

## The state of rural women and their role at the achievement of food safety

Silvia Jacková<sup>1</sup>, Mária Kadlečíková<sup>2</sup>, Jozef Košuda<sup>3</sup>, Zuzana Juričková<sup>4</sup>

Slovak University of Agriculture<sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup>

Faculty of Economics and Management, Department of Management

Trieda Andreja Hlinku 2

Nitra, Slovak Republic

e-mail<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>: silvia.jackova39@gmail.com, Maria.Kadlecikova@uniag.sk, aione@gts.mail.sk,  
Zuza.Jurickova@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

*The submitted scientific paper deals with subject of women's role and position at the development of agricultural production and rural development in the current phase of the global economic dimensions. The authors' prime objective in this paper is to analyze and to evaluate the issues of rural women's entrepreneurial activities in the fields of agriculture. The data are obtained from own research, furthermore, from the FAO, EU databases and ILO. The research activities are alongside of global approach focused on the selected European Union 'states and on the non-European Union states. The results of the paper confirm that if in the global circumstances the higher involvement of rural women into the agricultural and into the rural areas 'development, would be the reality, then this would lead to their better social status and to the new labor opportunities. Beyond of this, is confirmed that rural women play meaningful role at the sustainable management of natural resources. The important role for rural women represents education, extension service, social and professional alliances. The personal knowledge and capabilities of rural women confirm that they are prepared for managerial positions in the agri - food businesses and for entrepreneurial activities. They have the capabilities to diversify agricultural and rural activities and to create new employment opportunities in countryside.*

**Keywords:** entrepreneurial activities, food security, rural development, rural women, status

**JEL classification:** E240, O18

### **1. Introduction**

Women play in human society an important role in every stage of its development. Rural women often manage complex households and pursue multiple livelihood strategies. Their activities typically include cultivation of agricultural crops, farming animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural or other rural enterprises, collecting fuel and water, engaging in trade and marketing, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. Many of these activities are not always perceived as economically active employment in national accounts, but they are essential to the well-being of rural household (Doss & Raney & Anriquez & Croppenstedt & Gerosa & Lowder & Matuscke & Skoet, 2011) According to the FAO (2011), women provide in some developing countries up to 50 percent of agricultural production. In spite, of their active participation in agriculture and rural development, women often face barriers in access to productive resources and for business opportunities. In addition, the gender inequality is further complicating their opportunities in business. However, women are eligible to become a good entrepreneur or manager. Women are more flexible and handle easier more tasks simultaneously. In general women are considered as the strong personalities with exceptional leadership qualities. From the leadership point of view the women are good in diplomacy, they are intelligent, open minded, good listeners, typical for them is integrity, inclusiveness, humanity and generosity, they have also good sense for humor and they are excellent communicators. Even the female management style is considered as their advantage. Nowadays, the management gurus are openly recognizing that female management style is often their competitive advantage

(Kadlečíková, 2011). Education of rural women is also important. According to Becker, Hubbard and Murphy, (2009) and Malhotra, Pande and Grown, (2003), the wealth of developed countries is based on a highly educated population. Education is an important tool for empowerment. The number of empirical studies has found that the upgrade in women's education, increases wages and these returns from education to women are frequently greater than for men. Empirical evidence also shows that a mother's education has a positive impact on child survival, education and nutrition status.

## **2. Methodology**

The main objective of this paper is to analyse and to evaluate the issues of rural women's entrepreneurial activities in the fields of agriculture and food processing and their relation to the improvement of the food security and safety.

The data was gathered from own authors' research and other secondary data taken from FAO, European Commission and Eurostat. These databases are focused mainly on rural women, their position in agricultural businesses in comparison with males, age structure of men and women in the predominantly rural areas. Further, data deals with kind of women's farming activities, also whether they are interested in field of organic farming. In to research are included European Union countries and some European countries which are not in European Union too. For better comparison the data are divided into three groups. First is EU-28 (all EU members states), EU-15 (original EU members states - Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom. Third group is represented by EU-13 (new EU member states - Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Croatia, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia).

## **3. State of Rural Women in Europe**

There is difference among the women from Eastern Europe and those from developing states. They do differ by the level of education. Women from Eastern Europe have 1, 6 times higher education level in comparison with men. Furthermore, among the countries, there are differences, which change in time, due to various social, cultural, religious and economic factors. In developed and developing countries are significant differences with regard of wages between men and women. Practically, this means that discrimination is still the one of factors which has impact on reduced earnings of women. In the Czech and Slovak Republic, the income gap between men and women is up to 23, 6 percent. From this indicator, the most unfavourable result was achieved by Estonia with 30, 3 percent. The similar level of the above indicator as in Czech and Slovak Republic, is noted in Cyprus - 23,1 percent, Germany - 23 percent, Netherlands - 23,3 percent, Finland - 20,0 percent, United Kingdom - 21,1 percent, Greece - 20,7 percent and Lithuania - 20,0 percent. The best results are registered in Italy - 4, 4 percent, Malta - 5, 2 percent, Poland - 7, 5 percent, Portugal - 8, 3 percent and Belgium - 9, 1 percent.

Rural women achieve managerial positions first of all in agriculture (21 percent), in their own businesses (14 percent), in small companies (14 percent), in large enterprises (10 percent). From the above said for women is important to start with own business. However, for this is reasonable to have easy access to the financial resources. Financial services, for example savings, credit and insurance provide opportunities for improving the output of agricultural production, to reduce the risk of production, to ensure the growth of food security and safety, as well as to improve the economic vitality in the rural areas. Many examples confirm the

significant differences between the capabilities of men and women in access to loan. If loans are granted to women, so often it is only through micro loans which may be difficult to develop effective agricultural and rural activities. Micro loans schemes help women mainly in developing countries, but also in less developed economies (Armenia, Georgia, Bosnia-Herzegovina etc.). Through loan acquisition, rural women achieve independence their businesses, but also their social security is improved.

However, rural women mostly are not willing (mainly due to lack of self-confidence), to start with their own business. For example, research made by Lithuanian Institute of Agrarian Economics has indicated several common problems that rural women face with, while considering or creating their own business. These problems are (in descending order of importance), lack of money for starting business, difficulties of forecasting the demand for products, fear of risk or failure, lack of initiative, limitation of local market, lack of knowledge, insufficient support from government, lack of information, other reasons (Maskoliūnaitė & Pareigienė, 2004).

#### **4. Rural Women and Agricultural Labour Market**

Rural women have no easy position in the world. There is some gap between man and women in their rights and role in the labour market. In the employment gap is difference between the share of rural women in the population and in the labour force. In Slovakia, this gap is about 8 percent. This practically means that the share of working women in Slovak population is about 8 percent higher than the share of working rural women, so about 8 percent more rural women are unemployed. The highest unemployment rate of rural women is in Malta with 14 percent. This situation is similar in Greece and in Italy with 12 percent. The lowest unemployment rate of rural women is in Scandinavian countries with 3 percent.

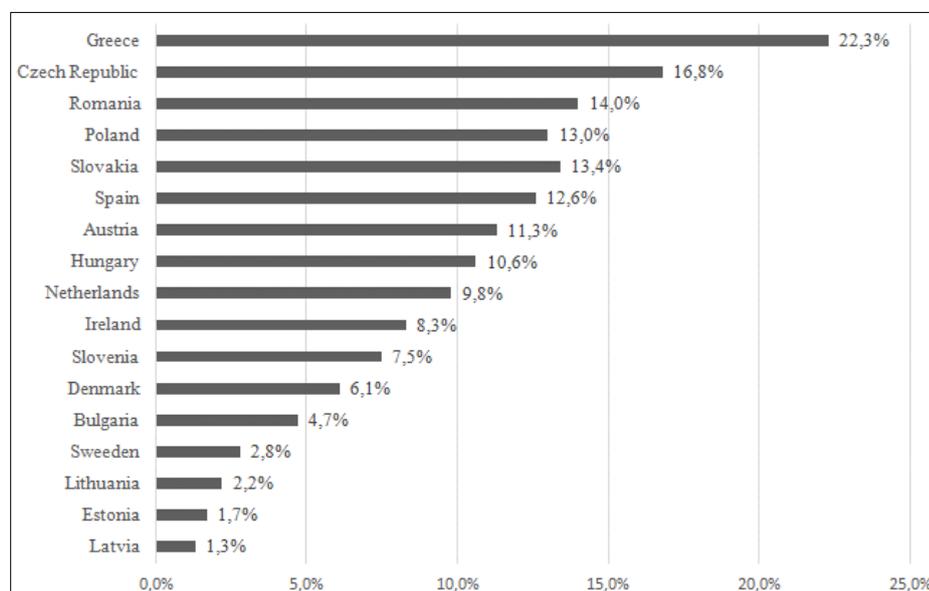
Another difference between man and women is in employment rates. In most European countries, women have higher unemployment rate than men in predominantly rural regions. The highest gap in employment rates between men and women is in Greece with 22, 3 percent. This actually means that in Greece, mainly in rural areas, are employed about 22, 3 percent more men than women. The second highest difference is in Czech Republic, nearly 17 percent. Lowest gap is in Latvia and Estonia, only about 1, 5 percent. Slovakia is on the fifth position, there is employed 13, 4 percent more men than women in rural regions (figure 1).

Women and men working in rural settings are often involved in numerous activities. For instance, they may change their work depending on the season, or may remain unemployed or underemployed for periods of time, due to their significant involvement in seasonal and part-time jobs. In rural settings, the domestic sphere and market production appear to be more closely linked than urban areas, and production activities, which rest to a large extent on the fact that women are faced with poor infrastructure and a lack of facilities.

Furthermore, we dealt with comparison women and men employment from the perspective of economic sectors, namely agriculture, industry and services (table 1). The collected data are for three regions, the whole World, European Union states plus advanced countries and Central plus South East Europe plus the CIS. At the world in agricultural works slightly more as 34 percent of the population, women employed in agriculture are representing 36, 3 percent and 32, 8 percent of men. Much smaller numbers are for the EU states and developed countries, where agriculture employs only 3, 8 percent of population; women are representing 2, 9 percent and men 4, 4 percent. In Central and South Eastern Europe and in CIS, work in agriculture in total 19, 9 percent of the labour forces, 20, 3 percent of women and 19, 7 percent of men. In contrast, at the servicing activities, work in the EU states 10, 7 percent of

women and 31, 5 percent of men. Most of the population is employed in services; it is up to 86, 3 percent of women and 64 percent of men in the EU. In Central and Eastern Europe are employed in agriculture about 17, 4 percent more women in comparison with the average of European Union states.

**Figure 1: Differences between men and women in employment rates in 2013**



Source: Eurostat

**Table 1: Distribution of female and male employment by sector in 2011**

	World			Developed Economies and European Union			Central and South Eastern Europe & CIS		
	total	Female	Male	total	Female	male	total	female	male
<b>Agriculture</b>	34,1	36,2	32,8	3,8	2,9	4,4	19,9	20,3	19,7
<b>Industry</b>	22,1	16,2	25,9	22,1	10,7	31,5	26,3	18,2	32,9
<b>Services</b>	43,8	47,6	41,3	74,1	86,3	64,0	53,8	61,6	47,5

Source: International Labour Organization

With regard of age structure, female farmers tend to be older than male farmers. Trend in European Union is still typical high age in this kind of jobs. The higher age than 65 years in 2010 had about 39 percent of women. On the other side, male farmers represent about 28 percent. This is category with the highest difference between men and women. Very low number of women has age category less than 25 years. Only about 1 percent of rural population from this age category is working in agriculture. In category from 25 to 35 years works in the farming 5 percent of women and about 6 percent of men. There are 16 percent men and 13 women from 35 to 44 years. In age from 45 to 54 years are about 23 percent men and 19 percent. The age category from 55 to 64 years is represented by 23 percent men and 22 percent women.

Regarding the level of education, the percentage of women who graduated from tertiary agricultural education is 47 percent in Slovakia (2010). In Czech Republic this indicator in education, achieved nearly 59 percent of women and the same result was noted in Slovenia. For instance in Poland it was noted 56 percent, in Latvia 57 percent, in Lithuania 53 percent, in Hungary 49 percent and in Armenia 39 percent.

## 5. Women as a Farmers

In average women’s farmer own farms with 5, 8 ha of agricultural land and generate about 8 850 Eur in standard output. They do employ less than 1 full-time worker (0, 6) and have slightly more than 3 livestock units. Average age of women in this kind of farms is more than 55 years.

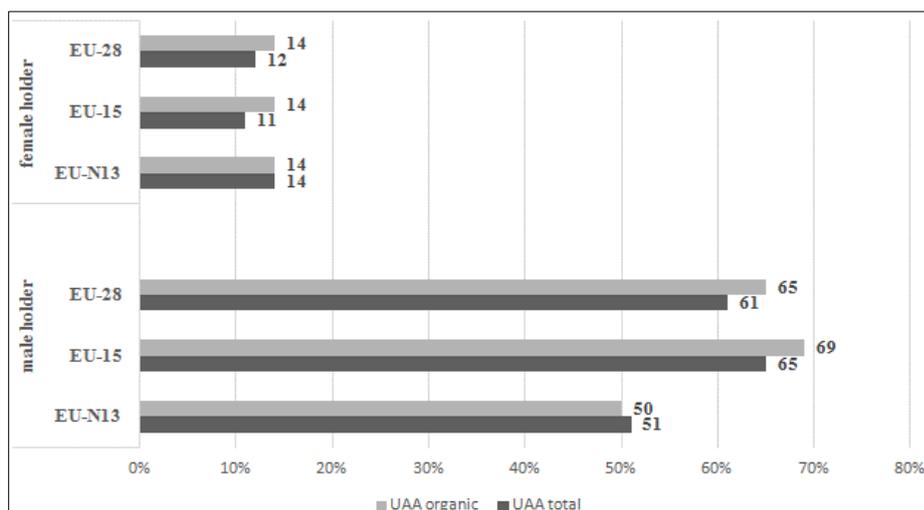
Women tend to be specialised in crop farming. In category mixed cropping women have about 5 percent production. In specialised farms with permanent crops, women produce about 3 percent more than man. Almost 30 percent of women’s production is in specialised field crops. In animal production, women lag behind men. Women produced about 4 percent less than man in mixed livestock. In category specialised on grazing livestock, women ‘share on production is only 10 percent, the same indicator in men category records nearly 19 percent.

## 6. Women as Owners of Agricultural Area

Women only hold a small share of the agricultural area. In terms of the ownership of land is the most favourable situation for women in Italy (32 percent) and in Romania (30 percent). Surprisingly, the least favourable situation is in Germany (10 percent) and in Denmark (12 percent). In the Czech Republic and in Slovakia, the situation is identical (18 percent).

It is interesting that women prefer organic and classic farming (figure 2). In EU-28 in total area women own 12 percent of land and in case of man this indicator is even 61 percent. Inside of EU in to organic farming are involved 14 percent women and 65 percent of men. In EU-15 own organic farms 69 percent men and 14 percent women. In EU-13 we cannot recognize preferences in favour of organic or classic farming, this is documented by the following results: 14 percent of women own organic area and 14 percent of them own classic farms.

**Figure 2: Total and organic farm area by holder in 2010**

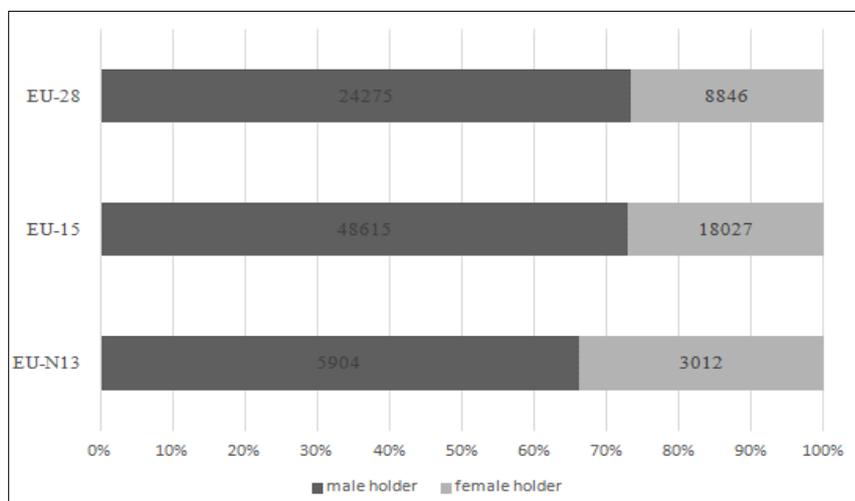


Source: Eurostat

If we would try to see the differences among men and women from the point of view of the physical and economic size of the farm, then we can conclude that women in the Europe, regardless whether they are from new or from the original EU states, they as an owners achieve lower turnover and they do own smaller farms in comparison with men. In the EU-28 the male’s holders own in average the farm with size 12, 88 hectares of the UAA/holding,

meanwhile, in the case of women this indicator achieves only 5, 84 hectares. The difference is 7, 04 hectares. This difference is significantly higher in the original EU member states, where the average size of the farm in the case of males is 22, 91 hectares UAA/holding and in the case of females it is only 10, 08 hectares, the difference is about 12, 83. The smallest difference is in the EU member states, just 2, 17 hectares (figure 3).

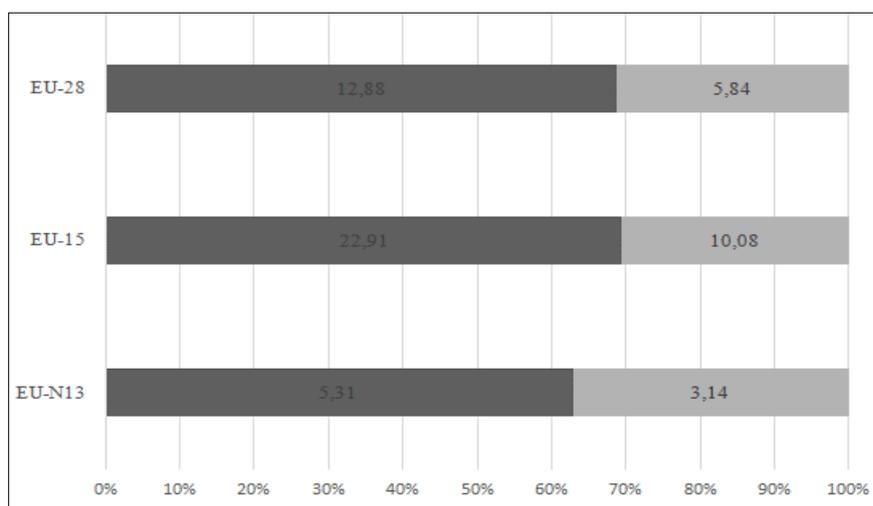
**Figure 3: Physical farm size in the EU in ha UAA/holding in 2010**



Source: Eurostat

When we analyse the farms ‘economic size and take into consideration gender differences, we can state that the differences are the highest at the EU-15 states, in these states the standard output on the farms which are owned by men is 48 615 Euro and in the case of women 18 027 Euro, the difference is then 30 588 Euro. The smallest difference is in the EU-13 states, only 2 892 Euro, In the EU-28 this indicator is at the level of 15 429 Euro (figure 4).

**Figure 4: Economic farm size in the EU in standard output in Euro/holding in 2010**



Source: Eurostat

## 7. Conclusion

In many countries of the world rural women are engaged in agricultural production, provision of water and other necessary things for the family. In addition, they are doing activities outside the farm, to improve the living standards of families. Furthermore, they care for

children, the sick and the elderly people. The main objective of this paper is to analyse and to evaluate the status of rural women in the labour market and the issues of rural women's entrepreneurial activities in the fields of agriculture.

In Slovakia, the percentage of women who are graduated from tertiary agricultural education is 47 percent (2010). According to Becker et al. (2009) and Malhotra et al. (2003), the wealth of developed countries is based on a highly educated population. Education is an important tool for women's empowerment and it is meaningful for increasing rural women's status in the society. Rural women participate to a lower degree in the labor force than women in the cities and urban areas. Women own agricultural areas less than men and only small percent of rural women own their own farms, nevertheless women provide a substantial share of agricultural production from the global point of view. Farms held by women tend to be very small and the holders are mostly rather old.

The increased proportion of women working in the agri-food sector as well as in rural areas, could result in: to increase of the living standards, to greater social security, to new job opportunities, to increase the export opportunities of the agricultural sector, the filling of local markets features regional products under the philosophy that what is produced in the region, will also markets its realized. Disadvantage of rural women is that they does not participate in political activities and thus do not determine the development of the company. For women it is significant that they are afraid to take risks, they have lack of confidence, language skills and limited knowledge in obtaining funds from the EU and other international organizations, respectively other international organizations. However, their personal knowledge and capabilities are confirming that they are prepared for managerial positions in the agri - food businesses, for work in business, respectively in logistics organizations. They have assumptions to diversify rural activities, create employment opportunities and inspire their surroundings for new things.

### **References**

- [1] Becker, G. S., Hubbard, W. H. J., Murphy, K. M. 2009. *Explaining the worldwide boom in higher education of women*. University of Chicago: USA, Chicago.
- [2] Doss, Ch., Raney, T., Anriquez, G., Croppenstedt, A., Gerosa, S., Lowder, S., Matuscke, I., Skoet, J. March 2011. *The role of women in agriculture* (ESA Working Paper No. 11-02). Agricultural Development Economics Division. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Retrieved from: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/am307e/am307e00.pdf>
- [3] Kadlečíková, M. 2011. *Postavenie vidieckych žien/ Rodové súvislosti*. Food prices: From critics to stability. World food day on 16. October 2011.
- [4] Malhotra, A., Pande, R., Grown C. 2003. Impact of investment in female education on gender quality. International Center for Research on Women: Washington, D. C.
- [5] Maskoliūnaitė D., Pareigienė L. 2004. *Employment of rural women in EU and Lithuania*. Lietuvos agrarinės ekonomikos institutas. Retrieved from: <http://www.lygus.lt/ITC/lyciu.php?id=100>
- [6] *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010 – 11 : Women in Agriculture – Closing the Gender Gap for Development*. 2011 Rome : FAO. pp. 147.

\* Online full-text paper availability: doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.15414/isd2016.s1.03>