improving cooperation between research and practice: There is significant potential for further cooperation between universities, research institutes, and local farmers to facilitate the transfer of innovative agricultural practices and technologies.</p>
<p>5. Potential for greater CAP support: New CAP measures are being developed to better support small farms and climate-resilient farming practices, which could lead to more targeted financial assistance for young farmers, helping them modernize and become more competitive.</p>
<p>6. Potentials to better cooperation in local value chains; it is clear that existing local chains have opportunities to enrich excellency and offer adjusted support to rural families/young in their way towards excellency in product/services in farming/supplementary activities/other branches.</p>
<p>Threats</p>
<p>1. Climate change impacts: Increasingly unpredictable weather patterns, such as droughts and floods, present a growing threat to agricultural productivity, particularly for small farms that lack the resources to adapt quickly.</p>
<p>2. Urban pressure on arable land: Urbanization and infrastructure projects are threatening valuable arable land, particularly in lowland areas, making it more difficult for young farmers to expand or start new operations.</p>
<p>3. Global market pressures: The availability of cheaper agricultural imports from global markets continues to suppress the prices of locally produced goods, making it difficult for small-scale farmers to compete, especially in retail markets.</p>
<p>4. Aging population: The agricultural sector is heavily reliant on an aging workforce, with a large proportion of farm owners over the age of 55. Without a viable strategy to attract younger generations, the sector faces the risk of labor shortages and a decline in agricultural knowledge and practices.</p>
<p>5. Insufficient policy focus on smaller farms: CAP subsidies continue to favor larger farms, leaving smaller farms, which are common in Slovenia, with insufficient support to innovate or expand. This could lead to the continued decline of small farming enterprises.</p>
<p>6. Insufficient variety of income: in the case that diversity of income (in many cases not only from farming), cannot assure families the security, young therefore had to leave/find othe sources of income.</p>
<p>7. Deteroation of the good quality of life: in the case that rural areas will receive less support to assure quality of life (due to EU, national, local policies more in favour of supporting urban development) young families/young will be forced to migrate outside the region/country.</p>
<p>8. Sustainable green tourism is continue to be too much affected by mass tourism: in Natura 2000 and in some rural areas that are already known as tourism destinations, will deteroate due to unpreceded flow of tourism and endavors to limit the number of visitors will not lead to success,therefore we</p>

will be facing “bad publicity” about destinations followed by lower income in rural families/ young from countryside.
9. High taxes, payment to state for ownership of land: due to rather high taxes, contributions based on the ownership of the land that hinder the economic vitality of smaller farms will further lead to cases to decisions of rural families/young to have hobby farm only while costs for development of farm will be payed from salaries earned in other economic branches) or they will not work on farm anymore (close the business).
10. Low support from CAP will continue; payments/ha will remain rather low in smaller farms/will not be adequate, they will not be able to participate in calls/due to vague profitability of investments/services therefore the great risks exist that young will not work on land anymore and biodiversity/landscape will change/deteriorate.

Figure 15 SWOT Analysis of Gorenjska Region

10.1.4 Romania

Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy aims to balance economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental stewardship, with a particular focus on revitalizing rural areas that play a crucial role in the country's agricultural sector. However, despite these strategic goals, young farmers in Romania's depopulated rural regions face significant access barriers that hinder their ability to contribute to and benefit from sustainable development initiatives. These barriers include difficulties in land acquisition, financial constraints, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of necessary skills and knowledge. Understanding and addressing these challenges is essential for the successful implementation of Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy and for fostering a sustainable and prosperous future for Romania's rural communities.

Retirement of farmers in Romania. One significant challenge in Romania's agricultural sector is the high rate of retirement among older farmers, which exacerbates the issues of depopulation and hinders the transfer of knowledge and land to younger generations.

Ageing farmers. The retirement age of Romanian population working in agriculture is 63 years old, for both men and women. (Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, 2024). According to the Romanian National House of Public Pensions, the pensioners in Romania

working only in agriculture represent 13.6 – 15.5% from the total in the system, and 37.3 – 40.1% represent the pensioners that have periods of working in agriculture, figure 2. (Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, 2024)

Average working age in agriculture. The average pension in Romania for professionals working only in agriculture ranges between 143 – 183 Euros from the total in the system, and between 104 – 128 Euros for the pensioners that have periods of working in agriculture. (Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, 2024)

Relatively high levels of unemployment in Romania's agricultural sector further complicate efforts to revitalize rural areas and attract young farmers. The number of registered unemployed persons in Romania is higher among women, ranging from 52.0 – 67.0% from the total, and the highest unemployment rate is in the rural area, 5.8 – 8.9%, figure 4. (National Institute of Statistics, 2024). According to the Romanian National Institute of Statistics, the unemployment rate is the highest among men between the ages of 15 – 24 years old and lowest among men between the ages of 55 years old and over. The unemployment rate in the rural area surpasses the unemployment rate in urban area in all age group categories, figure 5. (National Institute of Statistics, 2024). The unemployment rate is the highest among men with a low educational level, and the highest in rural areas among the persons with a high and medium education level, figure 6. (National Institute of Statistics, 2024)

Declining agricultural employment among labour force in Romania. In 2022, the employment rate of the working-age population (15-64 years) was 63.1%, an increase compared to the previous year by 1.2%. As in previous years, the employment rate was higher for men (71.5%, compared to 54.4% for women). By residential area, the occupancy rate was higher in the urban area (68.6%, compared to 56.3% in the rural area). Of the total number of employed persons, 2.9% worked in the agricultural sector (with 191.8 thousand of persons), 35.6% in industry or construction and 61.6% in services, figure 7. (National Institute of Statistics, 2024)

The aging and shrinking labour force in Romania's agricultural sector presents a critical challenge to sustaining agricultural productivity and innovation. Men

dominate the employment structure in agriculture, forestry and fishing in Romania (2020 – 2022), representing 13.1 – 20.9% from the total employees, figure 8. (National Institute of Statistics, 2024) According to the Romanian National Institute of Statistics, the highest percentages of employment in agriculture, forestry and fishing are comprised by the age groups 45 – 54 years and 34 – 44 years, and the lowest being 65 years and over, and 15 – 24 years (National Institute of Statistics, 2024). In agriculture, forestry and fishing in Romania, 53.2% employees are self-employed, and only 0.7% being business owners, figure 10. (National Institute of Statistics, 2024).

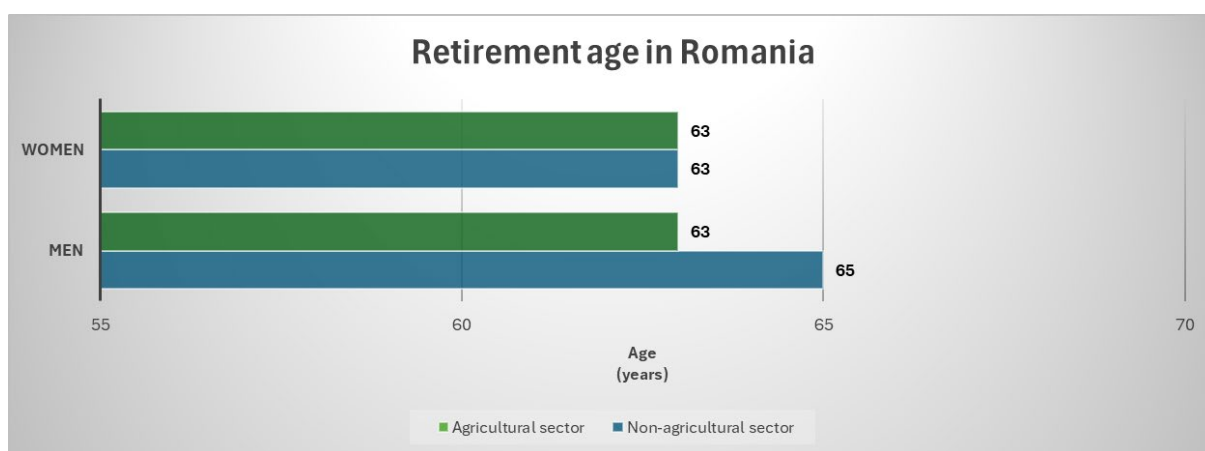


Figure 16 Retirement age in Romania

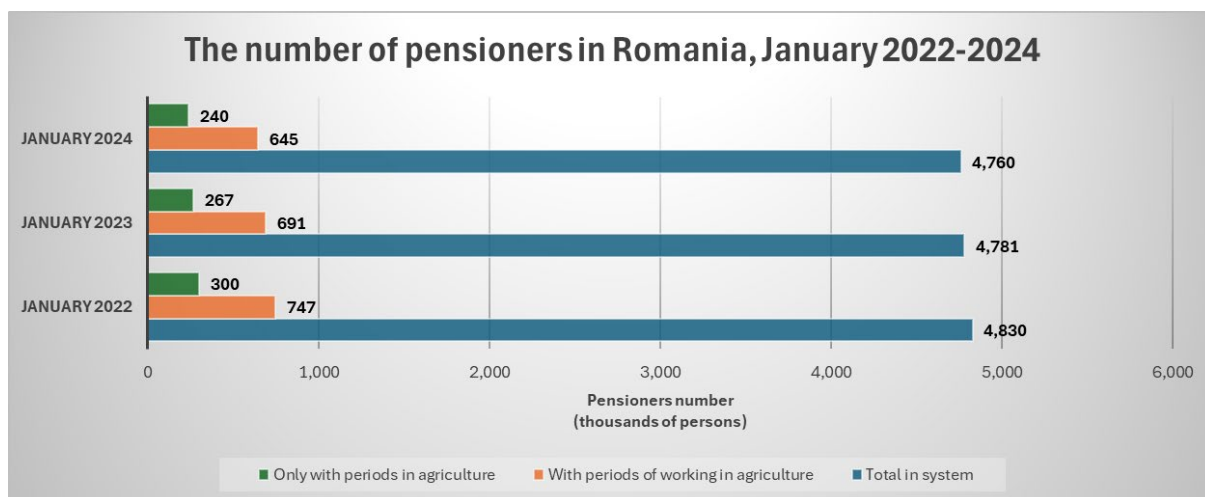


Figure 17 The number of pensioners in Romania, January 2022-2024

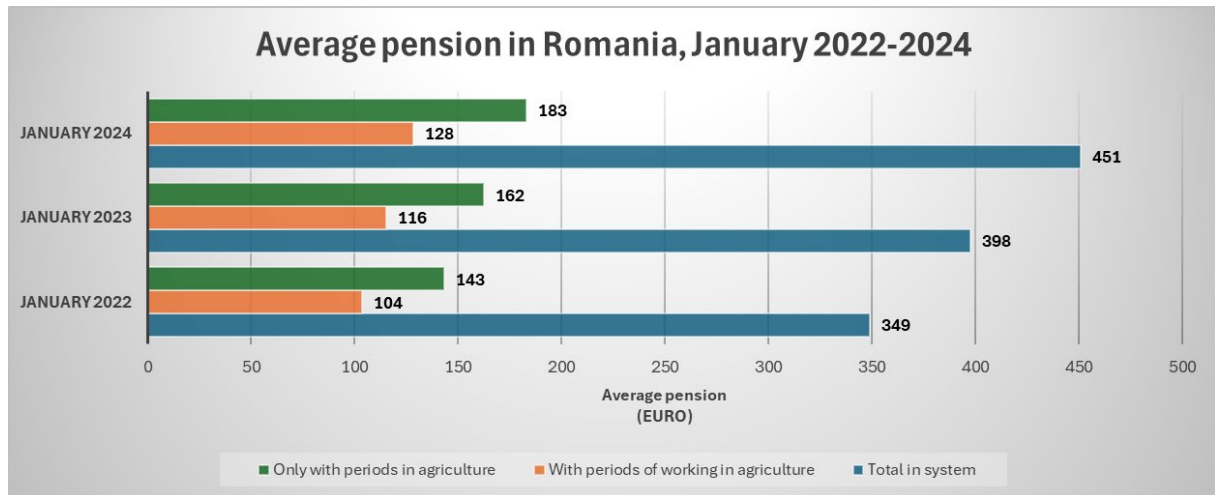


Figure 18 Average pension in Romania, January 2022-2024

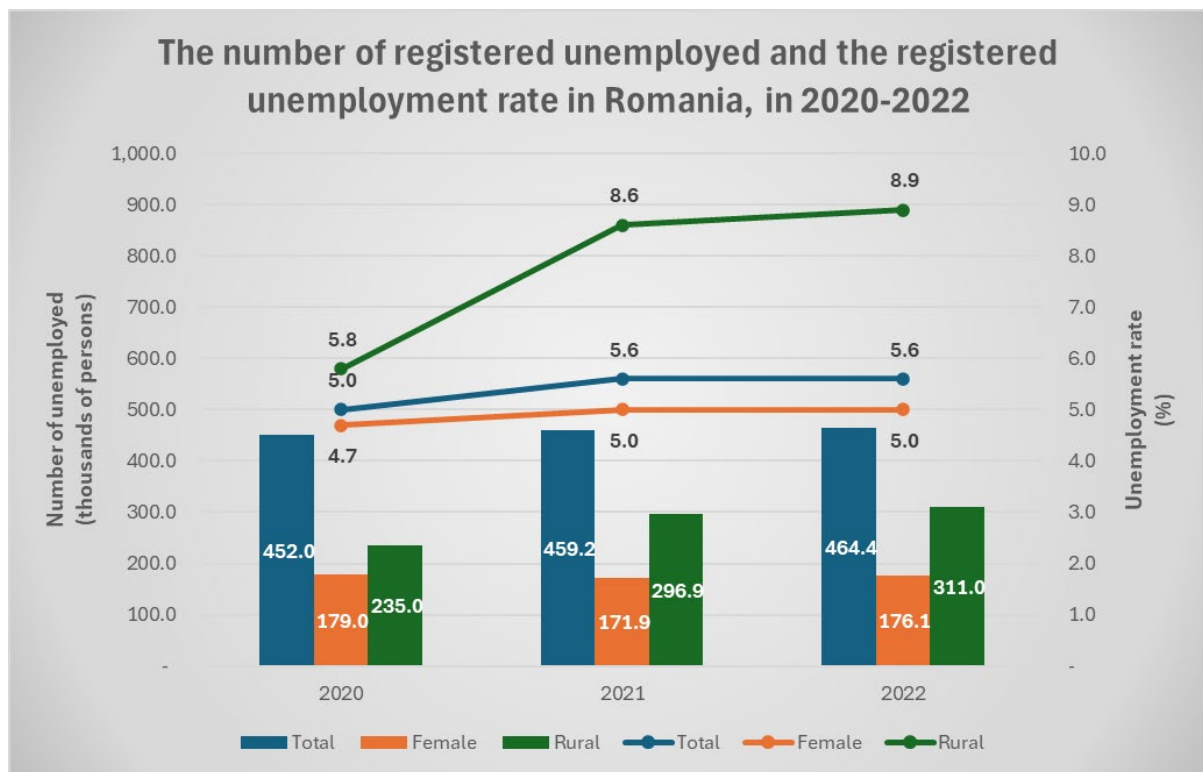


Figure 19 The number of registered unemployed and the registered unemployment rate in Romania, in 2020-2022

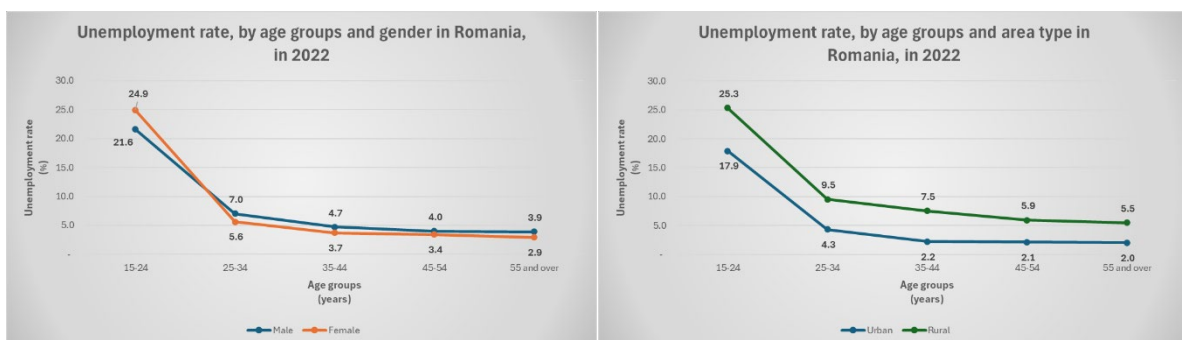


Figure 20 Unemployment rate, by age groups and gender (left), and area type (right), in Romania, in 2022

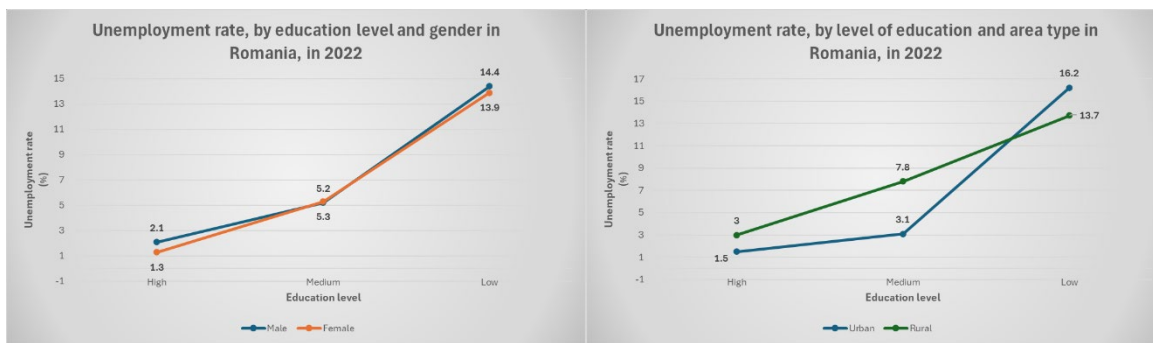


Figure 21 Unemployment rate, by education level and gender (left), and area type (right), in Romania, in 2022

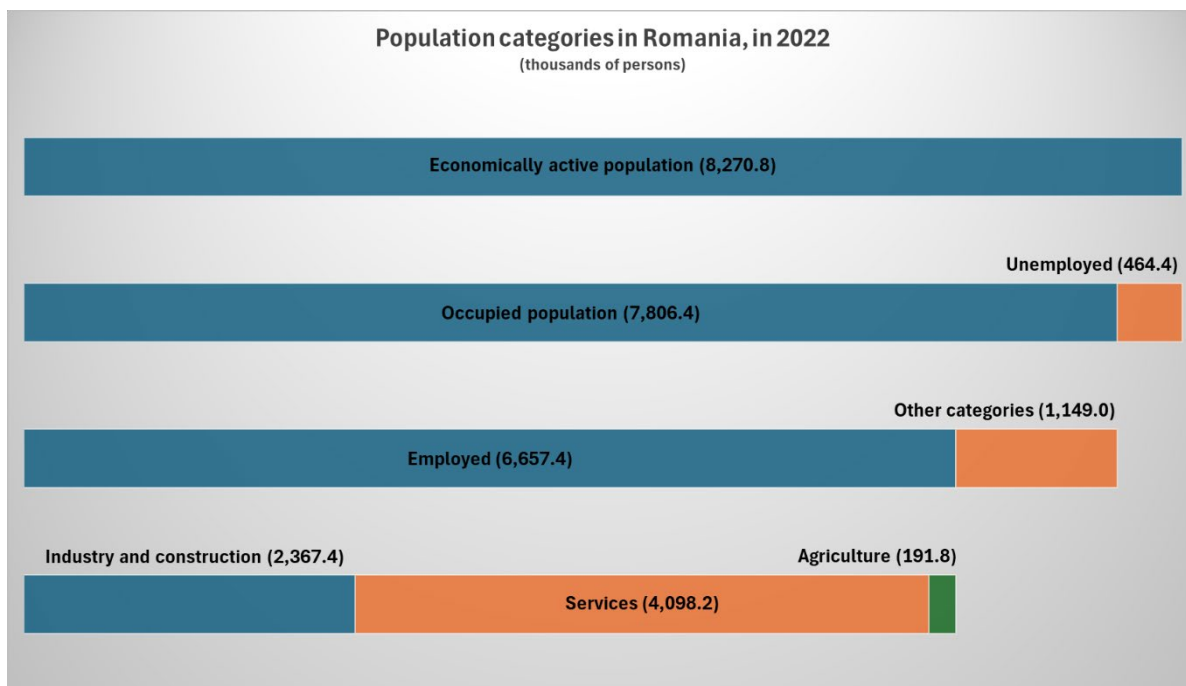


Figure 22 Population categories in Romania, in 2022

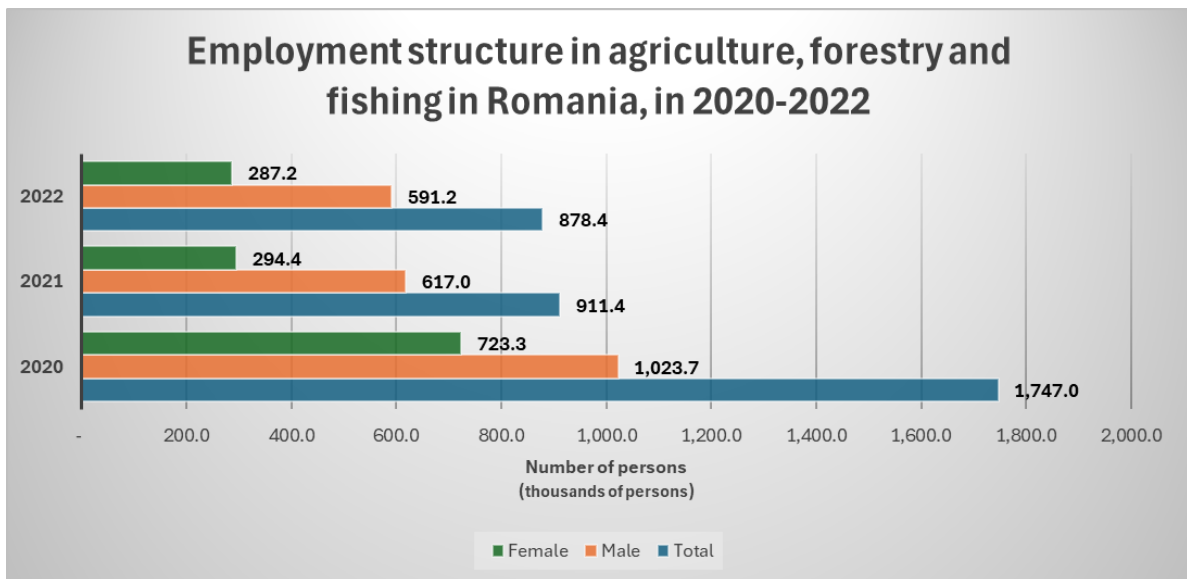


Figure 23 Employment structure in agriculture, forestry and fishing in Romania, in 2020-2022

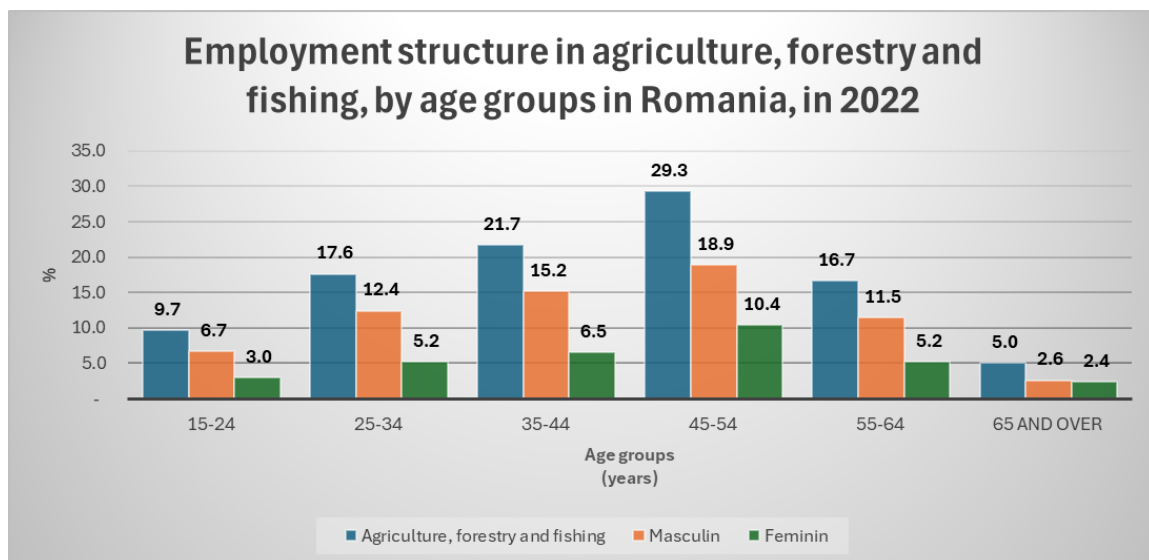


Figure 24 Employment structure in agriculture, forestry and fishing, by age groups in Romania, in 2022

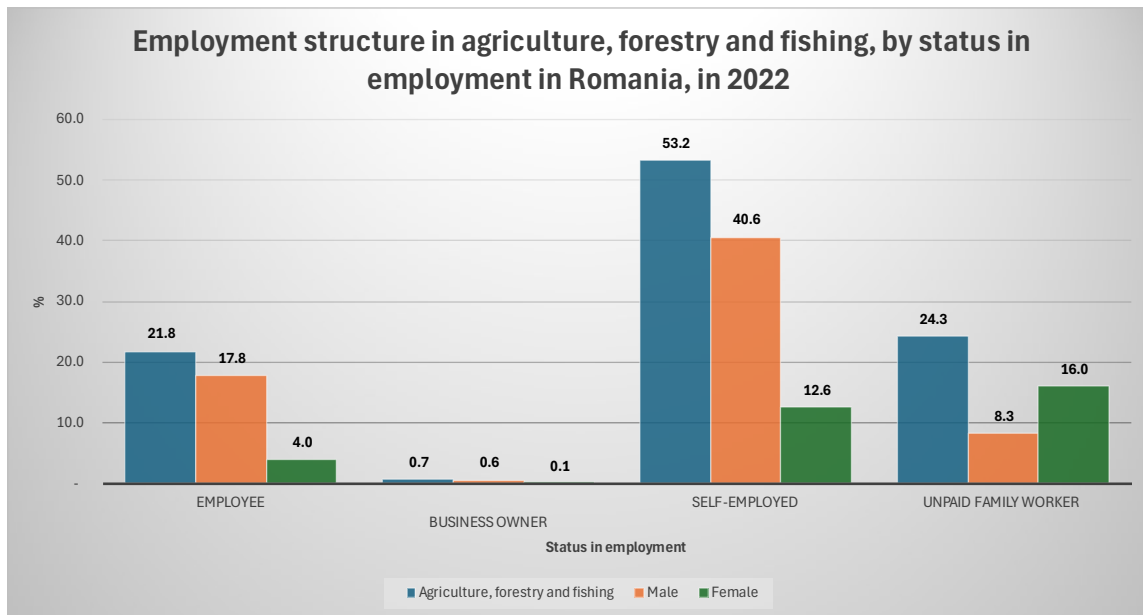


Figure 25 Employment structure in agriculture, forestry and fishing, by status in employment in Romania, in 2022

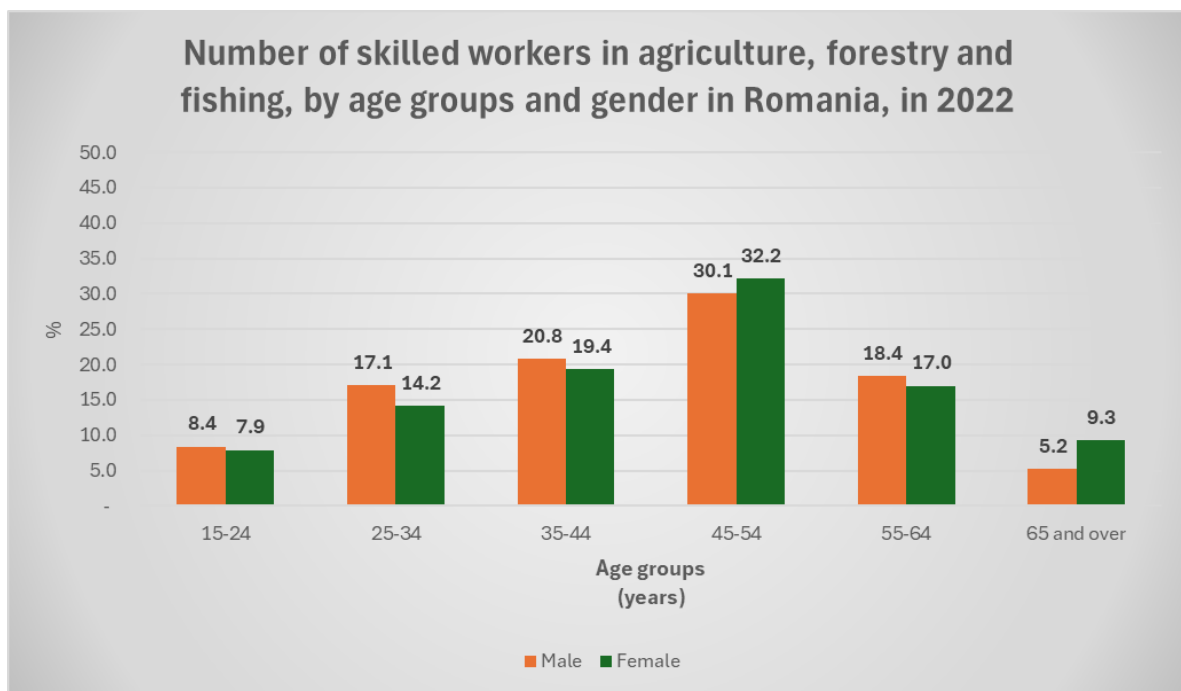


Figure 26 Number of skilled workers in agriculture, forestry and fishing, by age groups and gender, in Romania, in 2022

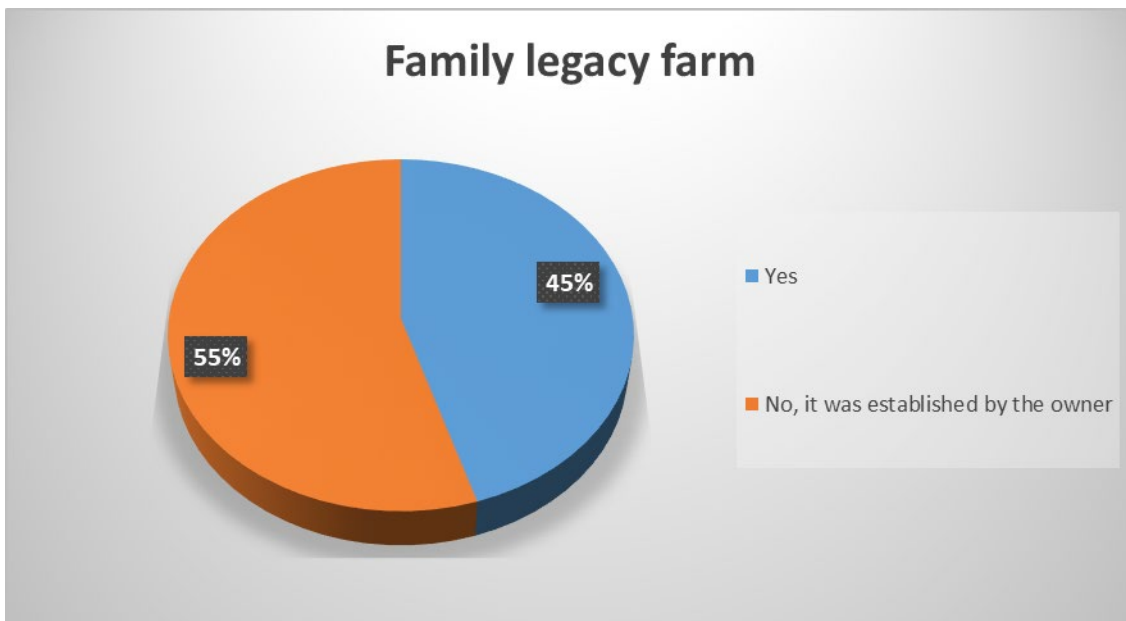


Figure 27 Family legacy farm

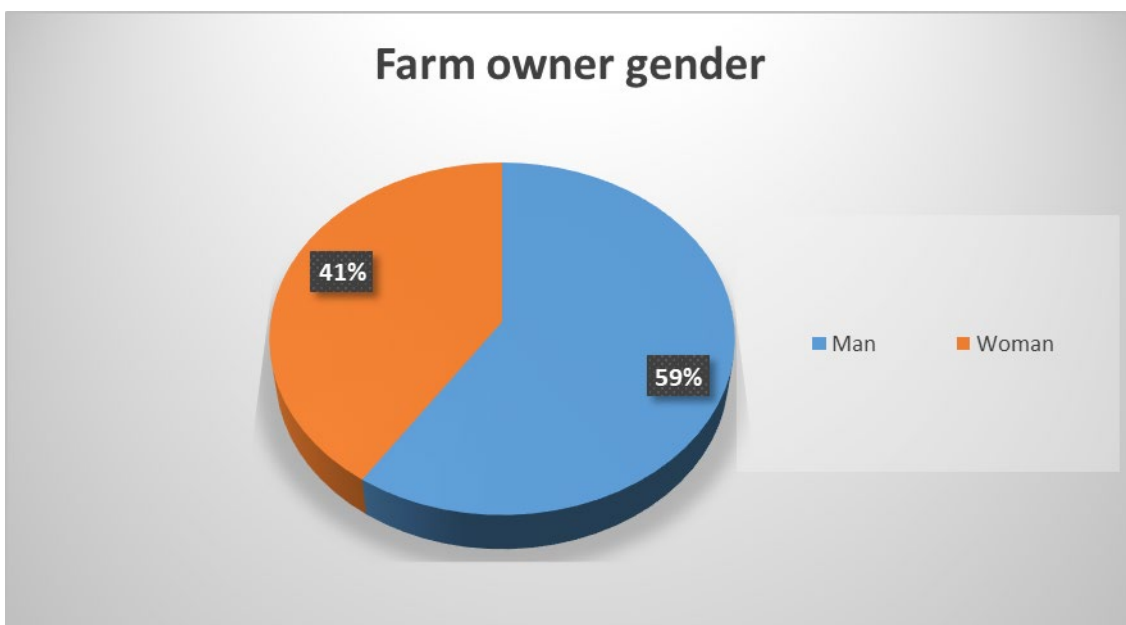


Figure 28 Farm owner gender

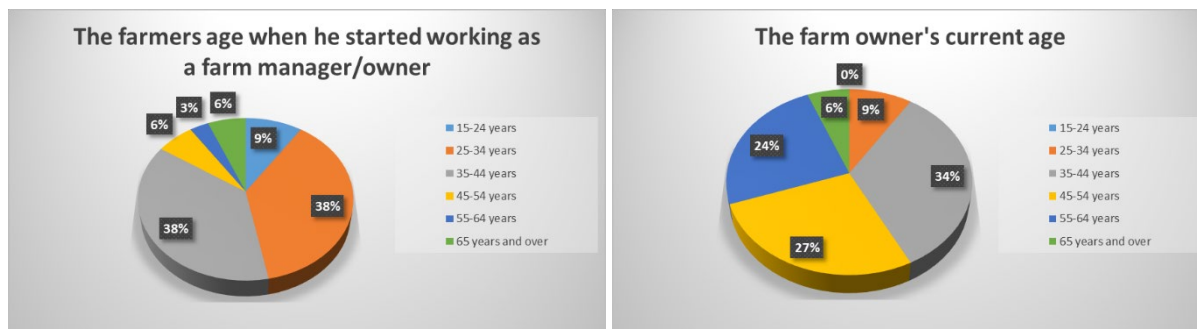


Figure 29 The farmers age when he started working as a farm manager/owner (left) and current age (right)

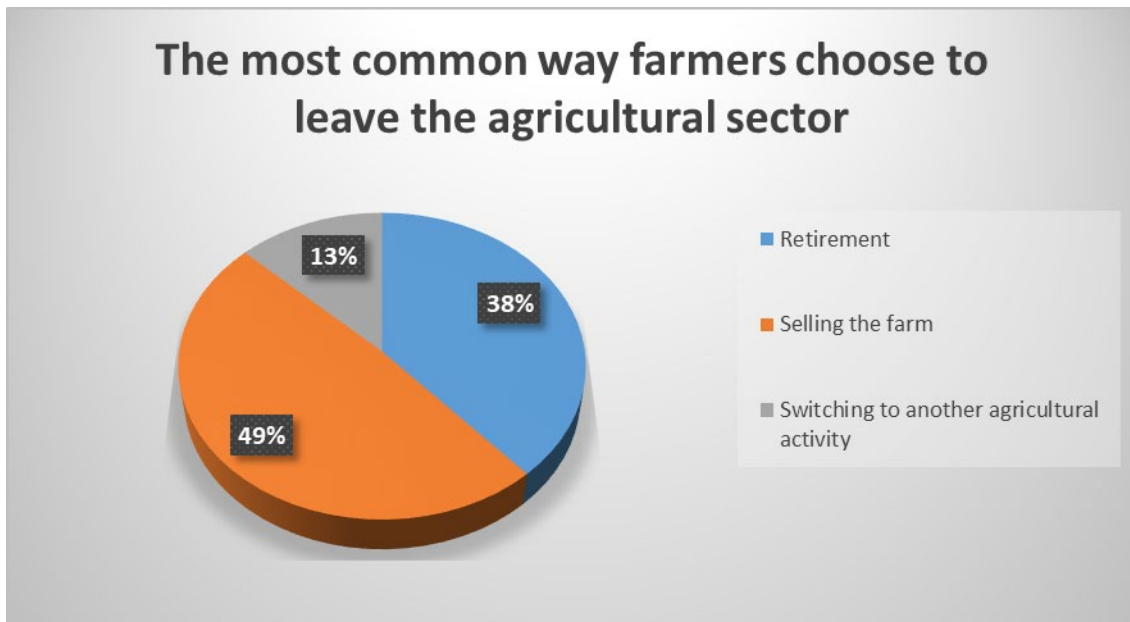


Figure 30 The most common way farmers choose to leave the agricultural sector

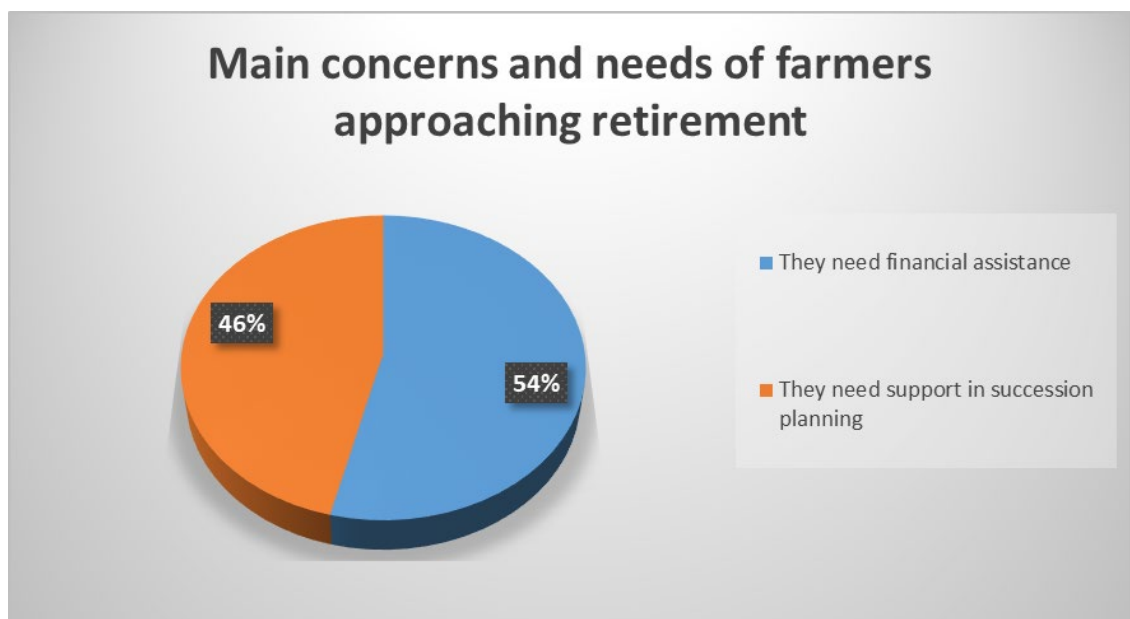


Figure 31 Main concerns and needs of farmers approaching retirement

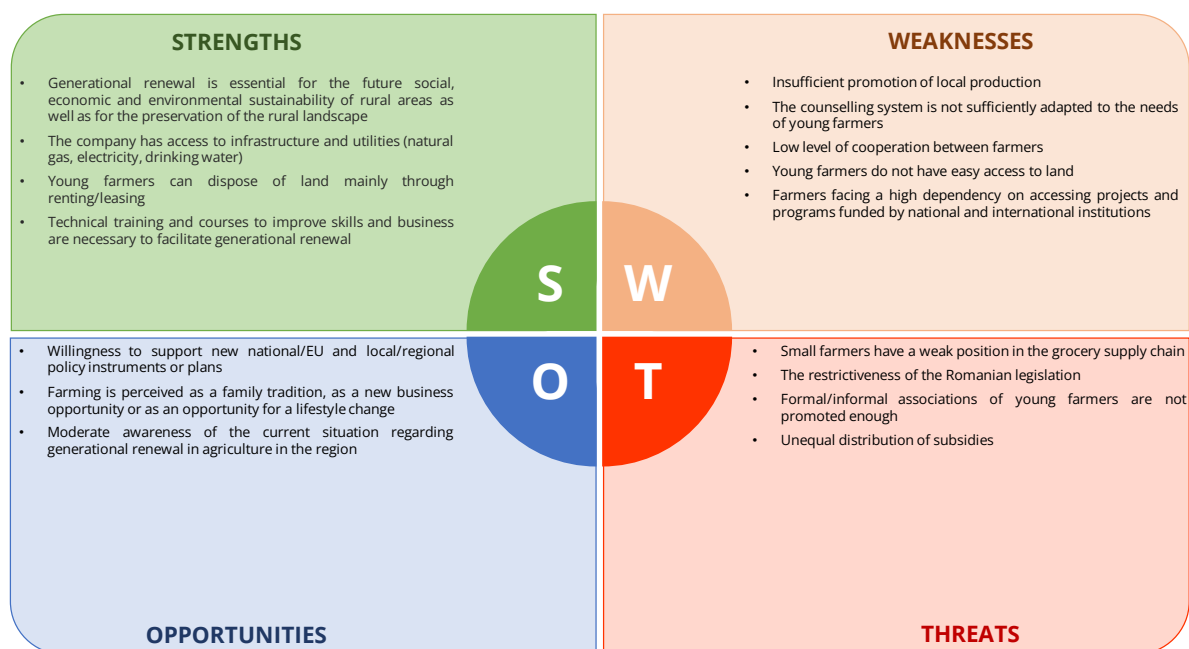


Figure 32 SWOT Analysis for Romania

10.1.5 Western Greece

Strategic Role of the Agricultural Sector. The agricultural sector in the EU plays a strategic role as it acts as a bulwark for both food security and autonomy on the continent. At the same time, it is part of the solution for environmental protection and restoration, adapting to climate challenges, and transitioning towards a climate-neutral European economy. This ensures the long-term sustainability and resilience of the European Union. It is recognized that a sustainable and resilient agricultural sector is directly linked to the high standard of living for European citizens, supporting various social and economic groups within the Union and its Member States.

Improving the potential of the farming sector. In order to continue producing high-quality food and sufficient quantities to nourish European citizens, there is a need to strengthen the agricultural workforce with fairer incomes for farmers, while simultaneously reducing production costs and improving competitive conditions. Facing an aging agricultural population, the EU is intensifying its efforts to encourage young people to turn to farming.

Agricultural Sector in the EU. Agriculture continues to be a family activity, as in 2020, it was found that nearly 9 out of 10 people working as farmers either worked alone or with

family members, with more than two-thirds, or 9.1 million farmers, being men. Regarding farms, the number of farms decreased by 37% between 2005 and 2020, with smaller farms experiencing the greatest reduction. Land consolidation and the reduction of farms and farmers lead to significant biodiversity loss. Agricultural land has unique characteristics such as size and location, and its fertility can be improved or diminished depending on farming practices.

Agricultural Sector in Greece. The agricultural sector is a significant aspect of the Greek economy but faces a series of challenges that hinder its development and competitiveness. These challenges range from demographic issues to lack of investment and technological innovations.

In general, rural areas represent 63% of Greece's territory, while residents of rural areas consistently make up 31% of the Greek population. Greek agriculture consists of approximately 700,000 farms, which are, on average, relatively small in size (7.7 hectares). Over 70% of Greece's agricultural land faces natural or other specific disadvantages (e.g., steep slopes, low temperatures, soil dryness, unfavorable soil texture, border areas, island areas) that significantly impact agriculture.

The sector employs about 450,000 people, representing 12% of total employment. Unemployment in rural areas remains a problem, especially for the youth. Greece had one of the lowest percentages of young farmers (3.7%) in 2016 among all farm managers, below the EU-27 average (5.1%), with this percentage decreasing by 44.3% from 2005 to 2016. Despite a slight change in trend during the economic crisis, the reduction in the proportion of young farmers continues, and managers over the age of 55 increased from 55% in 2010 to 61% in 2016.

The number of women in agriculture remains very low in Greece. The ratio of young female farm managers to male managers decreased from 1:3 in 2005 to 1:4 in 2016. This poses a significant challenge for generational renewal due to the fact that many farmers do not have natural successors. The lack of young farmers is particularly evident in mountainous areas.

Greece has a positive trade balance with non-EU countries, with major export products including cotton and processed agricultural products (e.g., olive oil and processed fruits and vegetables), while the trade balance with other EU countries is negative. However, the share of added value for primary product producers in the food chain in Greece has been increasing over time, despite the low degree of organization among producers.

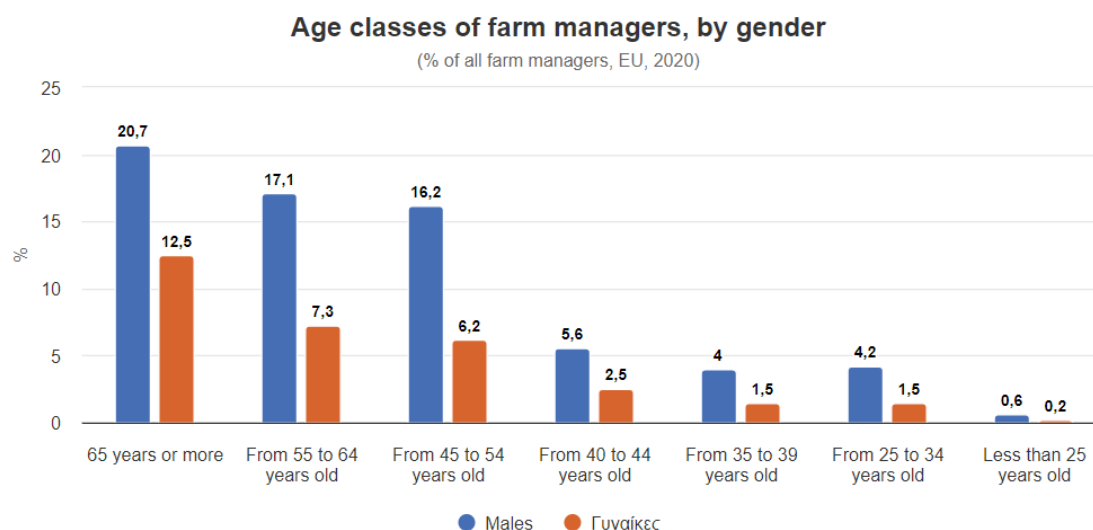


Figure 1: Age Distribution of Farmers by Gender (source: [1])

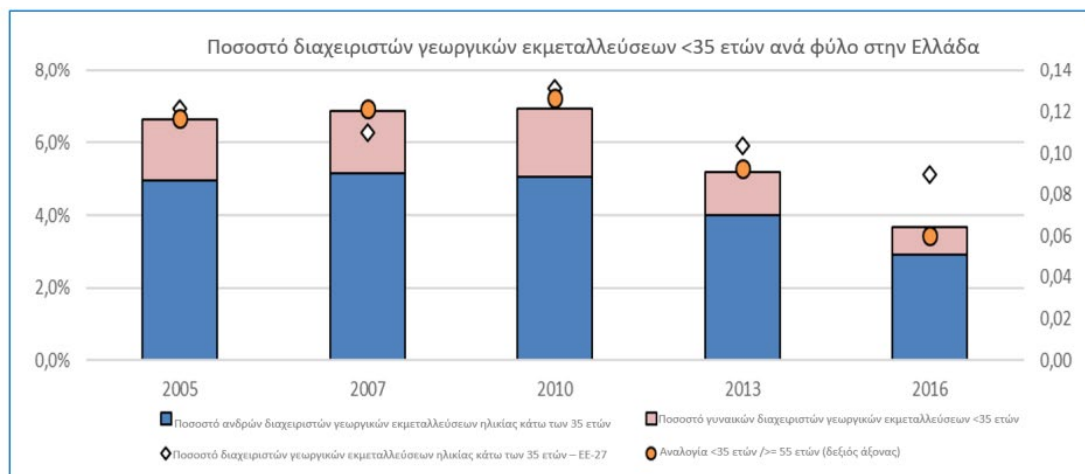


Figure 2: Percentage of Farm Managers Under 35 by Gender in Greece] (source: EUROSTAT [ef_m_farmang])

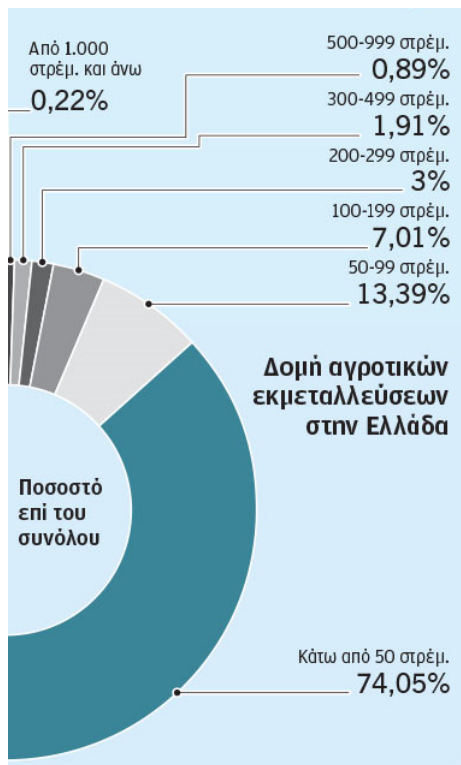


Figure 3: Structure of Agricultural Holdings in Greece.



Figure 4: Training Level of Farmers (Basic, Practice-based, complete farming training)

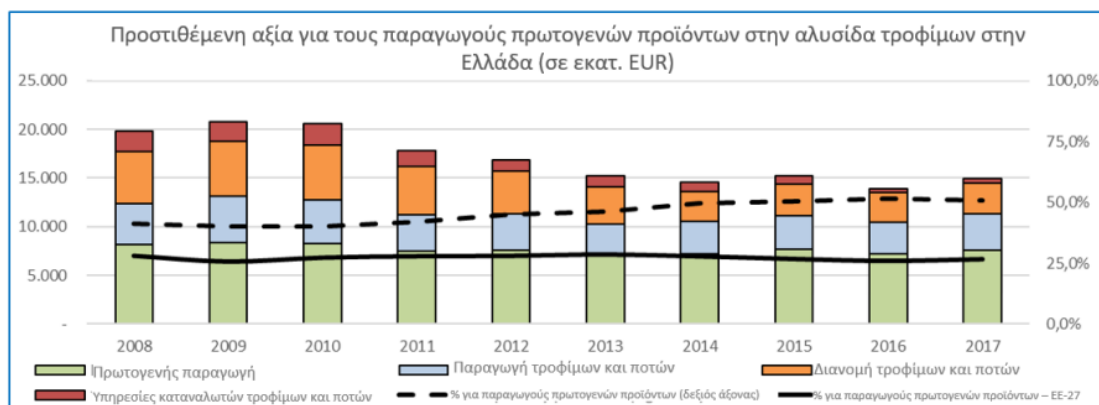


Figure 5: Added Value for Primary Product Producers in the Food Chain in Greece.

Obstacles and Challenges Facing Young Farmers

The agricultural sector is one of the main branches of the Greek economy, employing a significant number of citizens and contributing to development and social welfare. However, farmers face numerous challenges that can prevent young farmers from accessing agricultural areas:

2.1 Family Farms - Access to Land

Approximately 93% of farms in the EU (9.1 million farms, 2020) are classified as family farms. Family farms dominate the agricultural structure of the EU in terms of the number of farms, their contribution to agricultural employment, and, to a lesser extent, the land area they cultivate and the value of their production [4]. Nearly six out of ten farms are managed solely by family members, and in an additional 36% of farms, at least 50% of the total labor is performed by them. Family farms represented the majority of utilized agricultural land in 2020 (about 61% of 157.4 million hectares), the largest portion of the total agricultural workforce (nearly 78%), the majority of livestock units (almost 55%), and typical production (about 56%). Although non-family farms account for only about 7% of all farms in the EU, they represent much higher shares of the land used for agricultural production (about 39%), total workforce (about 22%), livestock units (about 45%), and typical production (about 44%). Greece is among the

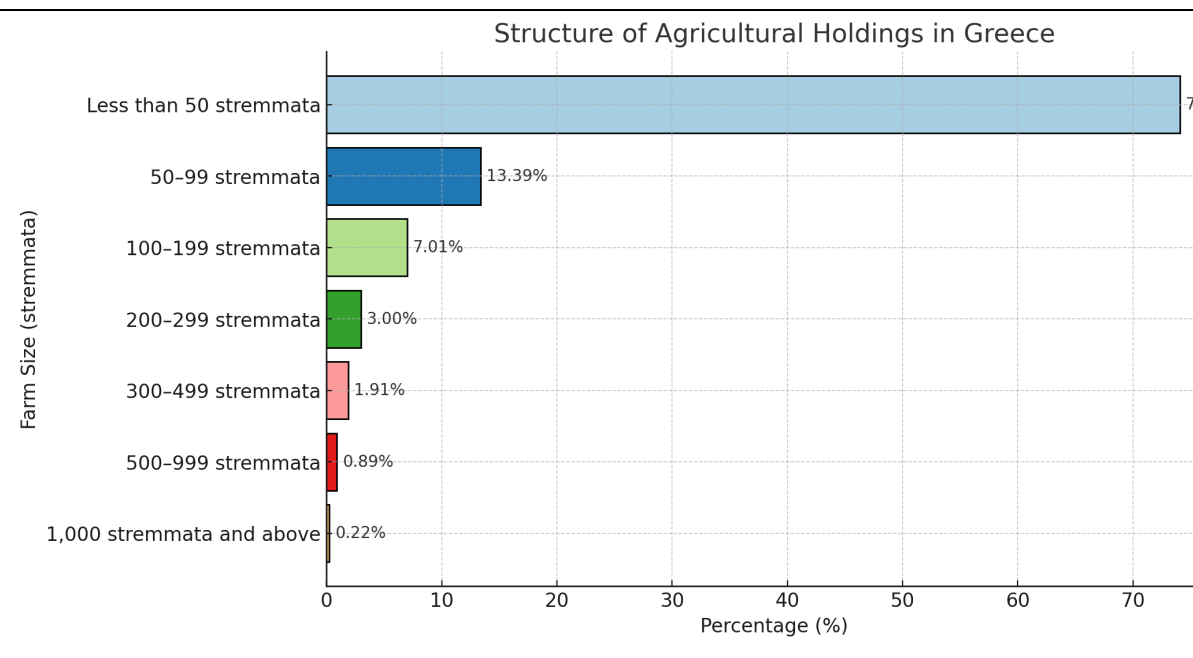
EU countries with the highest shares of family farms, along with Romania and Poland (all with about 99% of all farms) [5].

For a young person in Greece who does not own agricultural land, acquiring land is nearly impossible, as purchasing land and machinery represents a significant or prohibitive expense. In Greece, 43.1% of young farmers face this problem, and compared to other EU countries, the situation is more complex due to the state's lack of clarity on land use throughout Greece, making it unclear which areas can be used for agricultural cultivation and which for pastures. [Available land is scarce, and prices are very high. Often, the problem is due to existing legislation concerning land use and inheritance.]

2.2 Small Farm Sizes

Three out of four farms in Greece are under 50 hectares, while the EU average is 170 hectares. In Greece, we have fragmented agricultural holdings, with many small farms that often struggle to adopt modern cultivation methods, leading to decreased productivity. Source: [6]

Figure 3: Structure of Agricultural Holdings in Greece.



At the same time, in a farm consisting of multiple plots, production costs increase significantly, and economies of scale are not achieved.

2.3 Difficult Access to Credit

Young farmers in Greece face restrictions in accessing financing. This can be attributed to a lack of credit history, lack of collateral, banks' perception of young farmers as high-risk clients, and banks' reluctance to take risks in financing agriculture, resulting in much lower chances of obtaining loans compared to older peers. The percentage of viable young farmers with rejected applications in 2017 was 43%, and the percentage of farmers discouraged from applying was 19%. For younger farmers, the absence of equity creates further challenges. Generally, newcomers or young farmers undertaking large-scale operations with diversified agricultural activities are considered more reliable and have better access to financing.

Young farmers taking over existing family businesses have much higher chances of obtaining credit compared to other newcomers. Young farmers and newcomers often turn to private sources. Private financing from “friends, family, and business partners” can represent between 19% and 40% of financing. The main purpose for which young farmers in Greece seek financing is working capital (80%) [7].

2.4 Training Level and Innovation

Farmers in the country have low levels of training and largely apply practices used by farmers in the past, which affects productivity and competitiveness in Greece's primary production sector. According to the most recent Eurostat data (for 2020), only 0.7% of farm owners in Greece have formal agricultural training—meaning they undertook at least two years of training after compulsory education and studied a field related to the primary sector at a higher level. This is the lowest rate in the EU, with Greece being at the same level as Romania [8].

Another obstacle faced by young farmers is the transmission and implementation of innovative practices from research institutions and businesses. The integration of innovations into the agricultural production process in our country is low, due to a lack of synergy between research and business entities and the primary sector. There is a noticeable lack of investment in innovation and knowledge in both cultivation processes and investments. Additionally, there is a significant lack of links between agricultural holdings and research institutions, as well as small and medium-sized enterprises, which mainly operate in the agri-food sector. To promote sustainable agricultural

development and increase the competitiveness of the agricultural sector, incentives must be provided to integrate innovation so that new farmers are more likely to introduce innovative business ideas, promote shorter food chains, implement new technologies and production methods, and adopt sustainable agricultural practices, including agroecological practices and organic farming.

2.5 Suitable Living Conditions - Equal Services to Urban Areas

Rural areas must be able to provide suitable living conditions and services similar to those of urban areas for young and new farmers and their families, especially young women. This includes improved mobility, access to better educational, health, recreational, and cultural services, and broader digital connectivity. These conditions are crucial for enhancing territorial cohesion and promoting inclusive communities for young workers in agricultural holdings, ensuring that young people benefit from suitable working conditions, living standards, and social protection.

In rural and mountainous areas, distance is a significant challenge as it can cause problems not only with the transport of goods and services but also with access to education, healthcare, and other infrastructure, affecting residents' quality of life and regional development.

2.6 Bureaucracy and Administrative Difficulties

Complex procedures and bureaucracy delay project implementation and development, while the lack of digital skills limits the utilization of opportunities offered by new technologies. Over the past two years, with the implementation of the CAP, this bureaucracy has increased significantly, causing problems with agricultural subsidy payments with substantial delays in many areas. Young farmers find the complexity and bureaucracy overwhelming, often turning to specialists for guidance. Previous programs have shown that many who failed to participate were those who decided to complete all formalities on their own.

2.7 Education

Access to quality and continuous education in rural areas is not easy, as farmers often need to travel long distances to reach specialized centers. Focusing on improving their

<p>skills in both agricultural practices and business planning, as well as enhancing financial knowledge and literacy, is crucial and requires public support.</p>
<p>2.8 Increased Operational Costs</p>
<p>In the last decade, there has been an additional problem of increased production costs due to rising prices for inputs (energy, fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, feed). Farmers face significant challenges in managing the high costs required to run their businesses, often leading them to abandon their efforts.</p>
<p>2.9 Low Social Recognition of farmers role and vocation</p>
<p>The social image of farmers also affects young people’s inclination to pursue agriculture. Despite being professionals who work hard to provide quality food for the population under the best possible conditions, there are people who view farmers as second-class citizens. Some obstacles also arise from the environment itself. For instance, sometimes families prefer that their children not remain on the farm and engage in agriculture.</p>
<p>2.10 Unfair Trade Practices and Limited Market Access</p>
<p>Farmers face unfair competition and difficulties in selling their products at satisfactory prices, while limited access to new markets hampers their outreach. The law of supply and demand operates in the agricultural sector much more than in many other economic activities. Farmers and livestock breeders are significantly more numerous than intermediaries or final points of sale, leading to oligopolistic or, in rarer cases, nearly monopolistic market conditions. Simultaneously, many agricultural products that are traded are not controlled by the Greek market but by the global market.</p>
<p>2.11 Producer Organizations The degree of organization among Greek farmers in producer organizations, including cooperatives, is low. Although producer organizations are developing with EU support, particularly in certain sectors, their market power sometimes weakens as individual members sell their products independently [8].</p>

Figure 33 SWOT Analysis for Greece

10.1.5.1 In-depth interviews with Young Farmers in the wider area of Western Greece

A. Personal Information

Name: Ms. Theodora Georgopoulou (anonymized)
Age: 37 years old
Education: Psychology
Region of Activity: Krestena and the wider area of Ilia

B. Activity Details

1. How many years have you been active in the agricultural sector?

I have been involved for around 7 years. My main focus is on cultivating peanuts, but I also grow olive trees. However, the primary activity is peanuts because we have a processing unit where the product is handled and processed by us.

2. What made you decide to engage in agriculture?

I studied psychology and worked in my field in Athens at a rehabilitation center. However, under my father's encouragement—he was already a farmer involved in peanut cultivation—I began marketing the product, both raw and wholesale. Initially, this was done remotely for the first year, but I decided to return to my hometown to take on all aspects of the process, from cultivation to marketing. In 2017, I joined the "young farmers" program. My region, along with Kalamata and Serres, is one of the three areas in Greece that produce this specific type of peanut. However, over time, local farmers became disheartened and turned to more profitable crops like corn and cotton. My father revived peanut cultivation in 2014, and by 2017, I joined the effort.

3. What do you cultivate? Which crop is the most profitable?

Primarily, I cultivate peanuts. I also have some olive trees, but because we process peanuts ourselves and have a dedicated unit, peanuts are more profitable and efficient.

4. What is required for your crops to thrive and yield maximum results? What support do you need to sustain your activities?

Agriculture is challenging. It requires dedication, passion, and proper resources. For peanuts, fertilizers, regular weeding, and allowed EU-compliant pesticides are essential. For instance, yields can range from 200 to 500 kilograms per acre; achieving 400 kilograms is considered very successful. Proper equipment, such as tractors and harvesting machinery, is also crucial. Irrigation and disease control spraying are equally important.

5. What is the cost of maintaining your crops? Are your revenues sufficient for sustainability?

Costs are high, particularly with rising fuel and fertilizer prices. Although peanuts are profitable, agriculture is not always rewarded fully. Climate change adds unpredictability. For example, prolonged heatwaves can significantly reduce yields despite irrigation efforts.

C. Support

6. Which organizations support new farmers starting in agriculture?

I joined the "young farmers" program in 2017, which was easier back then due to fewer criteria and smaller grants. Beyond initial financial support, there is little assistance. For example, public lands formerly converted from a drained lake are leased without giving younger farmers priority. This lack of access to resources places new farmers in direct competition with established ones without a level playing field.

7. Who provides farmers with essential daily business support services (technical/professional guidance, financial/legal advice, grant applications, insurance, equipment, cooperatives, facilities)?

Unfortunately, there are no consistent seminars or guidance programs. When natural disasters occur, compensation is minimal and delayed. Cooperatives have dissolved due to internal conflicts, and there are no active efforts to help build new facilities.

8. What tools, policies, and programs exist in your area to facilitate the establishment or transfer of farms?

None. Despite the agricultural potential of the region—known for products like strawberries, watermelon, and olives—nothing is registered under PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) or PGI (Protected Geographical Indication). Young people continue to leave the area due to lack of educational and financial support.

D. Connectivity

9. Is the area where your crops are located isolated? How are products and workers transported? How are goods moved to larger urban centers?

The infrastructure is poor. Roads to major cities like Athens or Patras are inadequate. While municipalities try to improve local access, they face limitations. Workers often commute using personal vehicles with added costs, while farmers handle field transportation. Exporting products is possible but challenging.

10. Are health care, education, social benefits, and recreational facilities in your area adequate?

Healthcare and education services are severely lacking. For example, the local high school nearly lost its theoretical direction due to a lack of teachers. Recreational facilities are minimal, with limited activities for children. Despite some efforts, there is much room for improvement.

E. Conclusions and Recommendations

11. Is there state support and sufficient funding?

There is minimal state support. Imports from third countries often undermine local farmers, as they do not adhere to EU standards. Additionally, programs like crop insurance and disaster compensation are inadequate.

12. What are the main challenges you face?

High costs, including fuel and inputs, and the impact of climate change, are major challenges. The lack of workforce and proper infrastructure also hinders agricultural productivity.

13. What solutions do you propose to address these challenges? General comments and suggestions.

Education and training programs are essential to modernize farming. Restricting imports during local harvest seasons, improving infrastructure, and offering targeted subsidies would help. There should also be efforts to promote exports and ensure better market conditions for local produce.

Name: Mr. Fotis Papadimitris (anonymized)
Age: 41 years old
Education: Business Administration, Agricultural Science
Region of Activity: Kalamata

B. Activity Details

1. How many years have you been active in the agricultural sector?

I have been cultivating with consistent quality and quantity for about 6-7 years.

2. What made you decide to engage in agriculture?

My initial studies in business did not fulfill me. I transitioned to studying wild fungi, which led me to cultivate mushrooms professionally.

3. What do you cultivate? Which crop is the most profitable?

Mushrooms are my primary focus, alongside some secondary crops like microgreens and salads.

4. What is required for your crops to thrive?

High-quality raw materials, such as pasteurized wood for mushroom substrates, are critical for ensuring product quality. Our innovative methods differentiate us from conventional practices.

5. What is the cost of maintaining your crops? Are your revenues sufficient for sustainability?

Costs are high due to energy prices, material transportation, and raw material expenses. However, the enterprise is sustainable, and we are gradually expanding.

C. Support

6. Which organizations support new farmers starting in agriculture?

Programs like "young farmers" provide initial subsidies, but many are inaccessible due to eligibility gaps. Bureaucracy further complicates matters.

7. Who provides farmers with essential daily business support services?

Government organizations like the Ministry of Agriculture, OPEKEPE, and ELGA offer some support. Private consultants also assist with grant applications and certifications.

8. What tools, policies, and programs exist in your area to facilitate the establishment or transfer of farms?

Improvement plans and development laws exist, but they primarily benefit established businesses rather than young farmers.

D. Connectivity

9. Is the area where your crops are located isolated? How are products and workers transported?

Being located on the outskirts of Kalamata, transportation is relatively easy. We manage product deliveries with our own vehicles and cold storage solutions.

10. Are health care, education, and recreational facilities in your area adequate?

Public healthcare is inadequate. Social services and recreational facilities are limited, requiring significant improvement.

E. Conclusions and Recommendations

11. Is there state support and sufficient funding?

Funding and state support are insufficient and often misallocated. Assistance needs to be better targeted and results-driven.

12. What are the main challenges you face?

Rising costs, lack of infrastructure, and insufficient knowledge transfer hinder agricultural development.

13. What solutions do you propose to address these challenges?

Funds should be allocated more strategically. Providing technical support and easier access to resources can improve productivity and sustainability.

10.1.6 Municipality of Campobasso

Rapid rural depopulation. Rural depopulation is a pressing issue, exacerbated by economic, social, and environmental factors, leading to the erosion of cultural heritage, economic decline, and weakened social structures. The case of Molise illustrates these dynamics clearly.

PROSPETTO 1. POPOLAZIONE CENSITA AL 31.12.2022 E AL 31.12.2021 E VARIAZIONE 2022-2021 PER PROVINCIA E GENERE. Valori assoluti e valori percentuali

PROVINCE	Popolazione censita al 31.12.2022				Popolazione censita al 31.12.2021			Variazione 2022 - 2021	
	Maschi	Femmine	Totale	Composizione %	Maschi	Femmine	Totale	V.A.	%
Campobasso	103.851	106.873	210.724	72,5	104.116	107.470	211.586	-862	-0,4
Isernia	39.700	40.212	79.912	27,5	39.897	40.667	80.564	-652	-0,8
MOLISE	143.551	147.085	290.636	100,0	144.013	148.137	292.150	-1.514	-0,5
ITALIA	28.814.832	30.182.369	58.997.201	-	28.818.956	30.211.177	59.030.133	-32.932	-0,1

PROSPETTO 2. BILANCIO DEMOGRAFICO PER PROVINCIA. Anno 2022, valori assoluti

PROVINCE	Popolazione censita al 1° gennaio	Saldo naturale	Saldo migratorio interno	Saldo migratorio estero	Aggiustamento statistico*	Saldo totale	Popolazione censita al 31 dicembre
Campobasso	211.586	-1.862	-816	1.798	18	-862	210.724
Isernia	80.564	-739	-370	536	-79	-652	79.912
MOLISE	292.150	-2.601	-1.186	2.334	-61	-1.514	290.636
ITALIA	59.030.133	-321.744	-	260.796	28.016	-32.932	58.997.201

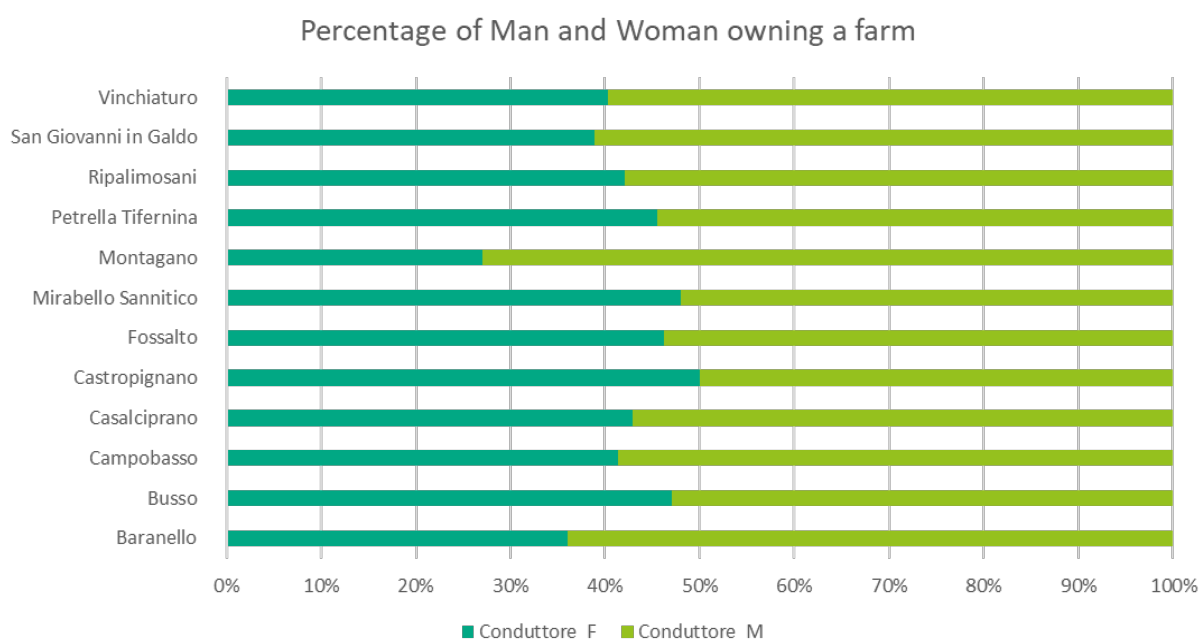
* L'aggiustamento statistico incorpora due componenti, il saldo delle poste relative a iscrizioni e cancellazioni anagrafiche per altri motivi e il saldo delle operazioni di sovra e sotto copertura censuaria (saldo statistico censuario).

Figure 1 Variazione popolazione molise

Youth rural exodus. The migration of young people to urban areas in search of better opportunities leads to a diminished labour force in rural areas, impacting agricultural

productivity and local businesses. This economic downturn creates a vicious cycle where the lack of opportunities drives further migration. Over the last twenty years, Molise has lost over thirty thousand residents, nearly 10% of its population, significantly impacting its economic vitality .

Ecological, cultural and welfare impacts of depopulation. Depopulation threatens the social network and cultural heritage of rural areas. Traditions, languages, and cultural practices face extinction as communities shrink. Abandoned agricultural lands lead to environmental degradation. Without proper management, these lands become prone to erosion, loss of biodiversity, and other ecological issues. Maintaining agricultural activities is essential not only for economic reasons but also for environmental stewardship . Overall the region counts around 20000 farm of which only 4254 are not freelance farmers.



Good gender balance. For the gender situation we can see Area Vasta of Campobasso has a slightly higher average of women in agriculture 40% vs the national average of 36 %.

PROSPETTO 5. AZIENDE AGRICOLE E SUPERFICI AGRICOLE UTILIZZATE (SAU), PER REGIONE O PROVINCIA AUTONOMA*, NEL 2020 E NEL 2010. Valori assoluti, composizioni percentuali, variazioni percentuali

REGIONE / RIPARTIZIONE	Aziende agricole					Superficie agricola utilizzata (migliaia di ettari)				
	Numero		Composizioni %		Variazioni % 2020/2010	SAU		Composizioni %		Variazioni % 2020/2010
	2020	2010	2020	2010		2020	2010	2020	2010	
Abruzzo	44.516	66.837	3,9	4,1	-33,4	415	454	3,3	3,5	-8,5
Molise	18.233	26.272	1,6	1,6	-30,6	184	198	1,5	1,5	-6,8
Campania	79.353	136.872	7,0	8,4	-42,0	516	550	4,1	4,3	-6,1
Puglia	191.430	271.754	16,9	16,8	-29,6	1.288	1.285	10,3	10,0	0,2
Basilicata	33.829	51.756	3,0	3,2	-34,6	462	519	3,7	4,0	-11,0
Calabria	95.538	137.790	8,4	8,5	-30,7	543	549	4,3	4,3	-1,1
Sicilia	142.416	219.677	12,6	13,6	-35,2	1.342	1.388	10,7	10,8	-3,3
Sardegna	47.077	60.812	4,2	3,8	-22,6	1.235	1.154	9,9	9,0	7,0
ITALIA	1.133.023	1.620.884	100,0	100,0	-30,1	12.537	12.856	100,0	100,0	-2,5
Nord-ovest	113.972	145.243	10,1	9,0	-21,5	2.055	2.097	16,4	16,3	-2,0
Nord-est	187.429	251.859	16,5	15,5	-25,6	2.431	2.472	19,4	19,2	-1,7
Centro	179.230	252.012	15,8	15,5	-28,9	2.066	2.192	16,5	17,0	-5,7
Sud	462.899	691.281	40,9	42,6	-33,0	3.408	3.554	27,2	27,6	-4,1
Isole	189.493	280.489	16,7	17,3	-32,4	2.577	2.541	20,6	19,8	1,4

Figure 2 Variazione superficie Agricola utilizzata e aziende agricole in Molise 2010 2020

Farm closures and underutilization of agricultural land. As we can see from the table, the utilized agricultural area (UAA) and the closure of many farms in Molise are significant issues. In fact, around 8,000 agricultural businesses have been lost over ten years, and the UAA has been reduced by almost 7%.

Limited number of young farmers in the land. As we can see from the table below in the municipality of Campobasso we have 4638 hectares of cultivated surface, with a small wooded area of 615 hectares and the presence of 672 agricultural companies in the territory. If we relate these data to the data relating to the agricultural surface used by young people (farmers under 40 years of age) we realize that the data are almost alarming. As can be seen in the following graph in Campobasso out of 4036 hectares cultivated only 757 hectares, or under the ratio between young and old farmers is 20%. Furthermore, the composition of the business fabric is made up of micro and small businesses. If we analyze the situation across the entire greater area, extending beyond the borders of Campobasso, the situation worsens drastically. In fact, when we look at the aggregated data, we see that young farmers utilize approximately 1,480 hectares of agricultural land compared to 12,032 hectares cultivated by farmers over 40, resulting in

a ratio of about 8%. In fact only 124 farms are owned by young farmers and 1698 by farmers over 40 as we can see in the graph below.

Generational renewal issues in farms. From the perspective of generational transition, we can observe that very few businesses are taken over by third parties, while most are taken over by family members. The percentage of businesses taken over by close relatives is equal to or less than those taken over by third parties. In fact, the family is not only a source of labor but, more importantly, a vector of continuity.

Limited farm consolidation. From the perspective of generational transition, we can observe that very few businesses are taken over by third parties, while most are taken over by family members. The percentage of businesses taken over by close relatives is equal to or less than those taken over by third parties. In fact, the family is not only a source of labor but, more importantly, a vector of continuity. This trend leads Campobasso and the municipalities of the vast area to have data that are counter to the 2020 national census agri report regarding training. The national trend highlighted in the ISTAT report is that of companies run by young farmers, under 40, to have a high number of training interventions in the company and a high percentage of use of IT and technological solutions, instead in Molise as we can see from the graph below, it is the companies run by farmers 40+ that train their employees more. This data reflects the scarcity of young farmers operating and active in the Molise region. A trend that could also be anticipated by the severe data on depopulation and the general ratio of 20% between young people and adults in the region.

Factors	Strengths	Weaknesses
Internal	- Qualified personnel to support young farmers (57%).	- Lack of personnel and objectives towards supporting young people in the agricultural sector (40%).

	- Partial use of best practices to facilitate young people's entry into agriculture (70%).	- Insufficient structures and equipment to support young farmers (80%).
	- Job offers with incentives, access to subsidized credit, specific training programs (37.5%, 25%, 25%).	- Lack of strategic partnerships for young people's access to agriculture (90%).
	- Motivation to change activities to improve young people's access to agriculture (62.5%).	- Initial access problems due to high investment costs and limited access to credit (60%).
		- Low profitability of the agricultural sector (50%).
		- Lack of adequate infrastructure (20%).
		- Limited access to credit and land.
		- Commercial problems and instability of agricultural markets.
External	Opportunities	Threats
	- Information and awareness on the situation of young people's access to agriculture (66.7%).	- Lower financial income for associations supporting young farmers.

	- Favorability towards new tools or plans for local, regional, European, and national policy (100%).	- Increase in bureaucratic and administrative procedures.
	- Funding opportunities through European (90%) and regional (50%) projects and funds.	- Need to hire new personnel.
	- Motivation to implement activities to improve young people's access to agriculture (25%).	- Lack of awareness of the objectives of young farmers.
	- Support requested at national, regional, and European level to improve young people's access to agriculture.	- Limited access to credit, lack of adequate training, and infrastructure (main risks).
	- Need to improve legislation and methodological standards at the municipal level.	- Limited awareness of best practices proposed during workshops (30%).

Figure 34 SWOT Analysis for the Municipality of Campobasso

10.2 Legal and strategic framework descriptions by each Regions

10.2.1 Neckar Alb

10.2.1.1 EU-level: The CAP-Strategic Plan

The EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which was launched in 1962, is a partnership between agriculture and society, and between Europe and its farmers. According to the European Commission (EC) it is a common policy for all EU countries that seeks to ensure a stable food supply, safeguard farmers' income, protect the environment and keep rural areas dynamic. It is managed and funded at European level from EU-resources (EC 2024a).

The CAP 2023–2027 came into force on January 1, 2023. This was the starting point of the implementation of the 28 approved CAP Strategic Plans in 27 EU countries. The procedure was based on the criteria set out in Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 which formulated the rules for the support of strategic plans to be drawn up by EU countries (EC 2024b). The strategic plans combine targeted interventions for specific needs for the realisation of particular objectives (EC 2024a).

Overall, the CAP 2023–2027 follows a performance and results-orientated approach. It is based on ten key objectives that focus on social, economic and environmental goals and which form the framework for the EU countries' CAP Strategic Plans. According to the EC 2004c, these key objectives are:

- Ensuring fair incomes for farmers,
- Increasing competitiveness,
- Improving the position of farmers in the food chain,
- Climate protection,
- Environmental protection,
- Preservation of landscapes and biodiversity,
- Promotion of generational renewal,
- Promotion of vibrant rural areas,
- Protection of food quality and health,
- Promoting knowledge and innovation.

With these key objectives, the EU has also placed a special focus on generational renewal. Generational renewal means to attract and sustain both young farmers and new farmers, and to facilitate sustainable business development in rural areas. As a result, the CAP 2023–2027 offers various initiatives that are dedicated to young farmers. In their CAP Strategic Plans, the EU countries organise such measures according to the respective local conditions (EC 2024c).

10.2.1.2 National and state level: The German CAP-Strategic Plan

Germany submitted a first proposal for a CAP Strategic Plan of Germany on February 21, 2022. The EC finally approved the revised version of the proposal on November 21, 2022. An amended version was finally approved on November 29, 2023. This document includes the main features of the CAP Strategic Plan of Germany (EC 2024d; BMEL 2024b).

The German CAP Strategic Plan aims to ensure the competitiveness and resilience of agricultural businesses in the long term and wants to improve the protection of natural resources and the climate at the same time. Another aim is to improve the quality of life in rural areas through investment, knowledge transfer and innovation. Germany has developed a strategy to link national and regional elements to provide support to farmers fairly across the country, thereby considering the special characteristics of the states. The plan also supports many national and regional initiatives that had been implemented before. According to the BMEL 2024b, it includes EU funding of around 30 billion Euro for the period 2023–2027 and has an impact on 300,000 applicant farms in the agricultural sector. To obtain a full picture, it is necessary to look at the instruments at national and state level that complement the plan as well (EC 2024d; BMEL 2024b).

The Germany CAP Strategic Plan is based on two pillars, which represent the constitutional distribution of competences between the federal government and the federal states. The strategies that are to benefit young farmers are embedded in this framework. The strategies generally involve combining several interventions including direct payments on the one hand, and actions for the installation of young farmers, new farmers and rural business start-ups via the call for applications for rural development funds on the other (EC 2024e; BMEL 2024c).

In the following sections, the funding and support options in the two pillars that are available to young farmers under certain conditions are briefly outlined:

First pillar (EAGF)

The first pillar is based on direct payments to farmers, regulations on conditionality, subsidies in certain sectors (e.g. the fruit, vegetables, wine and beekeeping sector) and on payments for voluntary “eco-schemes”. The funding comes from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund, EAGF. The responsibility for the first pillar lies within the federal government (BMEL 2024c).

Under the first pillar, farmers can apply for a range of support options, when they fulfil the necessary requirements (MLR 2024; LEL 2024d). Young farmers can apply for CAP support to the managing authorities, which are listed in the national CAP Strategic Plan. As part of the joint application, direct payments can be applied for:

- Basic income support
- Redistributive income support (supplementary)
- Complementary young farmer income support (supplementary)
- Climate and environmental schemes
- Coupled income support for the sheep meat and goatmeat sector

For young farmers, it is most interesting to apply for the young farmer income support in addition to basic income support. For this, certain eligibility requirements must be proven. Young farmer income support is granted for up to 120 ha of eligible land and for a maximum period of 5 years from the year of the first application. The standard amount for the 2024 application year is 134 Euro/hectare (LEL 2024e).

Second pillar (EAFRD)

The second pillar comprises targeted support programmes for sustainable and environmentally friendly farming and rural development. Funding is provided by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, EAFRD and by national funds. The organisation, national co-financing and implementation of the programmes is within the responsibility of the federal states (BMEL 2024b; BMEL 2024c).

Throwing a glance at the second pillar, the state of Baden-Württemberg is offering a total of 16 funding programmes in the present funding period (MLR 2023):

- Support programme for agri-environment, climate protection and animal welfare (FAKT II)
- Landscape conservation directive (LPR)
- Compensatory allowance for less-favoured areas (AZL)
- Sustainable forestry (NWW)
- Environmental allowance for forests (UZW)
- Agricultural investment support programme (AFP) incl. support for young farmers
- Promotion of investments in small farms (IKLB)
- Diversification (DIV)
- Market structure improvement
- Promotion of yield insurance in fruit growing and viticulture
- Nature parks
- Innovative measures for women in rural areas (IMF)
- Regional development programme LEADER
- Cooperation / European innovation partnership (EIP)
- Counselling for agricultural businesses
- Further training programme in agriculture and rural areas

Although these programmes are not specifically designed for young farmers and new entrants, they can still benefit from some measures. Young farmers can for example receive payments for environmentally friendly land management, obtain aid for investments or get support to set up or join a producer or marketing organisation.

Some of the programmes such as the Agricultural Investment Support Programme (AFP), which promotes investment in companies to maintain competitive, environmentally friendly and animal-friendly agriculture, explicitly offer grants to young farmers. Farmers can receive a 10 % higher subsidy of max. 20,000 Euro. The individual programmes and the requirements for funding are described in the “Förderwegweiser MLR” of the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Nutrition, Rural Affairs and Consumer Protection (MLR 2024).

10.2.2 Gorenjska

Slovenia's agricultural policies are primarily governed by its integration into the **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** of the European Union, particularly through the **CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027**. This plan aligns with broader EU goals but incorporates specific national objectives, particularly regarding **support for young farmers, rural development, and climate change adaptation**. The strategic framework emphasizes the modernization of agriculture, fostering innovation, and ensuring that rural regions like **Gorenjska** remain competitive and sustainable despite environmental challenges.

10.2.2.1 National Legislation and Support Mechanisms

The **Agriculture Act (Zakon o kmetijstvu - Zkme-1)** and other key national laws, such as the **Law on Agricultural Holdings** and **Land Use Laws**, establish the legal framework for agricultural activity in Slovenia. These laws define the rights and responsibilities of farmers, the structure of agricultural holdings, and the mechanisms by which the state supports rural development and agricultural productivity. The legislation also covers key aspects such as:

- **Farmland protection** and use to ensure long-term agricultural viability.
- **Support for young farmers** through grants, subsidies, and preferential tax treatments.
- **Legal forms of agricultural businesses**, allowing flexibility between individual and corporate farming setups to promote better business management (MAG_Krabonja_Tinkara_Iz...).

The **CAP Strategic Plan 2023–2027** has allocated significant resources toward modernizing Slovenian agriculture, with particular emphasis on supporting young farmers. The strategy includes:

- **Direct payments to young farmers**, ensuring income stability as they start their agricultural operations.

- **Investment support** for technological upgrades, sustainable practices, and improved competitiveness.
- **Knowledge transfer and training programs** focused on sustainable farming techniques and the use of digital technologies in agriculture.

Rural Development and Regional Integration

One of the key components of Slovenia's **National Rural Development Program (NRDP)** is the promotion of rural economies through targeted subsidies and grants. The focus is not just on traditional farming activities but also on the **diversification of rural economies**, supporting **eco-tourism, organic farming, and local entrepreneurship**. The legal framework encourages the development of these supplementary activities to help rural areas, especially those with difficult terrain, such as **Gorenjska**, become more economically resilient.

Local Action Groups (LAGs), operating under the **LEADER/CLLD initiative**, develop **Local Development Strategies (LDS)** that align with national policies but are tailored to the specific needs of each region. LAGs focus on:

- Promoting **entrepreneurship and innovation** in rural areas.
- Supporting **sustainable agriculture and eco-friendly farming practices**.
- Facilitating the integration of **local products** into broader supply chains .

At the local level, there are additional smaller-scale subsidies available through municipalities to support farmers, although these are generally focused on basic needs like equipment and machinery rather than strategic development for young farmers. The **lack of regional funds** and formal regional structures in Slovenia poses a challenge for more comprehensive rural development planning, which has led to an uneven distribution of support, particularly for emerging farmers.

Climate Change Adaptation and Sustainability

Climate change adaptation is a central theme in Slovenia's **legal and strategic agricultural frameworks**. The national strategic plan includes targeted actions for addressing climate change through:

- **Sustainable water management** to mitigate droughts and reduce the risk of flooding in vulnerable regions.
- **Soil conservation and reforestation** efforts, particularly in areas prone to erosion or desertification, such as the highland areas of Gorenjska.
- **Support for organic farming** and the reduction of chemical inputs in agricultural production.

Additionally, Slovenia's **CAP Strategic Plan** has set ambitious targets for increasing the amount of land under organic farming by 2027 and enhancing **biodiversity conservation**. For young farmers, this involves providing grants and subsidies to encourage the adoption of **climate-smart agriculture**. This is critical for ensuring that Slovenian agriculture can adapt to increasingly erratic weather patterns, including extreme heat, heavier rainfall, and more frequent droughts.

Integration of Environmental and Economic Goals

Slovenia's legal framework is designed to balance **environmental sustainability** with **economic viability**. Farmers are encouraged to adopt more sustainable practices through financial incentives and regulatory frameworks that promote **green agriculture**. This includes specific legal provisions that:

- Encourage the use of **renewable energy** on farms.
- Support the preservation of **natural landscapes** and **traditional farming methods**.
- Regulate the use of **water and soil resources** to prevent over-exploitation.

The strategic framework also includes initiatives to improve **digitalization** and **knowledge transfer** in agriculture. This ensures that farmers have access to the latest

technologies and practices, enabling them to manage their farms more efficiently while reducing their environmental impact.

Regional development program 2021-2027 for Gorenjska put a lot of emphasis on preservation of biodiversity, countryside and provisions for viability of rural areas (including the preservation/growth of rural businesses including family farms).

Leader, LAG strategies: In Gorenjska Region LAG strategies focus remains on preservation, growth of family farms with supplementary activities and their involvement in local value chains (e.g. also with tourism).

Local community development plans put emphasis on preservation of countryside, where liveability of rural families with diversity of income/with emphasis on agriculture/forestry production/other branches (e.g. tourism,...) is a strategic priority.

Conclusion

Slovenia's **Legal and Strategic Framework** for agriculture is a comprehensive approach that integrates **national, regional, and local policies** to support sustainable agricultural development and climate resilience. By aligning its goals with the **European Common Agricultural Policy**, Slovenia ensures a strong focus on **young farmers, rural diversification**, and **environmental sustainability**. However, the challenge remains in fully addressing the needs of emerging farmers, particularly through the **local-level funding mechanisms** and the **coordination of national and local strategies**.

This framework positions Slovenia to be a key player in the EU's push for greener, more resilient agriculture, while also ensuring that its rural areas, especially regions like Gorenjska, remain vibrant and sustainable.

10.2.2.2 Regional Framework

Slovenia's agricultural and regional development policies are deeply intertwined with national strategic frameworks, including the **National Rural Development Programme 2021-2027** and **Gorenjska's Regional Development Programme 2021-2027**. These documents emphasize **green sustainable development**, preservation of biodiversity, and promotion of innovation in agriculture. Key national initiatives like the **Common**

Agricultural Policy (CAP) support the overall strategic goals, but they also face challenges in addressing the specific needs of young farmers.

Local Action Groups (LAGs) play a crucial role in implementing regional strategies that emphasize innovation, entrepreneurship, and support for youth in rural areas. These groups operate through local development strategies that aim to enhance economic opportunities in the countryside by focusing on agriculture, tourism, and related supplementary activities. However, at the local level, development plans are constrained by the lack of regional funding mechanisms, meaning smaller subsidies are often provided directly by local communities for specific needs like equipment and machinery. These are rarely tailored to young farmers, limiting their ability to innovate and grow their businesses.

One significant barrier is the **non-availability of regional funds**. Without proper regional authorities to allocate substantial financial resources, local development plans remain limited in their ability to directly support young farmers. Although some support is provided at the local level, it usually comes in the form of smaller, unsystematic subsidies. This has led to gaps in funding for essential infrastructure, knowledge transfer, and access to financial tools for young and emerging farmers.

Climate Change Adaptation: Slovenia, like many countries in Europe, is experiencing growing pressures related to climate change. Farmers in regions like Gorenjska face challenges related to the reduced growing season at higher altitudes, poor-quality land, and increasing environmental stressors such as droughts and floods. Local policies are beginning to address these issues, but significant gaps remain. The **National Rural Development Programme** highlights climate change as a critical issue but still lacks targeted support for adaptation, particularly for younger and smaller farmers. These groups face difficulties accessing new technologies, receiving training on sustainable farming practices, and implementing the changes necessary to mitigate climate risks.

At the local level, **Local Action Groups** and municipalities are beginning to engage more actively with **climate adaptation strategies**. In Gorenjska, for example, various projects related to sustainable land use, biodiversity preservation, and eco-tourism are gaining

momentum. There is an urgent need, however, for more **systemic cooperation between national, regional, and local stakeholders**. This cooperation would better support local farmers in adapting to the rapid changes in weather patterns and ensuring long-term viability of agricultural production in challenging terrains.

In conclusion, while Slovenia's agricultural policy framework and regional strategies are generally well-aligned with the European Union's broader goals of green and sustainable development, much more needs to be done. The emphasis should be on **enhancing collaboration between research and practice**, especially in the agriculture and forestry sectors, and **increasing financial and knowledge-based support** for young farmers. Local communities must also address the **pressing challenges of climate change** by incorporating more targeted initiatives within their development plans to ensure resilience in agriculture and rural economies. **Loss of arable land, viability of income in rural families** need to be better addressed, the same goes for the **rather low CAP support for small family and increase taxes, contributions** that has to be payed either to local/national budget that **are affecting deeply the viability of the rural households/young trying to remain/work in countryside**.

This integrated approach would ensure a more sustainable, innovative, and climate-resilient agricultural sector in Gorenjska and beyond.

10.2.3 Western Greece

10.2.3.1 Common Agricultural Policy 2023 – 2027

One of the most important tools, if not the most important, for supporting and developing the primary sector is the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The CAP represents a partnership between agriculture and society, and between Europe and its farmers. Its objectives include supporting farmers and improving agricultural productivity to ensure a stable supply of affordable food, ensuring a decent standard of living for European Union farmers, contributing to combating climate change, and managing natural resources sustainably, preserving rural areas and landscapes throughout the EU, and keeping the rural economy alive by promoting employment in agriculture, the agri-food sector, and related fields.

The CAP is a common policy for all EU countries. Its management and financing are handled at the European level through the EU budget. To solidify the role of European agriculture in the future, the CAP has evolved over the years to respond to changing economic conditions and the needs and demands of citizens.

The CAP 2023-27 came into effect on January 1, 2023. Support for farmers and rural stakeholders in the 27 EU countries is based on the CAP's legal framework for the 2023-27 period and on the options detailed in the CAP Strategic Plans, which were approved by the Commission. The approved plans are designed to significantly contribute to the ambitions of the European Green Deal, the "Farm to Fork" strategy, and the Biodiversity strategy.

Under the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) for the 2023-2027 period, member states now design how they will use support tools based on their needs and priorities, while the European Commission sets general goals and conditions, and also approves and monitors the implementation of each country's national plans. The CAP is becoming "greener" as part of the goals of the "European Green Deal": it places increased emphasis on the environment, climate, and the sustainability of food production. Within this framework, there are specific conditions and support tools, as well as provisions for fewer pesticides, reduced nutrient loss in the soil, organic farming on ¼ of the land, and enhancing landscape diversity.

The two main pillars of the CAP are:

Direct support with annual payments to producers, mainly based on the eligible area they maintain. Additionally, other special support schemes are provided (e.g., for young farmers) as well as measures for agricultural markets.

Development of the sector and sustainability of rural areas through investments in farms and sustainable agricultural practices, cooperation between farmers, local development, as well as knowledge and innovation.

Generational renewal in the agricultural sector is a key goal during the 2023-2027 period under the common agricultural policy, highlighting the European Union's commitment

and support. Member states should allocate at least 3% of direct payment funds compared to previous programming periods, thereby underscoring the importance of the new generation of farmers in the agricultural sector. Consequently, member states will invest more resources in programs aimed at supporting young people and facilitating the easier transfer of agricultural assets. This includes educational programs, funding, access to capital, and innovative technologies and practices.

The legal framework addressing generational renewal in agriculture and support for young farmers in Romania is primarily shaped by national laws and policies, as well as by European Union (EU) regulations, given Romania's membership in the EU. These frameworks and measures collectively aim to encourage young people to enter the agricultural sector, ensuring the renewal of generations and the sustainability of agriculture in Romania.

10.2.4 Romania

10.2.4.1 Regional framework

Local Development Plans and Programs: Within each county, municipalities and rural communities may develop Local Development Plans and Programs. These plans outline local priorities and projects aimed at improving living conditions, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability in rural areas. (Ministry of Development, Public Works and Administration, 2023)

10.2.4.2 National framework

Romania's Sustainable Development Strategy 2030: This strategy outlines the country's long-term vision for sustainable development and covers various aspects, including environmental protection, demographic changes, and rural development. It provides a roadmap for integrating economic, social, and environmental objectives to achieve sustainable growth in rural areas. (Romanian Government, 2018)

National Rural Development Programme (NRDP): The NRDP is a strategic document at the national level, developed under the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union.

It outlines the priorities and measures to support rural development in Romania, including initiatives related to sustainable agriculture, rural infrastructure, and rural diversification. (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2023)

10.2.4.3 EU framework

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP): The CAP is one of the EU's core policies, which provides support for the agricultural sector and rural development. It includes measures to promote sustainable farming practices, support rural diversification, and enhance the socio-economic well-being of rural communities. (European Commission, 2023)

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD): As part of the CAP, the EAFRD provides financial support for rural development projects in EU member states. The EAFRD provides financial support for rural development projects, including those aimed at young farmers. The fund supports measures like farm modernization, improving competitiveness, and enhancing sustainability. (European Commission, 2023)

10.2.5 Galicia

In line with the objective of this report, it is important to analyse the legal framework, the financial support and to verify its adaptation to the rapid changes that are taking place at the socio-economic level in rural Galicia.

This chapter aims to analyse existing public policies, regulations, support programmes, instruments and institutional structures, and to identify the main constraints and opportunities that influence the incorporation of youth into the agricultural sector.

This analysis aims to provide a comprehensive and critical view of the regulatory and strategic environment, in order to identify areas for improvement and propose recommendations to facilitate greater access and participation of young people in Galician agricultural activity.

As far as aid is concerned, it is currently based on funds arising from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union (EU). The CAP is a common policy of all EU

countries that is fundamentally aimed at the agricultural sector and the rural environment with the objective of supporting farmers to provide them with a standard of living in line with the rest of society and also defines the conditions that allow the agricultural sector to fulfil the functions of food supply, environmental conservation, population fixation and employment generation. (Resumen PEPAC España 2023-2027, 2022)

The CAP Objectives for the period 2023-2027 are based on the three pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental and social. Within the social pillar is objective 7: Supporting generational renewal.

The Spanish CAP Strategic Plan (PEPAC) is a document that includes the interventions or measures to be implemented in 2023-2027 to respond to the needs of the Spanish countryside and thus achieve the objectives of the CAP and the ambition of the European Green Pact. After an exhaustive analysis of the needs of the agricultural sector and the rural environment in Spain, the measures to respond to these needs were defined and then a plan of targets was established for each specific objective and a financial plan, in addition to a management and monitoring system.

The PEPAC established specific measures to support the incorporation of young people into farming. Specifically, three measures are identified: in the chapter on aid, they are identified for income; for the incorporation of young people; and for investments and modernisation. In the chapter on rural development measures there are specific measures for young farmers and new rural enterprises. (Resumen PEPAC España 2023-2027, 2022)

For the period 2023-2027, the CAP was designed with a strategic and integrated approach to generational change in the Plan that ensures coherence between the different CAP measures. An example of this is the new definition of young farmers, unique for all CAP support, which favours simplification and reduction of bureaucracy. There is a specific budget of 220 M€/year exclusively for incentives for generational replacement. In addition, young farmers will be able to benefit from the rest of the aid. Priority will be given to young people who have just started farming in the allocation of payment entitlements from the national reserve.

In relation to women, for the first time the gender approach is incorporated into the CAP (which becomes part of specific objective 8), given the current situation of inequality between men and women in rural areas (de-feminisation, gender gap, lower employment rate of women, etc.). (Resumen PEPAC España 2023-2027, 2022)

In Galicia, an order was published in the Official Journal on 22 January 2024 laying down the regulatory bases for aid to improve the production structures of agricultural holdings.

This Order includes the following interventions contained in the PEPAC linked to youth support:

- a) Intervention 68411 Aid for productive investments in agricultural holdings linked to contributing to climate change mitigation-adaptation and efficient use of natural resources, with a budget of 4,500,000 euros.
- b) Intervention 68412 Aid for investments in modernisation and/or improvement of agricultural holdings, with a budget of 23,500,000 euros.
- c) Intervention 69611 Establishment of young farmers (Incorporación agraria), with a budget of 16.000.000 euros. (Diario Oficial de Galicia, 2024)

10.2.5.1 Financial support under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Income support for young farmers and young women farmers

It is an income support, complementary to the basic support, so farmers must have basic income support entitlements. However, the amount to be received is independent of the number of rights held and their value, as the aid is calculated according to the size of the holding, up to a maximum of 100 hectares, and according to the regional average value of basic aid. It is aimed at supporting farmers up to 40 years of age to become farm managers. The payment can be received for a maximum of 5 years from 2023, 15% more if they are young farmers.

In this way, greater economic support is provided to young farmers in charge of the farm during the first years of their start-up, which are the most difficult to establish the viability of their business project, favouring their long-term permanence. It also favours the

incorporation of young farmers, contributing to generational change, as its aid package is more attractive.

Establishment of young farmers (support for incorporation)

The establishment of young farmers as owners of agricultural holdings makes an essential contribution to the generational change needed in the sector, as well as to the establishment of population in rural areas, which are generally depopulated. The aim of this intervention is therefore to contribute to generational renewal and job creation in rural areas.

Persons wishing to qualify for support for the establishment of young farmers must meet the following requirements:

- a) Be between 18 and 40 years of age, both inclusive.
- (b) meet the requirements to become a first-time head of holding or have met those requirements in the 12 months preceding the date of application for the aid.
- (c) comply with the status of professional farmer within 18 months from the date of establishment.
- (d) The holding on which the installation is promoted must achieve a unit labour income equal to or greater than 35 % of the reference income.
- (e) possess a sufficient level of professional qualification.
- f) Submit a business plan.
- (g) remain in agricultural activity for a period of 5 years from the final payment of the aid.
- h) To participate in the mentoring programme for young farmers provided by the Regional Ministry for the Rural Environment.
- (i) Not having received aid for the first installation. (Diario Oficial de Galicia, 2024)

Between 2016 and 2023, 2709 applications for the incorporation of young people were approved, with a total budget of 101,345.000 euros.

Year	Approved applications	Amount of aid
2016	620	24,397,000.00
2017	466	14,920,000.00
2018	382	12,973,000.00
2019	357	12,443,000.00
2020	279	10,330,000.00
2022	353	14,991,500.00
2023	252	11,290,500.00
Grand total	2,709	101,345,000.00

Table 1: Approved applications and total budget for youth mainstreaming 2016-2023. Source: Informe Concellería de Medio Rural, 2024.

Of these applications, the highest number of applications approved and budget granted was in the province of Lugo, and most of them were granted to male farmers.

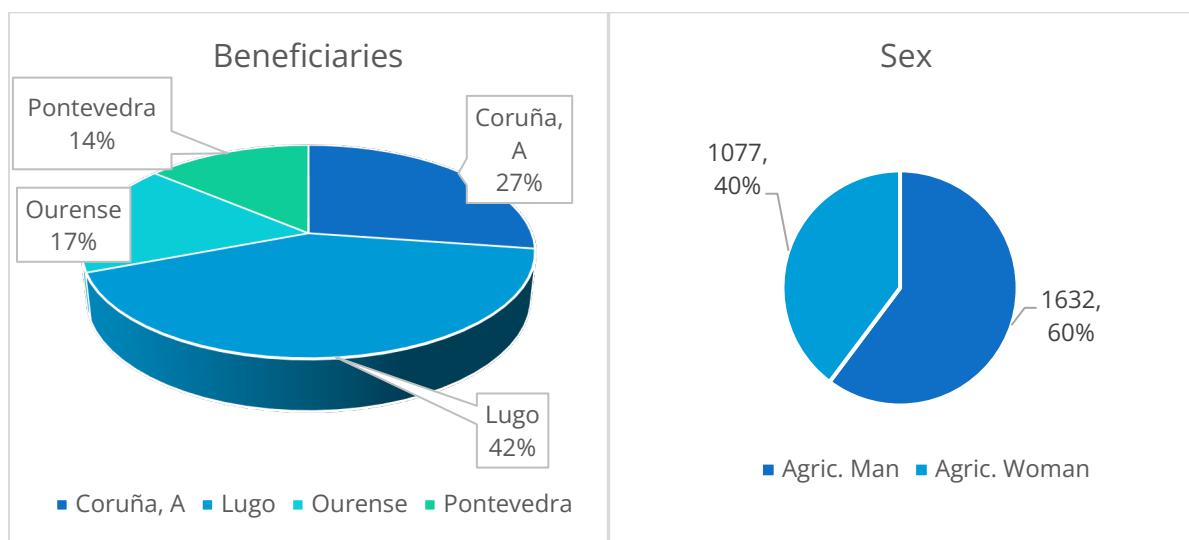


Figure 35: Approved applications and total budget for youth mainstreaming 2016-2023

Source: Informe Consellería de Medio Rural, 2024.

When looking at the incorporation by productive orientation, the great majority of incorporations are in the livestock sector, both for milk (43%) and meat (26%).

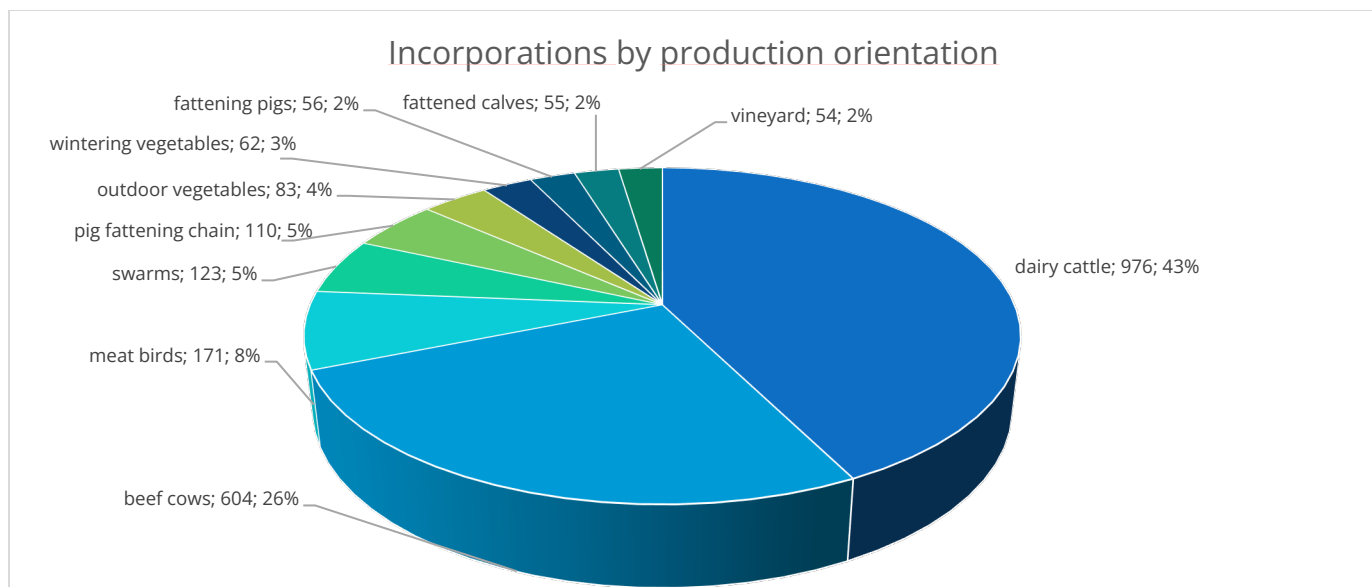


Figure 36: Mainstreaming by production orientation.

Source: Report of the Consellería de Medio rural, 2024.

Aid for investments in holdings

This intervention will co-finance productive investments focused on climate change adaptation and mitigation, efficient resource management, improved energy efficiency, animal welfare and biosecurity on farms. Investments will include changes in production orientation, efficient management of water, soil and air, reduction of emissions, improvement in the application of fertilisers and phytosanitary products, and agricultural machinery to optimise resources. Support will also be given to improve thermal insulation, energy efficiency in agricultural and livestock facilities, and the replacement of obsolete boilers with biomass systems.

In addition, investments that promote animal welfare and biosecurity measures to improve livestock health and farm sanitary conditions will be financed. Examples include the adaptation of livestock farms to control tuberculosis and the implementation of renewable energy systems such as solar and photovoltaic. All investments must meet and exceed mandatory standards and requirements, especially in manure management, energy efficiency and animal welfare.

In the case of this aid, the selection criteria stipulate that if the investment aid is applied for at the same time as the application for aid for the establishment of young farmers, 10 points out of a total of 42 are awarded. If half of the partners are women, an additional 3 points are awarded. (Diario Oficial de Galicia, 2024).

Aid investments in modernisation/improvement of agricultural holdings

This intervention seeks to modernise and improve agricultural holdings by restructuring them in terms of size and productive orientation. The aim is to support the installation of young farmers, maintain the rural productive fabric and encourage collective investments in associative regimes.

In addition, efforts to restore agricultural productive potential damaged by natural disasters will be supported and appropriate preventive measures implemented. Operations will include modernisation of farms, productive restructuring, promotion of the installation of young people in agriculture, and collective investment in associations.

The selection principles and prioritisation criteria for the granting of this aid mainly include the promotion of generational renewal and the sustainable use of the means of production. The incorporation of women in agriculture is favoured and support is given to companies dedicated to professional agriculture, promoting agricultural associations and helping farms that need it. Priority is also given to actions that save water and energy, innovative business plans with new technologies and renewable energies, job creation, and location in areas with natural limitations.

In addition, sustainable agricultural practices, investments made by professional farmers, farms classified as priority farms, and those included in shared ownership registers are valued. Other criteria include employment generated, aid received in previous calls, increase in the size of the farm, volume of investment and water saving.

Aid for investments for agricultural diversification

This intervention seeks to maintain the rural population, avoid the abandonment of farms, improve their size and diversify their activities to increase farmers' incomes. It will support investments that respond to the recommendations of the European Commission

to strengthen the rural socio-economic fabric, reduce depopulation, encourage generational renewal in agriculture, and promote the social inclusion of vulnerable groups. Priorities include the incorporation of women in agriculture, water and energy saving, technological innovation, and job creation in rural areas.

Investments will also focus on economic diversification, promoting new non-agricultural activities and improving the efficiency of the rural productive fabric. The selection criteria prioritise the contribution to the maintenance of the rural population, the development of micro-enterprises, the use of renewable energies, and the inclusion of young people, women and disadvantaged groups. In addition, the training of the promoter, the characteristics of the municipality and the synergies with other programmed interventions will be valued, avoiding double financing.

Farm succession cooperation

This is a measure that is established in the national PEPAC, but is not developed in Galicia. However, it is relevant to mention it, because it could be applied in the future.

The main objective is to promote a generational change in rural areas, encouraging job creation to revitalise agriculture and combat depopulation. It seeks to increase the participation of young farmers through the installation in farms and the retirement of people over 65 years of age. In addition, it is intended to encourage the creation of new agricultural and non-agricultural enterprises. This process is supported with aid for the first installation, facilitating access to land for young people, which is crucial to start the activity and achieve a good profitability in their farms.

To improve the situation, it is necessary not only to bring young people into farming, but also to facilitate the exit of less profitable farmers. The need has been identified to improve the professional qualification of young people through intergenerational cooperation, allowing the transfer of practices and acquired knowledge. It is essential to reduce the average age in farming, to facilitate access to land for new generations, and to ensure the transmission of knowledge and the retirement of producers with fewer

prospects. These actions can be achieved through cooperation between stakeholders, promoting innovative agricultural developments and activities.

The main objective of the intervention to promote the succession of farms is to encourage generational renewal (renewal of farmers, stockbreeders and agricultural or livestock workers, promoting new owners or the extension of the territorial base of the farm) and to increase the viability of farms by restructuring and extending them and raising the level of professional qualification of their owners. Support will be provided to farmers or stockbreeders who decide to cease their agricultural or stockbreeding activity in order to transfer their holdings to other farmers or stockbreeders, by submitting a cooperation project between the parties. (Informe sobre el plan estratégico de la PAC, 2021)

Institutional Structures

In addition to the aid described in the previous section, it is crucial to have a solid framework of institutional support that facilitates access to resources, training and technical advice. In this context, the Regional Ministry of Rural of the Xunta de Galicia, together with other public and private institutions, plays an essential role in promoting and supporting young farmers.

In addition to the PEPAC and the Galician Rural Development Plans, which include financial and technical support programmes aimed at young farmers, as well as measures to facilitate access to land and the modernisation of farms, there are public institutions and bodies that implement these plans and programmes.

The autonomous government represented by the Xunta de Galicia offers various grants and subsidies for young farmers, as well as training and capacity building programmes, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food through the CAP and other national programmes, provides funds and resources to support young people in the agricultural sector.

Cooperatives and associations

At the level of Cooperatives and Associations, there are 180 agri-food cooperatives with 34,000 members in 2022. These cooperatives offer technical support, training and advice

to young farmers, as well as facilitating access to inputs and markets. (Análise económico-financeira do agrocooperativismo galego, 2023). In 2024 there are 419 registered Agricultural Transformation Companies in Galicia. (datos.gob.es, 2024). The SATs are civil societies with an economic-social purpose in relation to the production, transformation and commercialisation of agricultural, livestock or forestry products, the carrying out of improvements in the rural environment, agricultural promotion and development, as well as the provision of common services related to these concepts. They therefore have legal personality. (Ministerio de Agricultura P. y., 2024)

There is also the Asociación Agraria Jóvenes Agricultores (ASAJA) which provides resources, training, and farm management support for young people. ASAJA has a national headquarters, 15 regional centres, 40 provincial offices and 810 local offices, as well as a permanent representative office in Brussels. (Asociación Agraria Jóvenes Agricultores, 2024)

The Galician Agrarian Association (ASAGA) represents the interests of agricultural production and offers legal, tax, labour and insurance advice. It also has a joint purchasing centre for its members. (Asociación Agraria de Galicia, 2024)

In Galicia, the Sindicato Labrego Galego, committed to sustainable and solidarity-based agriculture, defined in its 4th Congress in 1994 the axes to achieve an agrarian model based on the equitable distribution of production and public funds, the preservation of agricultural jobs and the fair remuneration of agricultural work reflecting economic, ecological and social costs. They promote a quality policy that limits industrial production and prioritises agriculture linked to the land, protecting the natural environment and maintaining genetic diversity. Furthermore, they seek to revitalise rural life through the development of diverse socio-economic activities and the improvement of infrastructures and social services. They advocate the decentralisation of agricultural power, adapting the CAP to local specificities, and propose a statute guaranteeing social and legal rights for farmers. Internationally, they are part of Via Campesina and other farmers' organisations. (Sindicato Labrego Galego, 2024)

Training and education

Training and education is supported through various programmes and centres such as the six Agricultural Training and Experimentation Centres of the Regional Ministry for the Rural Environment. These centres are adapted to the characteristics of the areas in which they are located in order to become a place of reference and take advantage of the resources of the area. They offer a wide variety of courses, both regulated and non-regulated, also known as continuous training. The former are divided into higher and intermediate cycles. Continuing education is based on eminently practical courses, given throughout the year and aimed at farmers and stockbreeders, such as courses in agricultural business aptitude, handling of phytosanitary products and farm improvement and monographic or specialisation courses that are adapted to the needs of the moment.

Among these options is Vocational Education and Training (VET). VET is a training system that is characterised by being eminently practical, as well as by its proximity to companies. It is an education that prepares students for a professional activity oriented towards the demands of the labour market, training them for the performance of a profession. It has an agricultural area where higher, intermediate and basic courses are offered.

At university level, the University of Santiago de Compostela, as well as the University of Vigo, offer bachelor's degrees and various master's degrees specific to the agricultural and livestock sector.

There are also the Centros de Promoción Rural - Escuelas Familiares Agrarias de Galicia (EFA), an associative movement that seeks to contribute to the professional and social promotion of the rural environment through educational actions: formal vocational training for young people and continuous and occupational training for adults and other young people. There are currently three EFAs in Galicia: Fonteboa (Coristanco, A Coruña), Piñeiral (Arzúa, A Coruña), A Cancela (As Neves, Pontevedra).

Lines of credit and financing

In Galicia, the centrally managed financial instrument (IFGC) is a financial support mechanism, complementary to subsidies, which aims to promote easier access to credit for young people, farmers, stockbreeders, foresters, agri-food industries, etc. The IFGC

makes it possible to support viable investments linked to the rural environment under better financing conditions. It arises in the National Framework for Rural Development 2014-2020 and is coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in direct collaboration with the Autonomous Communities, which provide funds from the Rural Development Programmes to facilitate investments in their territory, within the framework of the measures and beneficiaries of their respective Programmes.

Galicia was the third region to join the Centralised Management Financial Instrument in 2020 through an agreement with the following financial institutions: Abanca Corporación Bancaria, S.A., Banco Bilbao Bizcaya Argentaria, S.A., Caixabank, S.A., Caja Rural Gallega, S.C.C.L.G.

Technical Advice and Support

Galicia has 65 Regional Agricultural Offices, now called Rural Offices, which provide technical advice and support in farm management, as well as help in applying for subsidies and aid programmes. Through these offices, agricultural extension services are channelled to support farmers in the implementation of new technologies and sustainable practices. (Datos Abiertos: Oficinas Agrarias Comarcales, 2024)

Linked to the rural environment are foundations such as Fundación Juana de Vega and Fundación Roberto Rivas, whose mission is to promote sustainable rural development. Their focus includes environmental conservation, innovation in agricultural practices and improving the quality of life in rural areas. These types of foundations work on training, support for entrepreneurs and the development of projects that promote sustainability and the preservation of the region's natural and cultural heritage.

Instruments

Land Bank

The Galician Land Bank is an instrument created by the Regional Ministry of Rural Affairs with the dual aim of preventing the abandonment of agricultural land and making it available to all those who need it for agricultural, livestock, forestry, nature and heritage conservation or other uses of social interest.

The main function of the Land Bank is to dynamise and mediate between landowners and those who need land, as well as to provide guarantees, confidence and security in the management and use of farms. (Agader, 2024)

In addition, the available plots are published online in the Terras de Galicia Information System, which is a web tool where you can consult and apply for the plots that are included in the Banco de Terras of Galicia and contains an updated list of all the available plots.

Currently the Land Bank has 17,787 plots, on a total of 7,037 ha and the average price is 47 euros per plot and 118 per hectare.

Law on the recovery of agricultural land in Galicia

Law 11/2021, of 14 May, establishes various measures aimed at facilitating the incorporation of young people into farming and livestock farming, with the aim of promoting generational change and the sustainability of the sector. One of the main initiatives is the creation of agricultural experimentation spaces, where young people and entrepreneurs can train and experiment with new ideas and projects before they are launched on the market. These spaces provide the necessary infrastructures, fostering innovation and knowledge transfer. In addition, the circular bioeconomy, short marketing chains and agro-ecological models are promoted, thus promoting sustainable and efficient practices that not only benefit new farmers, but also the environment and the local economy.

Other general measures contemplated in the law include the creation of innovative instruments for access to land, facilitating contact between entrepreneurs and landholders, and supporting agroforestry farms in their competitiveness and resilience. The law also highlights the importance of maintaining the rural population linked to agroforestry activity, promoting the incorporation of young people through research and innovation projects and improving conditions for knowledge transfer.

Conclusions

Current support comes mainly from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which focuses on supporting farmers, improving their living conditions, preserving the environment and generating employment in rural areas.

In Spain's Strategic Plan (PEPAC) 2023-2027, specific measures have been established to support generational renewal and the incorporation of young people into the agricultural sector, including income support, incentives for new farmers and support for the modernisation of farms.

PEPAC's strategic approach includes a specific budget for incentives for generational renewal and prioritises administrative simplification. For the first time, a gender approach is incorporated to reduce inequality between men and women in rural areas.

At the level of Galicia, aid has been published to improve the production structures of agricultural holdings, including interventions for climate change mitigation, modernisation of farms and support for the incorporation of young farmers.

In addition, support for farm investments aims to promote adaptation to climate change, efficient resource management, improved animal welfare and biosecurity. Projects that promote the use of renewable energies and the circular economy are supported.

Institutional structures, such as the Regional Ministry of Rural of the Xunta de Galicia, play an essential role in promoting and supporting young farmers through training programmes, technical advice and access to financial resources.

In addition, cooperatives and associations such as SLG, Unións Agrarias and ASAGA provide technical support and training, facilitating the integration of young people into the sector.

Capacity building is reinforced through specific training centres and continuous programmes. Financial mechanisms such as the Centrally Managed Finance Facility are also in place to improve access to credit for investments in the agricultural sector.

10.2.6 Campobasso

The Regional Rural Development Plan (RDP) for Molise operates under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), as detailed in regional RDP documents available through the Molise regional government or agricultural agencies. The Molise Agricultural Development Agency (ARSARP) functions under regional legislation specific to Molise, providing mandated support for agricultural development. Youth entrepreneurship programs are part of broader regional economic development plans, with legislative references in regional laws promoting entrepreneurship and rural development.

Nationally, Italy's National Rural Development Program (PSR) is governed by EU Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013, with implementation specifics detailed in national legislative and ministerial decrees. The Young Farmers Act includes provisions from Legislative Decrees No. 185/2000 and No. 99/2004, supporting young farmers. ISMEA's operations are based on Law No. 196/2009 and Legislative Decree No. 123/1998, while ENEA is governed by Law No. 10/1991.

At the European Union level, the CAP's framework comprises Regulations (EU) No 1307/2013, No 1305/2013, and No 1306/2013. The EAFRD is established under Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013. The LEADER Program, part of the CAP, is implemented locally as per Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013. Horizon Europe is governed by Regulation

It is important for stakeholders to be able to intercept funds and possibilities opened by agricultural support funds but also to provide good guidance between European and national rules for young people regarding production norms and standards and the new CAP.

10.2.6.1 Molise Region Level

Regional Rural Development Plan (RDP) for Molise:

Legal Reference: The Molise RDP is implemented under the framework of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Specific measures and funding details are outlined in

the regional RDP documents, which can be accessed through the Molise regional government or agricultural agencies.

Molise Agricultural Development Agency (ARSARP):

Legal Reference: ARSARP operates under regional legislation specific to Molise, which mandates support for agricultural development. For precise legal references, the regional laws and regulations governing ARSARP's establishment and operations can be consulted.

Youth Entrepreneurship Programs:

Legal Reference: These programs are often part of broader regional economic development plans. Specific legislative references can be found in the regional laws and policies promoting entrepreneurship and rural development in Molise.

10.2.6.2 National Level: Italy

National Rural Development Program (PSR):

Legal Reference: The PSR operates under the EU Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Italy's implementation of the PSR is detailed in national legislative decrees and ministerial decrees that align with this EU regulation.

The Young Farmers Act (Legge per i Giovani Agricoltori):

Legal Reference: This Act includes provisions from several legislative decrees and laws aimed at supporting young farmers, such as:

Legislative Decree No. 185/2000 (Support for entrepreneurship and self-employment)

Legislative Decree No. 99/2004 (Measures to promote the development of the agricultural sector)

ISMEA (Istituto di Servizi per il Mercato Agricolo Alimentare):

Legal Reference: ISMEA operates under various national laws that establish its role and funding mechanisms, such as:

Law No. 196/2009 (ISMEA's functions and funding)

Legislative Decree No. 123/1998 (General principles on the support and promotion of agricultural and food market)

National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development (ENEA):

Legal Reference: ENEA is governed by laws related to innovation and technology in Italy, such as:

Law No. 10/1991 (ENEA's mandate and operational framework)

10.2.6.3 European Union Level

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP):

Legal Reference: The CAP's legal framework includes multiple regulations, such as:

Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 (Direct payments to farmers)

Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 (Support for rural development by the EAFRD)

Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 (Financing, management, and monitoring of the CAP)

European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD):

Legal Reference: EAFRD is established under:

Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 (Support for rural development)

European Investment Bank (EIB):

Legal Reference: The EIB operates under EU treaties and specific regulations governing its financing activities, including support for agriculture and rural development projects.

LEADER Program:

Legal Reference: The LEADER initiative is part of the CAP, governed by:

Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 (Support for rural development)

LEADER is specifically detailed within the rural development programs and implemented at the local level.

Horizon Europe:

Legal Reference: Horizon Europe is governed by:

Regulation (EU) 2021/695 (Establishing Horizon Europe)