



## **WONDER COMMONLANDS**

**BUILDING SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC STRUCTURES FOR  
CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY, ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE  
MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION IN OUR COMMONLANDS. THE  
IMPORTANT ROLE OF WOMEN**

25, 26 AND 30 JUNE 2025 , ZOOM



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## SUMMARY

The three-day on-line webinar brought together diverse stakeholders to explore how sustainable economic models, rooted in community and ecological resilience, can support biodiversity conservation in rural commonlands. A central focus was the critical and often under-recognized role of women in these processes.

This webinar highlighted the transformative role of women in shaping sustainable and resilient rural communities, showcasing how women's leadership drives social innovation, cultural preservation, and local economic renewal. Inspiring case studies from Greece and Bulgaria — including the Zagori Ecomuseum, the Varshets Paleopark, and the Gotse Delchev Business Incubator — illustrated how women-led initiatives are revitalizing rural areas through the promotion of cultural heritage, ecological education, and creative entrepreneurship such as ecotourism, artisanal production, and traditional crafts.

A central theme was **mentorship and empowerment**, with participants stressing the importance of inclusive support systems that combine technical guidance, emotional mentoring, flexible working arrangements, and the recognition of unpaid care work. Without addressing these structural barriers, women's full participation in rural economies and decision-making remains constrained.

Discussions on **pastoralism and agroecology** further demonstrated the potential of innovative, community-based models to strengthen rural livelihoods. Projects such as PASTINNOVA, Terra Lemnia, and La Porta dei Parchi showed how multifunctional agriculture, women's cooperatives, and living food heritage can regenerate local economies while enhancing biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

Research initiatives, including the **Agroecology Transect Project**, revealed persistent gender inequalities within agroecological transitions. Despite women's significant contributions to agricultural labor, they remain underrepresented in land

ownership and leadership roles. The development of gender-sensitive indicators emerged as a key tool to better assess and address these disparities.

The meeting concluded with a strong call for action, recommending policies that improve women's access to land, credit, and training; promote inclusive agricultural education; recognize care labor and informal contributions; strengthen women's networks and legal protections; and elevate women's roles in biodiversity governance and food sovereignty. Looking ahead, participants emphasized the creation of national women's rural development groups, the integration of gender indicators into municipal food policies, and continued collaboration through international platforms such as the IYRP Gender Working Group.

# PRESENTATIONS

25 JUNE 2025

EcoMUSEUM ZAGORI, GREECE\_ DIMITRA PAPAIOANNIDOU

The Zagori region, home to forty-six mountain villages within the Vikos–Aoos Geopark and the North Pindos National Park, is internationally recognized as a UNESCO World Cultural Landscape. This dramatic territory, shaped by nature and centuries of human presence, provides the setting for the Ecomuseum Zagori, founded in 2014 in Ano Pedina as a Social Cooperative Enterprise. Conceived as a “museum without walls,” the Ecomuseum works across the landscape itself, preserving and interpreting Zagori’s cultural and natural heritage through active community participation.

At its core, the Ecomuseum seeks to safeguard local identity, collective memory, and biodiversity, while encouraging community engagement—particularly among women and young people. Its activities range from educational programs and guided tours to initiatives that promote ecological awareness and traditional knowledge, all supported by close collaboration with universities, NGOs, public institutions, and local associations. Through this networked approach, heritage becomes not something to be displayed, but something to be lived and shared.

A defining focus of the Ecomuseum’s work is the recognition of mountain women, embodied in the symbolic figure of the “Woman of Pindos,” a representation of strength, resilience, and an intimate connection to the land. Despite their central role in sustaining rural life, these women are often marginalized by gender stereotypes and geographic isolation. The Ecomuseum actively challenges this invisibility by acknowledging mountain women as key custodians of cultural and ecological heritage and by creating spaces where their knowledge and voices can emerge.

This commitment takes tangible form through creative and cultural activities designed to foster empowerment. The Women’s Circle, for instance, offers a safe and supportive space where women share experiences, dreams, and traditions, resulting in a collective narrative that celebrates both individual stories and community bonds. Wool felting workshops, developed within the ECHOVERSITY project and inspired by Zagori’s biodiversity and pastoral traditions, invite participants to work with local materials while learning felting, spinning, and weaving techniques rooted in sustainability.

These practices extend beyond workshops into public dialogue. The mobile exhibition *Weaving Networks* showcased wool-based artworks created by local women, highlighting their role in transmitting knowledge and caring for the land, while engaging schools and sparking conversations within the wider community. Complementing this, videos and interviews featuring women sharing their skills and practices are used in exhibitions and educational activities, ensuring that oral history and lived experience are preserved and passed on.

Across these initiatives, shared reflections consistently emerged: empowerment begins with listening and inclusion; visibility reshapes identity, allowing confidence and agency to grow; and tradition remains alive only when it is shared, adapted, and reimagined. In this way, the Ecomuseum Zagori acts as a bridge between past and present, community and environment, transforming heritage into a living and inclusive force.

Ultimately, the Ecomuseum Zagori does more than preserve landscapes and traditions. By giving voice to the often unseen labor and wisdom of mountain women—the region’s unsung heroines—it contributes to building a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable rural future

## **PALEONTOLOGICAL PARK AND INFORMATION CENTRE IN VARSHETS MUNICIPALITY, BULGARIA \_ TANIA PETROVA**

The NGO “Local Initiative for Varshets” was founded in 2004 with a main focus on sustainable rural development. Its key goals are: sustainable use of natural and cultural resources; strengthening civil society in rural areas; community participation in local planning; support for alternative tourism, social integration, and youth development; cross-border cooperation.

The paleopark “Varshets” recreates the paleo-environment of the Balkans from 2.5 million years ago. It consists of features sculptural reproductions of extinct animals such as: rhinoceroses, saber-toothed cats, ancient wild horses, cheetahs, hyenas; birds like vultures, falcons, bustards, tundra partridges; reptiles like large monitor lizards. Its main goal is to educate visitors about the region’s prehistoric biodiversity.

The exhibition center shows fossil remains, skull casts, skeleton fragments. It has a diorama (12 sq. m.) that presents visual reconstruction of ancient landscape and fauna. It displays geological formations known as karst depressions (ponors).

The park and the exhibition center were officially opened on 15 March 2022. The idea of the park originated from a woman’s vision. The creation was realized after

years of funding rejections and was funded by Interreg project “New Destination in Cross-Border Tourism.”

The museum is currently operated by three women and has attracted over 30,000 visitors to date.

The Paleopark “Varshets” is a successful example of how female-led initiatives, local passion, and international cooperation can transform a region into a hub for educational tourism, heritage preservation, and rural revitalization.

#### **PRESENTATION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF BUSINESS INCUBATOR CENTRE IN GOTZE DELCHEV, BULGARIA\_ ROSITZA DJAMBAZOVA**

The Business Incubator – Gotse Delchev (BI-GD), Bulgaria, was established in 1999 as a non-profit organization in public benefit ([www.bi-gd.org](http://www.bi-gd.org)). It aims to foster social and economic development in rural areas through: support for entrepreneurship and innovation; assistance to start-ups, SMEs, and aspiring entrepreneurs; promotion of knowledge transfer, business-education partnerships, and local networking; emphasis on female participation and youth engagement.

The strategic focus of the BI-GD is to develop competitive entrepreneurs and innovative SMEs; to encourage local product creation and new business models; to build a skilled workforce through upskilling and reskilling; to achieve sustainable development via partnerships at local, regional, and international levels.

The key initiatives of the business incubator are:

Danube4Rural.com. The initiative focuses on policy innovation for remote work in rural areas. The main elements are: stakeholder engagement, digital infrastructure, training, feedback loops. The outputs are: governance model, policy hub, financial/regulatory frameworks.

ASPIRE 4.0 (2025–2026). The initiative focuses on youth social entrepreneurship and includes 6 educational modules based on EntreComp; online accelerator platform with mentoring tools; 12-session mentoring program; business idea competition with support for top 3 projects and ambassador roles for others

SEED BG–MK Project- a cross-border initiative with North Macedonia. The main activities are: training in soft and business skills; social innovation hub; cross-border bootcamp and ideas marketplace; ongoing mentoring and advising.

The main highlights from the presented initiatives are: strong youth and female leadership (70%+ female participation); active role in shaping inclusive,

innovation-driven rural economies; development of scalable, transferable models for entrepreneurship and policy-making

The incubator plays a pivotal role in empowering rural communities through youth leadership, social innovation, and inclusive entrepreneurship.

### **WORKSHOP (DISCUSSION): HOW CAN WE ENHANCE WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC INITIATIVES**

- Continued support, someone to hold your hand, guide you and reassure you while you develop your idea into something real. Mentors that are technical but also emotional support;
- Start with what they know, and their skills (listening) but also their needs ... (why they need to participate in economic activities?);
- By learning their needs and working together to meet them. And give inspiring models. Be honest;
- Developing good Communication Strategies connected to commonlands language and tools used by real women (some times we use too far and technical languages);
- Helping them with family and working burden, so they have time to participate in initiatives;
- First of all, by using a good mentoring and then providing all the legal and not efforts to do their initiative;
- Adapt timetables and spaces adapted to their needs and possibilities
- To adapt the rhythm of the mentoring to women needs;
- To share feelings with other women already involved on economical activities;
- Creating Women Groups with whatsapp, for example, at national level, can allow reduce loneliness, and share/develop the creativity of women in the most isolated areas.

### **SUMMARY 25 JUNE 2025**

The day was focused on developing sustainable economic initiatives in rural areas and commonlands initiated by women. Various initiatives focused on women's empowerment in rural areas, including projects in Bulgaria and Greece were presented, addressing also the challenges related to funding, connectivity, and sustainable development. The final discussion focused on important role of mentoring for developing of sustainable women-led initiatives in rural areas.

**26 JUNE 2025**

**TRANSHUMANCE AND GENDER: PASTINNOVA PROJECT \_ ATHANASIOS RAGKOS**

PASTINNOVA is a 3-year project which focuses on the prospects, dynamics and challenges of Mediterranean pastoralism. In particular, the key objective of PASTINNOVA is to re-enforce the sustainability, profitability and resilience of small pastoral farms, by setting up innovations and business models (IBM) to valorize their full potential and promote their access to markets.

The project examines pastoral systems which are able to provide a broad array of ecosystem services along with high-quality products in a variety of agro-ecological and socio-economic Mediterranean settings.

In order to address the weak positioning of pastoral smallholders in value chains, PASTINNOVA proposes a holistic interdisciplinary approach, which combines participatory approaches, assessments and real-life applications, where four elements interact (1) Diagnosis (listing of innovative project, practices and initiatives); (2) Testing of selected innovations under different contexts; (3) Small-scale pilot implementation, sustainability assessment; (4) Policy and market uptake.

In particular, based on the 'Living Laboratories' (LLs), a common network on "Pastoral actors and VCP" has been established to co-create innovative solutions for farmer organizations, farm management and value chains through the integration of needs, capacities and experiences of actors (e.g. farmers, entrepreneurs, manufacturers, retailers, policy makers, researchers, consumers). Selected solutions have been tested and implemented in small-scale real-life applications and assessed for their sustainability (economic, social, environmental). Particular focus is set on the inclusion of vulnerable groups as well as on environmental performances of pastoral agro-ecosystems and chains, promoting sustainable and profitable use of farm waste. Furthermore, the project has proposed a supportive policy framework and necessary value chain and market arrangements for efficient access to markets.

A significant part of PASTINNOVA activities has been allocated to promote the role of under-represented and vulnerable actors, in which women pastoralists have been particularly focused.

The project has provided assessments of the relevance of IBM to women and to the roles that women can play in the upscaling and promotion. In addition, PASTINNOVA focused the co-creation process of IBM specifically for women, including developing business plans for Women Cooperative in Lebanon specializing on the production of Khisk, a local food that is traditionally

consumed by Lebanese citizens.

The Women Cooperative WADA is very active in organizing and developing entrepreneurial activities for women and, more important, provides empowerment to these women.

In the same framework a common exchange visit was organized for Lebanese and Turkish women who visited Spain, where they were hosted by Ganaderas en RED, a pastoral women Association that promotes equal roles for pastoral women under a feminist perspective. This visit promoted even more the activities of women from the three countries. To improve understanding of the motives and mindset of pastoral women, qualitative in-depth interviews have been undertaken combined with a questionnaire interview of Women Cooperative members in Turkey. The results indicated that women were quite passionate of their common work but in need of more support to be able to supplement their income but, more important, to increase the social recognition of their work.

## **DIVERSIFICATION AND MULTIFUNCTIONALITY ON THE FARM IN MARGINAL ECONOMY**

### **AREAS\_MANUELA COZZI**

The presentation focuses on promoting sustainable, multifunctional agriculture in marginal Mediterranean regions, using the Abruzzo region of Italy as a case study under the PASTINNOVA project, funded by the European Cooperation Programme 2023–2027. The goal is to enhance local agrifood systems, create added value, and restore rural vitality through multifunctional farming.

Presentation started with description of the unique rural context of Abruzzo, which is characterized by exceptional biodiversity and protected natural areas (70% of the land), very low population density (2 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>), small villages, and marginal economic conditions, but high-quality production based on extensive grazing of local breeds and raw milk transformation.

The Case Study: “La Porta dei Parchi” Cooperative is a pioneering example of a multifunctional farm business: founded in 1977, it evolved from sheep farming to a multifaceted cooperative with: organic certification; agritourism & educational farms; cheese factory & farm shops; “Adopt a Sheep” global campaign (since 2000); rural hospitality (hotel-in-village concept); online marketing & storytelling.

Multifunctionality is crucial because traditional agricultural income has stagnated or declined, while the cost of living has increased 7x; To survive, farms must not only produce but transform and market directly.

- Strategies for Success are the following:
  - Internal value chains: from raw material to final product and tourism services;
  - Local Networks: cooperatives, CSA systems, and integration with public parks and schools.
  - Digital transformation: online visibility, storytelling, and e-commerce enable global outreach.
- Strengths of Multifunctional Farms are:
  - Entrepreneurial mindset & openness to innovation;
  - Strong technical knowledge and staff versatility;
  - Respect for tradition combined with innovation;
  - Willingness to network and build long value chains.
- The main challenges faced were:
  - Isolation between farmers;
  - Complex bureaucracy and regulation;
  - Lack of institutional knowledge/support;
  - Wildlife-related damages (boars, wolves);
  - Need for systemic, participatory solutions to sustainability

Conclusion: Multifunctional farms like La Porta dei Parchi demonstrate how rural resilience, biodiversity preservation, and economic innovation can be harmonized. Success depends on: visionary thinking; technical competence; strong networks; strategic use of tradition and technology

#### **BUILDING ROBUST LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS – HERITAGE AND WOMEN’S AGENCY - TERRA LEMNIA PROJECT \_ RIGAS ZAFEIRIOU**

The main challenges identified were related on one hand to the global food system failures such as: hunger, malnutrition, and health impacts from ultra-processed foods; rural poverty, inequality, and the disappearance of small farms; hyper-concentration of power and land; climate impact and biodiversity loss, and on the other hand on the Greek rural crisis: shrinking small farms (1 in 3 farms ceased operation from 2007–2021); ageing farmers (65% over 55 years old); digital and infrastructural gaps, depopulation, and marginalization; sharp increase in input costs and climate threats to iconic crops.

An opportunity to respond was introduced by the Programme Vision: Let it grow. This was a multidimensional strategy for restoring food systems in Greek islands

through: agroecosystem protection & restoration; living food heritage promotion; sustainable food entrepreneurship.

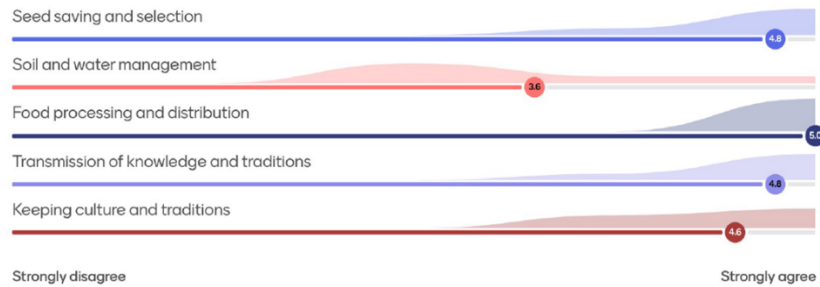
The main initiatives were the following:

- Healthy Agroecosystems which include: Community-led conservation of agrobiodiversity (e.g., Lemnian landraces); Establishment of local seed banks and “Ark of Lemnian Seeds”; Terra Vita certification ecosystem for small farmers; Promotion of in-situ and ex-situ conservation, capacity-building, and participatory farming;
- Living Food Heritage: Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) documentation and promotion; Cheese-making, viticulture, mandra system, and beekeeping traditions; Development of food trails in Lemnos and Kythera; School programmes (250+ teaching hours, 180+ students) integrating local food heritage; Intergenerational storytelling (e.g., with the Women’s Association of Pylos);
- Food Entrepreneurship & Innovation: Promotion of short food supply chains (e.g., Kythera-Hamburg project); On-farm artisanal production (e.g., spoon sweets, pickles) doubling incomes; Food tourism experiences, linking producers and visitors; Smart Village Labs and support for women’s entrepreneurship; Circular bioeconomy through byproduct valorisation (e.g., wool, pruning).
- The role of women: Women are traditional custodians, innovators, and food sovereignty advocates; they are leading the efforts in agroecology, seed preservation, and food heritage transmission; empowering women in patriarchal communities via entrepreneurship and inclusive development.
- The main aspirations are related to revitalisation of remote agrarian economies through integrated sustainability; Creation of a resilient, diverse, and locally-anchored food ecosystem; Enhancement of food culture, identity, and ecological stewardship in Greek islands.
- Conclusion: The LET IT GROW initiative provides a compelling model for transforming local food systems by leveraging heritage, agroecology, and women’s leadership. It offers a blueprint for resilience and innovation grounded in place-based knowledge and community agency.

**WORKSHOP (DISCUSSION): HOW IMPORTANT IS THE ROLE OF WOMEN FOR PRESERVATION OF COMMONLANDS? IS IT RECOGNIZED AND WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE ?**

Participants were asked to evaluate which is the most important role of women for the conservation of biodiversity:

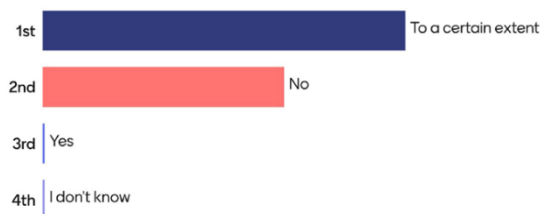
The most important role of women for biodiversity conservation in commonlands is:



In addition to that the participants recognized the important role of women for:

- Community building (diplomacy, social relations, “gossiping”;
  - Decision making;
  - Care labour for just food systems and societies;
  - Taking care of the family;
  - Authenticity and capacity building;
  - Food activism+ food sovereignty.
- Most of the participants think that the role of women for preservation of commonlands is only partially recognized:

Is the role of women for preservation of the commonlands recognised?



- The better recognition of women’s role for commonlands?
  - More activism plus women-led social movements regionally and across Europe;
  - Better training and mentoring;
  - Making visible what already do/have done in the past;
  - Empowering and training them to thrive in the current situation of rural abandonment/collapse of agriculture;
  - Sharing best practices;
  - Better approaches to gender disaggregated data / gender mainstreaming.

- The day was focused on presentation of different projects of women-led initiatives for transforming local food systems by leveraging heritage, agroecology, and women's leadership. Recommendations for better recognition of women's role in preservation of commonlands and rural areas was also discussed.

**30 JUNE 2025**

### **AGROECOLOGY PRINCIPLES. AGROECOLOGY TRANSECT ROADSHOW \_ YANKA KAZAKOVA**

- The presentation focused on the 13 principles of agroecology of the HLPE, highlighting its focus on both agroecosystems and food systems, and outlined the stages of transformation needed to achieve a fairer and more just system.
- Agroecology Transect project was presented, which aims to support the transition towards agroecology by learning from experiences in 11 innovation hubs across Europe.
- The presentation was followed by short video from the AET Virtual Roadshow showcasing the potential of agroecology for adapting to climate change, preserving biodiversity, and enhancing farm socioeconomic resilience and the engagement of women for AE transformation



### **AET – PROJECT: USING INDICATORS TO INVOLVE GENDER IN AGROECOLOGICAL TRANSITION. FARMERS PERCEPTIONS ON THE ROLE OF WOMEN \_MARIE-HÉLÈNE DELHOVE**

- The presentation focused on a framework for assessing agroecology practices in 11 innovation hubs, focusing on gender indicators. The framework was co-developed with input from innovation hubs and aligns

with existing agroecology principles and tools. The framework includes indicators for decision-making processes, labor division, social organization participation, and income/asset availability for men and women. Gender is considered an important aspect in both the innovation hubs' practices and existing agroecology frameworks.

- Their results from the study in Bulgaria were presented with a focus on farm ownership, working hours, and task division. The results show that while some farms showed gender equality in management and voluntary work, women were underrepresented in farm ownership and leadership roles. The study found correlations between gender equality in working hours and higher farm revenues, as well as between equal voluntary work distribution and lower reliance on subsidies. The necessity to refine the indicators to better capture women's underrepresentation in agriculture and considering an equity-based approach rather than just equality is still to be carried out.
- Gender equity in agricultural labor regarding labor division and women's roles on farms from Bulgarian farms show similarities with Swiss farms in terms of care work and lighter tasks typically assigned to women. The discussion highlighted gaps in current frameworks, including the lack of consideration for reproductive and care work, and explored how agroecological transitions might impact women's labor burdens. Participants shared insights on labor laws, safety concerns with machinery, and the challenges of gender equity in farming, emphasizing the issue of women's absence from remote farming areas due to lack of services.

## **TRANSUMANCE AND GENDER. INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF TRANSUMANCE AND PASTORALISM\_ NITYA GHOTGE**

- The objectives and activities of the Gender Working Group for the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralism were presented. Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men or other gender identities that are socially constructed. This includes cultural, social or psychological norms, behaviours and roles. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time". Pastoralism and gender are an under-explored area; there are not many studies, publications or documents on the subject.

- Understanding gender relations and the power dynamics behind them is a prerequisite for understanding people's access to and distribution of resources, the ability to make decisions and the way women and men, boys and girls are affected by political processes and social development. The Working Group (WG) “Pastoralism & Gender” – targeting the IYRP 2026 – sets itself the following objectives:
  - To give greater visibility and amplify the voices of pastoralist women and girls;
  - To generate better understanding of gender issues in all aspects related to rangelands and pastoralism, including recognizing how gender is understood within different pastoralist societies;
  - To highlight the advantages of bringing a gender lens to pastoralist policy and development issues;
  - To disseminate key information around gender and pastoralism;
  - To generate discussions on this topic with a view to raising awareness;
  - To identify gaps in research on gender and pastoralism;
  - To advance gender justice/equality and contribute to equal access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, including economic participation and decision-making;
  - To support the other IYRP WGs in their efforts to incorporate a gender lens into their work;
  - To make sure gender issues receive adequate attention in the IYRP 2026 and other events leading up to the IYRP or working on pastoralist concerns.
- The need to recognize and support the role of women in pastoralism, as they often remain invisible both as pastoralists and as women was highlighted.
- The group's initiatives, including organizing a global gathering of pastoralist women, creating a film festival, and mapping women's social networks were presented.
- Mera Declaration was explain, a landmark event from 2010 that set a roadmap for advancing the goals of pastoralist women worldwide.
- The attendees were invited to join the working group and learn more about their efforts to promote gender equality in pastoral communities.

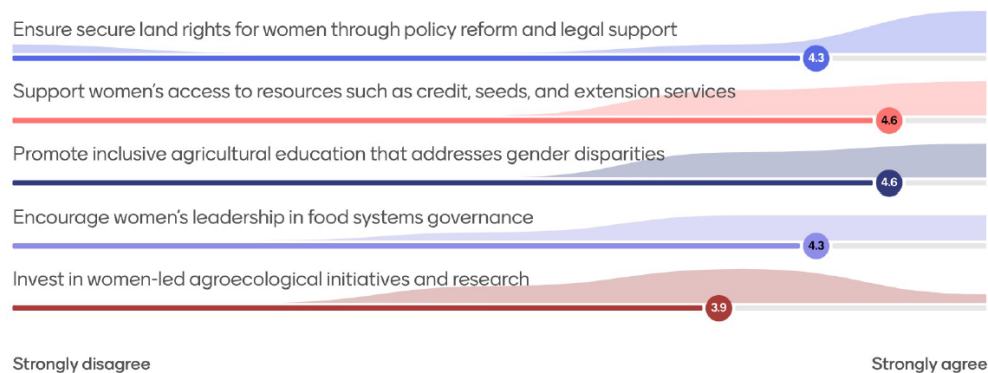
Gender is a crosscutting theme that overlaps with other thematic areas. This WG would like to engage with the other IYRP WGs to bring gender perspectives into their themes as well as into the overall IYRP preparation and implementation process.

### **WORKSHOP (DISCUSSION): HOW CAN WE ENHANCE WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN INITIATIVES FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION**

- The discussion focused on two main questions:
  - How can we enhance women's participation in initiatives for biodiversity conservation;
  - Policy recommendations to strengthen the connection between agroecology and gender equality.
- The participants gave the following answers on the question "How to enhance women's participation in initiatives for biodiversity conservation":
  - Connect them with their daily issues;
  - Make women visible. Bring them out of the shadows. Ensure they are included in project design and through every part of the project;
  - Empower woman regarding the management of land;
  - Make them economically sustainable;
  - They could participate as storytellers during education sessions in small rural schools, telling what they do every day;
  - Design initiatives in such a way that it supports what they are already doing, addresses their challenges, values their knowledge and doesn't further burden their labour or compete with family demands;
  - Provide information on the channels they use and try to find out which channels are;
  - Working with local women's groups, regardless of their shared goals;
  - Adapt activities to their time availability;
  - Provide them with an adequate training and mentoring and then by giving importance to their role inside the initiative;
  - Educate men on gender perspective and values on biodiversity conservation;
  - Stimulate meeting spaces in which women can share the enormous diversity of self-care practices;
  - Moving from self-care to meetings and preserving other lives;

- Create women networks;
- They could be asked to save seeds and get involved in exchange sessions
- Add value to biodiversity conservation activities.
- The participants were asked to rank how important are some the policy recommendations to strengthen the connection between agroecology and gender equality. The most important recommendations according to the participants is to: support women's access to resources such as credit, seeds and extension services and to promote the inclusive agricultural education that addresses gender disparities.

How important are the following policy steps for strengthening the connection between agroecology and gender equality



- In addition the following policy recommendations were added:
  - Networks, networks, networks;
  - An international legal framework;
  - Do we know if and to what extent women want to be involved in pastoralism?
  - Promote, support by funds women's engagement and participation in networking;
  - Highlight the many risks to women's secure tenure on the commons posed by various interests: 30x30 target, rewilding proposals, industrial agriculture, ecotourism etc.;
  - Educate men in horizontal skills and governance methodologies.

### SUMMARY 30 JUNE 2025

The meeting focused on enhancing women's participation in biodiversity and conservation initiatives, with discussions centered on methodologies to make

women's contributions visible, especially in informal sectors and areas where women are not formally registered. Participants highlighted the need for creative and flexible research methods to capture the roles of women in agriculture, pastoralism, and transhumance, emphasizing qualitative and quantitative data collection. The group agreed on policy recommendations, including promoting inclusive agricultural education, addressing gender disparities, supporting women's access to resources, and securing land rights. The importance of networking and international legal frameworks to strengthen the connection between agroecology and gender equality was also discussed.

- The following next steps were outlined:
  - Create local women groups in each country as part of the next proposal to promote sustainable development of rural areas and commonlands;
  - Update the website with recordings, minutes, pictures, and other materials from all three webinars by the end of summer;
  - Register for the IYRP gender working group by contacting Nitya at [mitya.owc.19@gmail.com](mailto:mitya.owc.19@gmail.com) if interested in joining;
  - Integrate findings and discussions from all three webinars into future work and collaborations;
  - Exchange information about gender indicators in food strategies at municipal level.

## **SPEAKERS' SHORT CVs**

### **DIMITRA PAPAIOANNIDOU**

Dimitra Papaioannidou is an environmentalist with a degree from the Department of Environment of the University of the Aegean and postgraduate studies at the Department of Environment and Development of the NTUA. Her research interests focus on environmental protection, biodiversity conservation and integrated development. She has been active in environmental organizations where he has dealt with issues of environmental education, communication, awareness-raising and shaping environmental consciousness. She has been actively involved in the empowerment of women in mountainous areas through actions that promote sustainable development and the promotion of intangible cultural heritage, such as shifting cultivation. At the Zagori Ecomuseum, she coordinates initiatives that link nature conservation with social participation and the local community.

### **ROSITZA DJAMBAZOVA**

Rositsa Dzhambazova is Director of Business Incubator-Gotze Delchev, Entrepreneurship Promotion Centre since 1999. She works for rural and regional development to increase competitiveness and resilience of the community and economy through supporting potential entrepreneurs, young people, women to address challenges, start their innovative businesses; she provides practical education and training (e-tools, innovative camps, webinars, workshops) and mentoring, rising awareness and involving community, academia and business to find innovative solutions and access to technology and innovation. She is an electronic engineer & economist- Foreign Trade and International marketing.

### **ATHANASIOS RAGKOS**

Dr. Athanasios Ragkos is an Agricultural Economist currently employed as a Researcher at the Agricultural Economics Research Institute of the Hellenic Agricultural Organization "DIMITRA". He obtained his Ph.D. Diploma in 2008 from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. He has participated in more than 40 research projects (five of which as Coordinator). His research fields include the economics of agricultural and animal production, environmental economics, the multifunctional character of agriculture and sustainable rural development. He is experienced in designing interdisciplinary approaches regarding the above-mentioned research fields by maintaining close collaboration with scientists of relevant fields.

### **MANUELA COZZI**

Manuela Cozzi is an agronomist, involved in rural development for 42 years, actively working to build networks for the production, processing, and marketing of organic products in mountain areas. She has participated and continue to support Slow Food projects, and in the meantime, together with her partners, she has founded the ASCA agricultural and social cooperative, a model of sustainability, diversification, and multifunctionality at the international level. The initiative "Adopt a sheep, defend nature" has earned coverage in the world's most prestigious newspapers.

### **RIGAS ZAFEIRIOU**

Rigas Zafeiriou is a programme manager at the Mediterranean Institute for Nature and Anthropol (MedINA) for sustainable food systems. Under this initiative, more than fourteen projects have been implemented in different communities across Greece since 2023. He has served as programmes director at the Kytherian Foundation for Culture and Development, as a consultant for UNESCO and Paths of Greece, among others. He has been a member of the tourism board of the Municipality of Kythera, the sustainable development committee of Thermo Municipality, and the general assembly of the Society for the Protection of Prespa. He holds a master's degree in Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development from Wageningen University in the Netherlands.

### **YANKA KAZAKOVA**

Yanka Kazakova has a PhD in Agriculture Economics and Policy from the University of National and World Economy (UNWE) in Sofia. She is a lecturer at the Department of Economics of Natural Resources at UNWE. Yanka's interests are in agri-environmental economy, policy design and implementation with a focus on High Nature Value farmlands and farming in Natura 2000 areas. Yanka is one of the founders of the Society for Territorial and Environmental Prosperity (STEP), aiming to connect her research and teaching activities with the practical experience to promote and develop economic activities that are in harmony with our natural environment.

### **MARIE-HÉLÈNE DELHOVE**

Belgian bioengineer with a background in tropical agronomy and professional experience in sustainable farming systems in Africa and Europe. She started her professional career in capacity building of the African horticultural sector. In 2021, she started to focus on agroecology and had a first multicriteria assessment experience in Sénégal by working on the development of a methodology to assess the performance of agroforestry farming systems in Senegal. Since 2022, she is fully engaged in agroecological research at the Walloon agricultural research

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### **NITYA GHOTGE**

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