Innovation vs opposition: the role of women in the family farms regeneration process. An Italian experience

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1. Introduction

Since the 1970s the consensus over the role of agriculture in the countryside has declined. The negative consequences of the impact of agricultural growth have become increasingly evident. Driven especially by high prices support and the overall framework which the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) guaranteed, farms planned their decisions in order to bring more land under tillage, supported in turn by increased use of fertilizers and pesticides.

In addition, pollution from intensive agriculture has given increasing cause for concern, particularly in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. There has also been rising concern for food quality and growing criticism of the cost and apparent inefficiency of public expenditure on agriculture. The crisis facing the CAP, first acknowledged by the community in the mid-1980s, was seen to arise from an expansion of agricultural output at a rate that had overcome the capacity of

Abstract

A large body of literature pointed out the great importance of the role of women in the rural development process to guarantee the commercial farm survival. Indeed, the women's management – in particular for family-run farms – proved to have a notable capacity to seize new opportunities of income and great skills in the management regeneration offered by new links with society and rural areas. At the same time, the women's management often meets opposition with the persistence of cultural factors reflecting a chauvinist approach; such opposition is more likely to occur in a territorial contest characterized by socio-economic marginalization.

In this sense, an overriding objective of the European policy for rural development is to support the overcoming of such restrictions, by implementing the female enterprise in rural areas – connected or not to agricultural activities – or by promoting the women's interest within the local network and the formal-informal institutions that preside over governance systems.

The goal of this paper is to deepen the dynamics that have characterized the women's management in Italian rural areas, in particular in the region of Lazium, under three different scenarios. First of all, we analyze the evolution of family and structural typologies related to farms consulting the Italian agricultural census data; we investigate the type of relationship existing between family and farm. Secondly, relating to policy use, we examine investments made by an unbiased sample of regional, women-run farms that benefited from the Rural Development Plan (RDP) by the Lazium Regional Government. Lastly, using survey data collected on farm, we address our effort to improve our understanding of the main socio-economic conditioning factors that could affect the women's management performance.

Key words: farm management, women's work, Rural Development.

Résumé

Dans la littérature, bon nombre d'exemples mettent en évidence l'importance du rôle joué par les femmes dans le processus de développement rural afin de garantir la survie commerciale des exploitations. En réalité, les femmes qui occupent des postes d'administration, surtout dans les exploitations familiales, ont toujours prouvé leur capacité de trouver de nouvelles sources de revenus et de régénérer les activités administratives grâce à la nouaison de nouvelles relations avec la société et les territoires ruraux. Toutefois, cette gestion féminine est souvent contrecarrée à cause de la persistance de facteurs culturels qui réfléchissent une approche chauviniste; cette opposition est plus évidente dans les territoires caractérisés par des formes de marginalisation socio-économique.

Voila pourquoi, la politique européenne de développement rural a la priorité de dépasser ces restrictions, par la promotion de l'entrepreneuriat féminin dans les zones rurales – associé ou non aux activités agricoles - et la protection des intérêts des femmes au sein des réseaux locaux et des institution formelles et informelles qui président les systèmes de gouvernance. Cet article a l'objectif d'approfondir les dynamiques qui, dans trois cas différents, ont caractérisé l'entrepreneuriat féminin dans les zones rurales italiennes, en particulier dans la région du Latium. Premièrement, nous analysons l'évolution de la famille et les différentes typologies d'exploitation agricole, en consultant les données du recensement agricole italien, et ensuite nous étudions les relations entre famille et exploitation. Deuxièmement, nous examinons les investissements faits par un échantillon non biaisé d'exploitations régionales à gestion féminine qui ont bénéficié du Plan de Développement Rural (PDR) de la Région Latium. Enfin, à travers l'analyse de donnés d'enquêtes menées dans les exploitations, nous essayons de mieux comprendre les facteurs socio-économiques qui peuvent avoir influence sur la performance de l'entrepreneuriat féminin.

***Mots-clés:** gestion de l'exploitation agricole, travail féminin, développement rural.*

community markets, the Community's agricultural budget and, indeed, the capacity of the natural environment.

Since the mid-1980s all these aspects have created a favourable environment for implementing an agroenvironmental policy both at the national and Community level, definitely rethinking a new strategy for the CAP. In this context, agricultural policies have shifted from the traditional paradigm based on the support of the reproductive function to an innovative political view based on the territorial dimension and aimed at the production of externalities. Such changes were also followed by the parallel modernization of the schedule of economic-agrarian research and by the evolution of a multidisciplinary study approach including sociological, demographic and geographic analysis. In such an evolutionary context of the public and academic sphere of action, an important role was played by the reproduction processes of business units in rural areas. The centrality of agriculture is one of the main elements of a sort of agreement between farmers and citizens under a socio-economic and an environmental point of view; it is the starting point of the future evolution of the policies to sustain the

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primary sector and rural areas (Adinolfi, De Castro 2006). In Italy, as in most European countries, the contribution to agricultural production is mainly due to family-farm business types. Their activity is very useful for socio-economic and environmental reasons especially in upland areas.

The aim of this study was to learn more about the female management on family farms. The importance of this theme is proven by the increasing attention paid since the beginning of the 1980s by researchers to the key role of women in rural areas, in the reproductive processes of the family farm as well as within European Community policy favouring action aimed at rural evolution. EU Regulations 1257/99 and 1698/2005 represented guidelines for policies during the planning periods 2000 – 2006 and 2007 – 2013. These normative instruments aimed at promoting equal opportunities between males and females and favoured female participation in the labour market as well as training initiatives for women, their consideration in decisional processes and the attempt to reconcile work and family activities (Tarangioli, Zumpano 2006).

Female enterprises have shown specific adaptation capacities to the exogenous changes of recent years. It has been extensively underlined (Pezzini 1997, Shortall 2002, Bock 2004) that women have shown their vitality also in terms of capacity to tap external income resources sometimes deriving from new types of activities. Such innovative initiatives have in the last few years favoured the increase in the supply of goods and services of farms and have thus largely contributed to the continuity of farm life and the diversification of the rural economy.

Even if past farm policy orientation considered gender differences, more often their presence in the planning process focused on a concept of whole enterprise mostly geared to profit maximization. As amply underlined in the specific literature (Whatmore 1988, Gourdomichalis 1991, Alston and Wilkinson 1998, Bock 2004) female management aims at goals of a non-economic nature. Given the importance of the survival of the family farm, this phenomenon recalls the urgency to evaluate the performance of female management under different points of view. As testified by numerous experiences, very often women face considerable limitations during the start-up phase as well as during the following evolution step. This is a consequence of such a traditional approach of chauvinist-based public policies (Price and Evans 2006), and the result of some cultural tendencies still characterizing socio-economic networks in some marginalized areas. Such cultural barriers impede the opportunities of female management more often on small farms, with fewer links with those responsible for product processing and marketing and lastly many more problems in gaining working capital.

This research aimed to analyse the relations among female management, farm life cycle and strategic-decisional process of the family farm. The results of such research questions were considered within the process of defining the 2007-2013 Rural Development Regional Plan (RDP) for Lazio, with a view to finding appropriate solutions to sustain the role of gender policies within the regeneration process of the family farm.

2. Sources and methods

In defining the 2007-2013 Rural Development Plan, the Lazio Regional Authority considered numerous priorities on which initiatives for developing the primary sector and rural areas were based. Among these themes, the planning documentation attributes a key role to female participation and to the generational change. Such themes share the objectives first of all to ensure the survival and the strengthening of the productive base of the farm, secondly to stimulate the stability of, and increase in population levels in the rural areas of the region.

In order to increase the level of efficiency of the actions, the planning process starts from articulated analysis of the region. It aims to obtain homogeneous areas and is based on the assumption that this process is an important premise for the correct formulation of the actions and for the definition of specific rural policies. To this extent, the region was divided into four «macro-areas» internally characterized by high homogeneity with respect to a group of variables able to explain the economic, social and environmental profiles of each single context (Fig. 1).

Figure 1 – *Territorial classification in the Lazio RDP.*
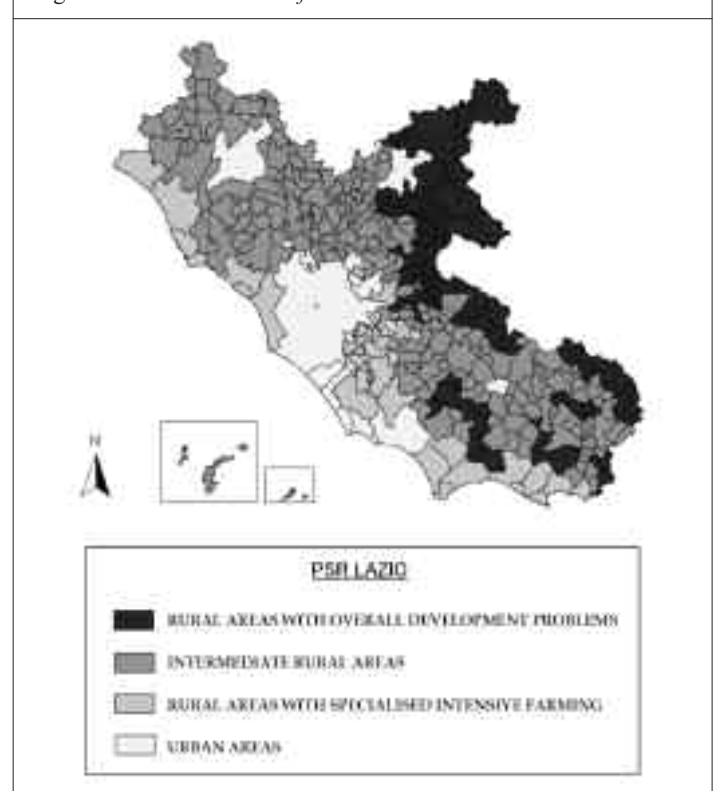
Following the results of the preliminary territorial study we applied a business demography method. This kind of application seeks to clarify the interdependencies between

family behaviour and business strategies. However, while some widely-read studies (Bartelsman, Scarpetta, Schivardi 2003), focus only on the economic and business factors of the phenomenon, some demographic aspects such as gender differences, the family life cycle and location, are herein regarded especially for their influence on birth and dead rates of farms. A strictly demographic classification of rural families makes it possible to appreciate their composition and their life-cycle phase, both influencing the persistence capacity of the firms.

The first part of the paper analyses the demographic dynamics of the family business farms classified on the basis of the life-cycle phase of the family and of the manager's gender for each area of the RDP. In this way the links among the business dynamics of the primary sector and some characterizations of the tenant farmer family receive an important consideration during the interpretation process. In the second part the consumption of policies regarding the 2000-2006 RDP of a sample of farms was investigated to the extent of verifying the possibility of the «demographic family structures» to use the different policy measures. The contribution is based on the information collected through some interviews with a set group of institutional interlocutors and other operators active in the promotion of female entrepreneurship in agriculture. It aims to explore the theme of gender conditions and limitations characterizing the start-up and development of female farm management.

The observation field of the first part of the research consists in the farms with a tenant farmer land area as resulting from the IV and the V General Agriculture Census. The possibility of using the microdata of this information base favoured the large-scale use of this statistical tool. This advantage ensured a greater interpretation capacity with respect to the aggregated data and also made longitudinal matching possible both in terms of static comparative analysis and in terms of dynamic analysis on the basis of the interpretation prospects. The use of a *file* containing an identification code able to identify the farms present in both censuses gave the opportunity to obtain the number of farms registered by the 1990 Census but not registered in

Table 1 – *Registrered farms 1990-2000 per homogeneous area of the RDP.*

Homogeneous areas by RDP definition	1990	2000	Incoming Farms	Closing Farms
Intensive and specialized agriculture areas	41,402	37,105	14,053	18,350
Intermediate rural areas	136,148	127,844	39,433	47,737
Rural areas with development limitation	29,801	25,346	6,964	11,419
Urban areas	24,629	18,499	5,616	11,746
Total	231,980	208,794	66,066	89,252

2000, and, by difference, those born in 2000 but not registered in 1990. The hypothesis here is that the expired farms belong to the first group, those born after 1990 to the second[1]. The total number of farms registered from 1990 to 2000 is listed below.

The observation of the phenomenon through the territorial stratification process gives the possibility to link the behavioural models of the family farm with the external dynamics with respect to the business structure and family size. In the following steps the cases are ranked with respect to the variables *sex of manager*, *family age* and *structure*[2]. The composition of the manager's family was defined after a number of elaborations on the data of the «Labour Section» of the two censuses. As for the process used to obtain the variable of the family composition and the verification of the connection level between the two demographic traits, other previous contributions (Bartoli, De Rosa, 2004, Adinolfi, Bartoli, Murano 2007) may be consulted.

The ranking method of the variable *family structure*[3] herein applied has the following modalities and it is also classified on the basis of the sex of the manager:

Single-person families

Manager < 35 years old

Manager 35 - 64 years old

Manager > 65 years old

Couples without children

Manager + spouse < 35 years old

Manager + spouse 35 - 64 years old

Manager + spouse > 65 years old

Couples with children

Manager +spouse+ children < 35 years old

Manager +spouse+ children 35 – 64 years old

Manager +spouse+ children > 65 years old

Other families

Families with one parent and extended families

In order to obtain a graphic representation of the demographic dynamics, some demographic ratios were calculated:

$$n_{i,j} = \frac{N_{i,j}}{P_{i,j}} \cdot 1000$$

(birth-rate per 1000 family farm)

$$m_{i,j} = \frac{M_{i,j}}{P_{i,j}} \cdot 1000$$

(death-rate per 1000 family farm)

$$g_{n,i,j} = n_{i,j} - m_{i,j}$$

(natural growth rate)

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[1] As more information about the birth-death rate of the directly managed farms was not available, the authors used the indication of some identification codes from the National Statistics Institute of the farms present in the last two censuses. These include some that changed the family structure and managers in the ten years between the two censuses.

[2] In those families with more than one member the age refers to the manager's partner or, if any, to the female partner.

[3] The modalities of this variable, one for each sex and class of age, are the following:

- Only manager (the graphs indicate this with a C for the Italian terminology)

- Manager + spouse (the graphs indicate this with a C with a C+C)

- Manager +spouse+ children (the graphs indicate this with a C+C+F)

- Families with one parent and extended families (the graphs indicate this with "Other F")

- The graph also uses the letters G for young, M for mature, and A for old, with respect to the average age of the family.

$$\varepsilon_{t,i,j} = \frac{\left(P_{i,j}(2000) - P_{i,j}(1990)\right)}{10\, \overline{P}_{i,j}} \cdot 1000 \qquad \text{(total growth rate)}$$

$$\varepsilon_{m,i,j} = \varepsilon_{t,i,j} - \varepsilon_{n,i,j} \qquad \text{(status change net rate)[4]}$$

where:

i, = general form of variable «manager gender».

j, = general form of variable «family structure and life-cycle stage».

$N_{i,j}$ = annual average number of family-farm newcomers during 1990-2000.

$M_{i,j}$ = annual average number of family-farm closures during 1990-2000.

$\overline{P}_{i,j}$ = average number of family farms during 1990-2000 (arithmetic mean of stock from beginning until period end)

In order to facilitate the interpretation of the results, four different Cartesian graphs were used (Figures 1- 4, Attachment 1). They represent the points of the classifications used where the y axis shows birth rates and x the death rates. The representation is proposed for each of the four area types identified by the Regional Authority. In all the graphs the quarter bisector represents the points where the birth rate equals the death rate. In this sense, all the farms under that line have an increasing trend, while those above the line have negative ratios. Moreover, in each graph there are lines parallel to the Cartesian axis, passing through the point with as coordinates the general mean (with respect to the regional territory) of the two ratios.

As regards the labels identifying each point, the symbols ♀ and ♂ indicate the sex of the manager, the first being female, the second male. In Attachment 1 for the whole region the mean annual rates of total, natural and «transition» increments are reported divided by the four areas on the basis of the modalities of the variable *family structure*.

In the second part of the contribution, the results of a crossing operation of two different databases, census and the financing applications of farms with direct management and utilised agricultural area (UAA). Out of a total number of 7,408 distributed regional planning funds, the crossing operation was able to identify 2341 common farms, that is about 1/3 of the total. The results of the elaborations were evaluated by the interlocutors chosen for the interviews. Those interlocutors were also asked to evaluate the performance of the female management, the role of previous planning, female management skills and its key presence in agrarian and rural contexts, on the basis of the interview reported below in Attachment 2.

3. The results

3.1 The life-cycle of family farms in Lazio

The dynamic analysis of the life-cycle of family farms shows first of all that female-run farms have higher birth rates especially for those in the young phase of the life-cycle. It also emerges that the mortality rates decrease with the increase

in the number of family members; they decrease even more for family structures with children positioned in a mature or old phase of the life-cycle and even more for female-run farms. Albeit with a different intensity in the four areas considered, positive transition rates are generally associated with families positioned in an old phase of the life-cycle; it is the consequence of the ageing process of the business context. In fact, even if the older family farms have a lower survival capacity, especially when the probability of a generational change exists, their number increases. The opposite happens for young families: positive natural increment rates are associated to negative transition rates, thus producing a decrease in those families during the decade in question. As for the results considering each single area, figure 1 – Attachment 1 – analyses the family farms belonging to the 38 municipalities (10 per cent of the region) of the «*Intensive and specialized agriculture area*». Analysis of the graph shows that the points are concentrated in three different areas corresponding to different combinations of the levels of the two considered rates.

- The upper zone on the left, with negative natural increment rates due to the association between high mortality rates and low birth rates, exclusively regards farms managed by males and in an old or mature life-cycle phase.

- In contrast to those farms, in the «growth area» in the lowest part on the right, there are the old and mature family farms with children, young single-person families, young and mature couples without children with female managers, and the single-person and young couples managed by males.

- The third zone has a high level of turn-over as both the rates are high. In this area young couples with children, the mature single-person family and the other families are positioned.

Without considering the family structure it emerges that female-run farms have a negative ($-1.1°/_{00}$) average annual natural increment; at the same time their total increment is positive ($5.4°/_{00}$) mainly caused by the value of the transition rate ($6.5°/_{00}$). On the contrary, male-run farms show negative values for all three ratios which are, respectively, -15.2 , -18.1 and $-2.8°/_{00}$.

Fig. 2 – Attachment 1 – representing the *Intermediate Rural areas* (to which 214 municipalities belong, amounting to 56% of the total) shows a general change in the points under the average regional mortality rate. It emerges that rates below the average birth rate can be found only for male-run farms, of which the old ones also have high mortality rates and are positioned in a strongly concentrated area. On the opposite side are the young male-run farms. This area is the only one with a positive average annual natural increment ($2.1°/_{00}$) for all the «female» farms thanks to low mortality levels with the birth rates becoming higher when the ages of the farms increase. However, the most important influence on the natural increases in this zone is due to the transition rate ($8.5°/_{00}$), representing the highest level of the mean annual total increment ($10.5°/_{00}$) in the four macro-areas of the region. The three ratios have a different sign with respect to the male management even if their absolute values are smaller (respectively -10.0 , -3.8 and $-13.8°/_{00}$).

The *rural areas with development limitation* (Fig. 3 – Attachment 1) regard 109 municipalities (28.8% of the total) de-

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[4] This ratio indicates the net difference in relative terms of the transitions from one modality to the others of the considered variable.

fined as «risking socio-economic marginality and farming decline». These contexts have a difficult demographic situation since most of the municipalities in such areas are in upland zones and experience extensive depopulation, hence demographic ageing.

Even if the graph of this area has a larger dispersion of the points, the main characteristics of the family farms in this zone are the following:

- Old single-person families and couples without children show the highest negative rates of increment;

- Without considering the family structure and life-cycle phase, female-run farms show substantially higher birth rates and generally lower death rates;

- For male – and female – run farms, death rates strongly decrease with the increase in the number of family members even if birth rates do not always show a relative increase.

- Without considering either the family structure or the sex of the manager, when the old phase of the life-cycle is considered, mortality rates strongly decrease; on the other side, in the transition point from the young to the mature phase, the birth rates increase.

Table 2 – *Family farms in Lazio (2000 Censius), total and average funds received by the sample of family farms in both databases (ISTAT Census and RDP database of Lazio).*

Family structure	Family farms (Lazio)	Family farms (PSR)	Funds received total	Funds received mean	% fam. RDP out of total
Only manager F < 35 years old	680	27	787,282	29,159	4.0
Only manager M < 35 years old	1857	190	7,154,299	37,654	10.2
Only manager F 35 - 64 years old	7966	36	1,102,104	30,614	0.5
Only manager M 35 - 64 years old	14920	112	4,769,879	42,588	0.8
Only manager F > 65 years old	11653	4	237,931	59,483	0.0
Only manager M > 65 years old	12016	10	388,262	38,826	0.1
Manager F + spouse < 35 years old	747	35	999,952	28,570	4.7
Manager M + spouse < 35 years old	2147	114	3,539,067	31,044	5.3
Manager F + spouse 35 - 64 years old	12189	77	2,521,600	32,748	0.6
Manager M + spouse 35 - 64 years old	26744	142	4,896,391	34,482	0.5
Manager F + spouse > 65 years old	5715	5	164,561	32,912	0.1
Manager M + spouse > 65 years old	18271	6	420,529	70,088	0.0
Manager F + spouse + children < 35 years old	831	67	1,853,456	27,664	8.1
Manager M + spouse + children < 35 years old	2660	141	4,432,788	31,438	5.3
Manager F + spouse + children 35 – 64 years old	15310	237	7,119,334	30,039	1.5
Manager M + spouse + children 35 – 64 years old	37755	497	18,108,911	36,436	1.3
Manager F + spouse + children > 65 years old	1348	4	216,220	54,055	0.3
Manager M + spouse + children > 65 years old	5073	11	850,380	77,307	0.2
Other families, manager F	13399	142	4,720,544	33,243	1.1
Other families manager M	17513	484	15,807,846	32,661	2.8
Total	208,794	2,341	80,091,335	34,212	1.1

The last area is termed «*Urban areas»,* and includes 17 municipalities (4.5% of the total) and a population amounting to 63% of the region's total according to the 2001 Census. Family farms in such areas show a higher concentration in the upper left-hand quadrant that is a strongly decreasing area, and even more for the male-run businesses. The only exception to this trend is represented by young single-person families, especially females, thanks to the higher birth rate. With respect to the total natural increment (table a. – Attach-

ment 1), it is negative for both sexes and in this area it shows higher values than those of the other areas. For the most part, considering the disaggregation of the information with respect to family structure, and without considering the variables gender and life-cycle phase, it is noticeable that, the natural increment rate being positive – only for the single-person families – and of the transition rate, the single-person families and the old multi-person families increase, with the only exception of old couples without children and with male managers.

3.2 Policy consumption

Notwithstanding the chance nature of the sample used, the analysis of the consumption policies (Tab. 2 – 3) gave some more interesting observations. Generally speaking, family farms with many members account for the most of the funds. Moreover, they show a more evident openness to invest money in the young and mature phases than in the old phase of the life-cycle. With respect to the sex of the manager, in all the demographic family structures except the single-person female-run farm, a smaller application for funds in female-run farms than in male ones is also evident.

Considering specifically female management, the largest funding applications come from young families with children, followed by those without children. These two family structures are on average those with the largest amounts of realized investments in regional plans. With respect to the types of investments, it is clear that those aimed at the internal expenses of the farm (business investments and diversification strategies) are lower for female-run farms.

The data are consistent with the positions of the mainstream literature, underlying first of all the limits on female-run farms in establishing relations with political and economic institutions, secondly the specificities of the entrepreneurial process deriving from the objective and favoured by the spatial coincidence between farm and family and the possibility of reconciling work and family needs. As recently pointed out by Bock (2006), this element limits the female condition to activate larger production dimensions, to approach capital sources and realize larger investments so that expenses on human resources lessen and the organization and management of business resources become easier. This phenomenon also concerns the non-agriculture sectors (Weiler and Bernasek 2001) and limits the impact of the external relations of the farm.

In this sense the importance of a gender approach to interpreting family-farm dynamics is proven that identifying core objectives of business mission not only economics have an influence on the family-farm development.

3.3 Opinions of interviewees

The interpretation of the research was better analysed within the group of interlocutors selected for the interviews. The interviews, consisting of responses to five questions, made it clear that the dynamic behaviour of female-run farms is also

Table 3 – *Family farms and funds granted per policy measure and gender of manager.*

3a. Financed farms per measure and gender of manager

MEASURE	Male manager	Female manager	Total
Investment in farms	1,310	454	1,764
Start-up assistance for young farmers	281	122	403
Improving processing and marketing	23	2	25
Farm diversification	93	56	149
Total	1,707	634	2,341

3b. Total fund per measure and gender of manager

MEASURE	Male manager	Female manager	Total
Investment in farms	46,130,630	13,617,729	59,748,359
Start-up assistance for young farmers	5,164,272	2,369,993	7,534,265
Improving processing and marketing	3,067,612	281,096	3,348,707
Farm diversification	6,005,838	3,454,166	9,460,004
Total	60,368,351	19,722,984	80,091,335

3c. Average value of fund per measure and gender of manager

MEASURE	Male manager	Female manager	Total
Investment in farms	35,214	29,995	33,871
Start-up assistance for young farmers	18,378	19,426	18,695
Improving processing and marketing	133,374	140,548	133,948
Farm diversification	64,579	61,682	63,490
Total	35,365	31,109	34,212

characterized by a positive evaluation of the business activity in terms of reconciling work and family requirements and also for the new residential vocation of rural areas. The interviewees agreed with the opinion that the new opportunities for business diversification gave women more scope for strategic decisions able to capitalise at the same time on the economic, family and hedonic functions of farming. The interviews also showed that the decision of women to engage in farming was not an imposition but the realization of a precise rational choice. This desire to run one's own life reinforced the hypothesis that the goals of female management differ from those of men. This goes back to a gender approach to business management which, in the female dimension finds out the will to enrich the immaterial elements of the supply. This goal is more easily realizable on a small family farm.

The interviewers agreed that this could be a key element behind female entrepreneurship in the last years. However, they also emphasised that the gender restrictions are still a major factor especially in the most peripheral and socio-economically underdeveloped zones where an evident cultural closeness helps the continuity of a male-biased approach and limits female opportunities and participation in the decisional processes within the rural context.

4. Conclusions: the contribution of the study to implementing policy supply for rural areas

On the basis of the results of the study, some useful consideration for the organization of policy instruments to implement during the planning regional period 2007 – 2013 were formulated. Since the start of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms, the depopulation and ageing phenomena in peripheral areas, together with the decrease in rural activities, have been new topics to consider in order to formulate a new vision of sector policies, defining with Agenda 2000 the transition from a strictly economic-productive view to a new area-oriented one where the territory with all its parts (physical, economic, socio-demographic) assumes a key role. In this way, the new planning cycle identifies the generational change and the gender policies as the strategic and fundamental goals.

In this direction and within the area classification process of the policies, the indications resulting from the analysis make it possible for the policy maker to realize the transition from a standardized supply of intervention measures to sustain generational change and the role of women in business management to a more articulated system in terms of political instruments as well as in area distribution.

Specifically, our results suggest stronger support be given to female management for start-up initiatives and to identify consolidation processes. More precisely, there emerges the need to evaluate the access to RDP support measures for the female managers through a different evaluation instrument of business performance and structural resources.

Over an efficiency logic considering different goals from the traditional ones and that pays attention to the new functions of the farm and confirms the existence of a gender approach, it is necessary to consider the persistence of some cultural factors in rural areas characterizing the identity of the farm and entailing the acceptance of some behaviour, considering women as less qualified in terms of economic and business relational skills (Alston and Wilkinson 1998).

On such a basis, Lazio Region Authority 2007 – 2013 planning has sought to promote the female protagonist capacity in business regeneration processes both by going beyond the consideration of the farm as an independent entity, and also favouring the formulation of policies that consider at the same time the concepts of business, family and activity in order to lessen the survival risks of the farm as the importance of the family is progressively increasing in the explanation of the local development dynamics of the rural contexts (Mantino 1995).

The available instruments were thus organized within the definition of a set of political *measures ad hoc* implemented to support female entrepreneurship, favouring the contemporaneous activation of more than one intervention measure with the goal of stimulating new long-run investments considering the attitudes of female management for the development of a new selection of agriculture goods and services and ensuring new resources for female management. Moreover the minimum structural budget limit for the access to the regional funds was moving out of this set of measures with the aim of considering the peculiar characterization of the development possibility of the female-run farm.

To conclude, for the definition of regional priorities, the results of the study lead the policy maker to extra effort in the information and promotion activities of female participation in the decisional processes mainly in the most socio-economically problematic areas (*Rural areas with development limitation)*. Regional intervention should aim to take into consideration the gender specificity of the development path of the female-run family farm, at the same time trying to go beyond the cultural restrictions of rural areas with development limitations.

Attachment 1

Figure 1 – *Generic birth and death rate (annual average number fot 1000 family Farm) – Intensive and specialized agriculture area –*
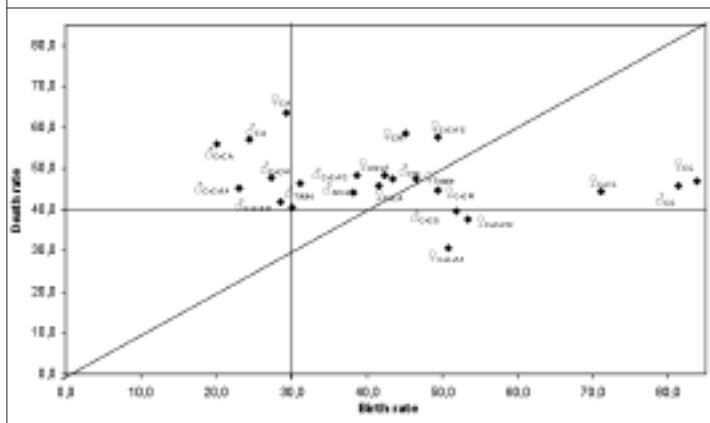

Figure 2 – *Generic birth and death rate (annual average number fot 1000 family Farm) – Intermediate Rural areas –*
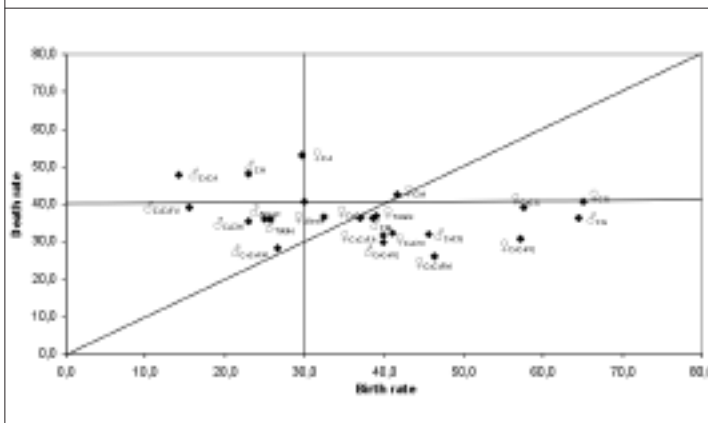

Figure 3 – *Generic birth and death rate (annual average number fot 1000 family Farm) – Rural areas with development limitation –*
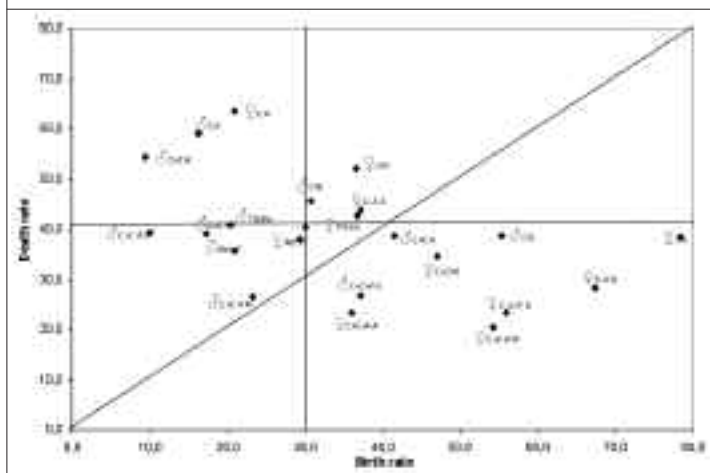

Figure 4 – *Generic birth and death rate (annual average number fot 1000 family Farm) – Urban areas –*
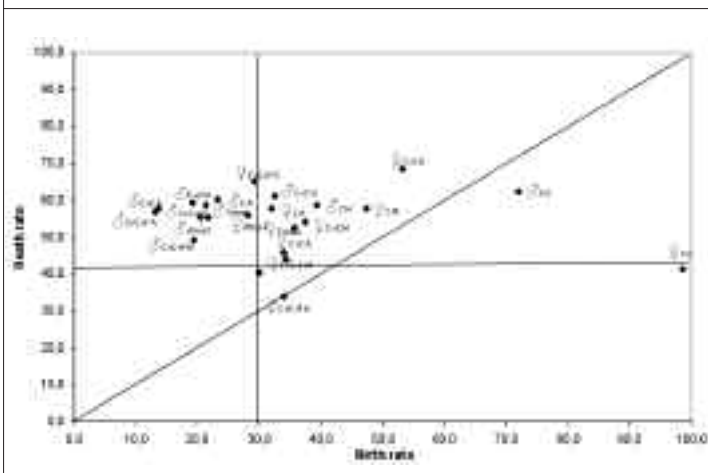

Table A – *Natural increment rate (NIR), transition net rate (TNR) and total increment rate (TIR) by area and category for Lazio family farms.*

Family structure		Lazio Region			Intensive and specialized agricultural areas			Intermediate Rural areas			Rural areas with development limitation			Urban areas		
		NIR	TNR	TIR	NIR	TNR	TIR	NIR	TNR	TIR	NIR	TNR	TIR	NIR	TNR	TIR
Female farmer	C G	32.0	-18.5	13.5	36.9	-4.6	32.3	24.4	-26.8	-2.4	40.0	-12.8	27.2	57.4	-4.4	52.9
	C M	-5.8	-2.0	-7.8	-13.3	6.1	-7.2	-0.8	-5.3	-6.0	-15.5	-7.7	-23.3	-10.4	13.1	3.7
	C A	-26.3	30.8	11.5	-34.4	42.3	8.2	-23.3	40.4	17.1	-42.0	34.0	-7.7	-25.8	42.0	16.2
	C+C G	19.7	-52.4	-32.7	26.3	-48.3	-22.0	16.5	-65.3	-36.0	39.1	-58.7	-19.6	-15.4	-33.0	-49.0
	C+C M	5.5	-0.8	5.3	4.8	-0.1	4.7	6.5	-0.3	6.8	12.4	-11.7	1.3	-16.0	7.3	-8.3
	C+C A	-2.0	48.7	46.7	-4.3	38.0	34.7	0.7	63.0	63.8	-6.7	41.2	34.6	-9.7	47.2	37.5
	C+C+F G	11.8	-62.4	-50.8	-6.4	-62.3	-75.3	26.8	-61.4	-33.8	32.5	-81.8	-29.4	-30.0	-72.0	-197.9
	C+C+F M	16.8	-8.0	8.8	15.7	-10.3	5.6	20.3	-5.7	14.7	33.8	1.2	34.9	-12.0	-22.9	-34.8
	C+C+F A	10.3	69.5	79.8	20.0	74.4	94.4	8.4	66.3	74.7	12.5	72.1	84.7	0.0	74.4	74.4
	Other F	-7.3	7.0	-0.3	-6.0	10.1	4.1	-4.1	4.4	0.3	-8.7	12.7	4.1	-27.7	11.1	-16.6
	Tot. Female	-1.3	8.2	6.8	-1.1	6.5	5.4	2.1	8.5	10.5	-5.1	10.5	4.4	-16.0	7.2	-8.7
Male farmer	C G	26.1	-24.9	1.2	35.9	-14.3	20.6	20.1	-62.7	-4.9	18.7	-25.1	-6.4	9.8	-4.9	4.9
	C M	-3.7	10.2	6.5	-4.2	16.8	12.5	2.2	7.8	9.7	-14.9	7.7	-7.2	-19.4	20.5	1.1
	C A	-30.6	53.2	22.6	-32.8	55.9	23.0	-25.0	55.9	30.9	-42.9	43.8	1.0	-37.0	50.9	13.9
	C+C G	8.4	-62.2	-43.8	12.1	-46.7	-34.6	13.8	-64.4	-46.0	2.8	-63.8	-93.0	-26.6	-38.1	-66.7
	C+C M	-17.8	-12.5	-30.8	-20.6	-5.7	-26.3	-12.4	-12.4	-24.8	-21.8	-25.8	-47.7	-40.1	-7.4	-47.5
	C+C A	-36.5	37.7	1.2	-36.9	42.0	4.2	-33.5	39.9	6.3	-48.1	29.4	-18.6	-43.0	36.7	-7.2
	C+C+F G	1.0	-79.8	-78.7	-9.3	-75.4	-84.3	10.3	-81.8	-71.5	10.3	-79.1	-63.8	-37.3	-75.4	-112.0
	C+C+F M	-7.3	-21.8	-29.1	-13.9	-21.2	-34.7	-1.5	-20.7	-22.3	-3.3	-25.4	-28.7	-24.7	-26.0	-49.7
	C+C+F A	-28.2	49.8	23.6	-22.3	52.5	30.1	-25.4	61.7	28.3	-29.3	30.9	10.6	-43.8	48.2	4.4
	Other F	-13.1	-14.4	-27.8	-6.0	-10.8	-6.7	-11.1	-19.9	-30.0	-14.0	-16.5	-30.0	-34.6	-6.9	-41.5
	Tot. Male	-14.5	-3.8	-18.2	-15.2	-2.8	-18.1	-10.0	-3.8	-13.8	-20.4	-4.4	-24.8	-33.5	-3.2	-36.7

Attachment 2

Interview trail to selected interlocutors

For our enquiry we administered a free-response interview to representatives of institutions and professional organizations committed to promoting female farm entrepreneurs and belonging to the National Observatory of Female Farm Entrepreneurs and Work (ONILFA), established by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policy.

- ONILFA Presidency
- Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry Policy
- Tuscany Regional Authority
- Umbria Regional Authority
- Puglia Regional Authority
- National Confederation of Tenant Farmers
- Farm Producers Confederation
- General Confederation of Italian Agriculture
- Italian Farmers Confederation
- ISTAT

Questionnaire

1) Which elements in your opinion positively influence the dynamics of female management of family farms?

2) What is your opinion about the application of gender policies within rural development policy planning and how do you assess the role of rural development plans to support the presence of women?

3) What are the most frequent reasons motivating women to become entrepreneurs?

4) With respect to other autonomous activities, what kind of limits does the female farm manager encounter in terms of reconciling life and work schedules?

5) How do you rate female adaptation skills within the representative bodies of agriculture and in the context of rural communities? (In the case of a negative opinion, please state motivations).

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