



**Northern Ireland
Rural Women's Network (NIRWN's)
Response To**

EU Communication on Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Reform

**Department of Agriculture and Rural
Development (DARD)**

Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN)

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN) is a regional network established to articulate the voices of women in rural areas. It is jointly funded by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) and the Department for Social Development (DSD).

1.2 NIRWN has six key objectives:

- Increasing the voice of rural women through giving them a voice at Policy level
- Playing an advocacy and lobbying role on behalf of rural women
- Capacity Building and Group Development for rural women
- Encouraging women in decision-making and providing representation for rural women
- Information and networking opportunities for rural women
- Working within the Women's Centres Regional Partnership to give a voice to rural women's centres.

1.3 NIRWN welcomes the opportunity to comment on the: 'EU Communication on Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Reform'. Our comments in relation to specific issues are set out below.

2.0 Response to Consultation

STRATEGIC POSITIONING OF THE CAP

The Commission Paper identifies three challenges for the CAP in the future, namely food security, environment and climate change and territorial balance.

2.1 Do you agree that these are the correct objectives or should they be modified or expanded?

NIRWN would like to comment on '*Objective 3: Balanced territorial development*'. NIRWN would like to expand the first bullet point:

'to support rural employment and maintaining the social fabric of rural communities'

NIRWN would like to see this separated and developed into two separate objectives:

- 'to support rural employment'
- 'to maintain and develop the social fabric of rural communities'

It is our view that although rural employment does contribute to maintaining the social fabric of rural areas it is not the sole contributing factor. It is the view of NIRWN that whilst many rural areas in Northern Ireland currently have a vibrant social fabric that will require maintenance in the future; there are also many areas that require support to build their social capital; develop their communities; social infrastructure and social fabric.

The EU Communication outlines three policy options in an Annex. These are:

Option 1 - enhanced status quo;

Option 2 - more balanced, targeted & sustainable support, and;

Option 3 - abolished market & income support.

2.2 Which of the three broad policy options do you support and why? How well do each of the policy options address the challenges and deliver the objectives identified?

NIRWN supports policy option 2. It is the view of NIRWN that option 2 presents the best balance between the current provision and needs of rural dwellers and the responsibilities of all the EU to address climate change and foster more equitable distribution among Member States and farmers.

3.0 RURAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Priorities

COM (2010) 672/5 on 'The CAP towards 2020' refers to '*measures to help unlock the potential of rural areas should pay close attention to innovative ideas for business and local governance*'.

NIRWN would like women and young people to be specifically targeted for these measures: '*Addressing the specific needs of young farmers and new entrants will be a priority*' should read '*Addressing the specific needs of young farmers, women and new entrants will be a priority*' .

3.2 Effective Delivery Mechanisms

Historically female representation has always been poor in Northern Ireland. Career paths like farming and business are considered non-traditional routes for women; similarly, participation in public and political life can equally be considered traditionally male preserves. While women's representation in public bodies, local authorities and political parties has increased in the last thirty years, women are still far from being on a par with men; in some areas the shortfall of female participation is considerably more marked than others¹. Therefore the issue of appropriate gender representation needs to be integral to the membership and delivery of the new Structures.

As with the consultation and engagement processes NIRWN would expect that any consultation group or, delivery structure moving 'towards 2020' should be gender balanced (taking account of CEDAW² and UN Security Resolution 1325³) and reflect the multiplicity of society in their locality. Women comprise 51%⁴ of Northern Ireland's population and the new Programme and structures should reflect this. NIRWN holds the view that with the lack of gender parity that exists throughout Northern Irish society it is imperative that the Policy and ensuing Programmes address and reflect grass-roots concerns and views.

3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

NIRWN agree that: *'The set of indicators in the Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework should be both simplified and improved'*, however NIRWN believe it is imperative that a new Monitoring and Evaluation Framework must have gender disaggregated data. The NI Executive and the EU must be in a position to monitor and evaluate the impact of the Common Agricultural Policy on women in rural areas.

¹ Dr Helen Mc Laughlin (2009) 'Women Living In Disadvantaged Communities: Barriers To Participation

² UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women,
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations>

³ <http://www.peacewomen.org/un/sc/1325.html> UNSCR 1325 emphasises the distinct position of women in conflict and post conflict situations. It calls on member states to act in several areas, including the promotion of women in decision making institutions

⁴ Census (2001)

4.0 EQUALITY

Please comment on any aspect of the EU Communication on CAP reform which you consider may have equality implications.

NIRWN notes that it is difficult to accurately gauge the potential adverse gender impacts which may occur as a result of the implementation of the measures. The reason for this is that currently, the statistics available are not broken down in a wider context, for example, in respect of families and women. The absence of a baseline makes it very difficult to monitor and comment on future potential equality implications.

A key issue for rural, farming women is that of not being formally recognised. The current Agricultural Census reporting system only allows for one principal partner. This meant that, in the last census, 35 per cent of women who were working more than 30 hours a week on their farms were classified only as 'farmer's spouses'⁵.

The lack of gender awareness and the absence of gender-disaggregated information have been identified as the main problems in recognising farming women's contribution to the agricultural sector. Shortall⁶ correctly highlighted that, in Western Europe most farms are operated by farm families. If the work and role of women on farms is not measured and recognised; it is impossible to assess the impact positively, or negatively, of measures such as the Common Agricultural Policy on rural women.

⁵ Shortall, S and R Kelly (2001) **Gender Proofing CAP Reforms** Rural Community Network

⁶ Shortall, S (2002) **Women in the Field: Women, Farming and Organizations-** Gender, Work & Organization Volume 8 Issue 2, Pages 164 – 181, 2010 Blackwell Publishing Ltd