



## **INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SERVICE OF THE REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR THE PERIOD 2014- 2022 OF THE LIGURIA REGION**

**CIG: 7070449F14**

### **Thematic Report 2024**

**Summary - Equal opportunities and female agricultural entrepreneurship  
in the 2014-2022 Liguria RDP**

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

MA: Managing Authority

AGEA: Agency for Agricultural Disbursements

TA: Technical Assistance

DPO: Department of Equal Opportunity

EAFRD: European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

FA: Focus Area

LAG: Local Action Group

GO: Operations Groups

ITI: Integrated Territorial Investments

LEADER: Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale

PO: Paying agency

OT: Thematic Objective.

CAP: Community Agricultural Policy

PF: Performance framework

PR: Rural development priorities

RDP: Rural Development Program

QCMV: Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

QVC: Common Assessment Question

RAA: Annual Implementation Report

MM: Measure Manager

RL: Liguria Region

RT: Tuscany Region

RU: Umbria Region

RVA: Annual Evaluation Report

SNAI: National Strategy for Inner Areas

UM: Under Measure

LDS: Local Development Strategy

SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

TI: Type of intervention

ICT: information and communication technology

TP: Privileged Witness

EU: European Union

VA: Value Added

IE: Independent Evaluator

VEXP: Ex Post Evaluation

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## Foreword

**This in-depth thematic study focuses its attention on the issue of the perception of gender equality within the Ligurian agricultural sector and the role of the 2014-2022 RDP of Regione Liguria in supporting female agricultural entrepreneurship.** At the outset, we would like to emphasize that the decision to focus on this specific policy aspect demonstrates the Managing Authority (hereafter MA) sensitivity in wanting to identify the specific issues and/or possible areas for improvement that characterize a cross-cutting theme of European funds in the transition between one programming cycle and another.

**The paper, therefore, in addition to conveying the inherent complexity of the theme of gender equality-through the presentation of the regulatory framework that characterizes and substantiates it-wants to offer a cross-section of the Ligurian business fabric and the 2014-2022 programming through the "gender lens" that investigates** *in the facts* what is happening on the territories, within society to avoid obsolescence of the debate and applicable strategies. The goal is to raise awareness and inform regional rural development policy through its decision makers, make it more effective with respect to gender equality and combating discrimination in agriculture. With this in mind, the work of the Independent Evaluator is to "give body," goals and boundaries to the theme of equality in agriculture, departing from a generalist view, creating "**a fertile and conducive environment for the recognition and promotion of the people** behind the production processes" by promoting inclusion and "*the role of women in agriculture, enhancing their potential contribution in the various stages of the agricultural production chain*" (Catia Zumpano, gender issues expert, CREA).

**"Recognition is the core of the democratic rule of law. Only equality guarantees respect or recognition of a given thing or action."**

Jurgen Habermas

Much more generally, however, this is a first attempt to introduce gender mainstreaming (in English gender mainstreaming), or the gender perspective in policies and programs by going to systematically consider the differences between women and men and their different needs and priorities at every stage of decision-making, from design to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It is gender mainstreaming that is, in fact, aimed at achieving equality between women and men, preventing and countering gender inequalities in all spheres of society by promoting the recognition of women's role in the main economic and social sectors of society (labor, education, health, and politics).

**After all, as the data from the context analysis will show, even in Liguria the total number of women is higher than the number of men (about 52 percent of the Ligurian population is female)** as in the rest of Europe where women represent just over 50 percent<sup>1</sup> of the total population. Representing an important share of the population, gender analysis also passes through the analysis of socioeconomic contexts and territorial development: the disadvantages and difficulties that typically characterize the agricultural economy, the farm system and the rural territories themselves - depopulation, globalization, lack of social infrastructure, difficulties

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<sup>1</sup> Eurostat, data to 2021.

in accessing essential services, etc. - are elements to be taken into account in approaching gender issues by also going through a marked differentiation from male entrepreneurship. From the labor point of view then, there is the aspect of family labor to be taken into consideration, which in Liguria accounts for almost 65 percent of the workforce<sup>2</sup> : even when female labor is employed in the business, it is often not materially paid separately from the spouse/domestic partner/owner, contributing to the failure to emerge the phenomenon of female labor in the business, which remains invisible and undetected within official statistics .<sup>3</sup>

All these stimuli, as also mentioned in the opening, led the Managing Authority of the Liguria Region to investigate the issue of gender equality by breaking it down into different levels of analysis - supra-national framing of the principles affecting gender equality, regional EAFRD 2014-2022 programming, territorial, economic, social results and impressions, reactions from female beneficiaries -. Consequently, the **Independent Evaluator** (hereafter IE) **delved not only into the socio-economic context in which the labor, professional and social dynamics of women in agriculture and rural areas develop, but also into the European and national strategic-regulatory framework in which gender mainstreaming has been strongly reinforced.** In particular, through the use of the methodological approach peculiar **to the Toolkit "Methodologies and Tools for Evaluation from a Gender Perspective"**<sup>4</sup> , the IE briefly focused on secondary data (analysis of **women's participation in the 2014-2022 RDP**) and the construction of primary data (in-depth interviews and processing of perceptions of women entrepreneurs and key referents of Professional Agricultural Organisations). The paper then focused on **answering specific evaluation questions and drafting conclusions and recommendations in the form of** Logbooks, accompanied by appropriate operational recommendations.

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## 1. The definition of the evaluation questions

**The main purpose of this in-depth study is to reconstruct and understand the conditions that favor or conversely weaken the role of women farmers in the Liguria Region.** To construct the answer to this general cognitive question, the IE, at the stimulus of the MA and sharing the entire path of analysis with RL, started from the analysis of two main-inputs, the first coming from the outside and one of an "endogenous" nature.

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<sup>2</sup> [Agriculture in the Italian regions](#)

<sup>3</sup> In Italy, 93.5 percent of farms are family-owned.

<sup>4</sup> Department for Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (n.d.). Toolkit and tools for gender-responsive evaluation. <https://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/media/0a0dqq4r/toolkit-di-valutazione.pdf>.



The exogenous input relates to the institutional political context of reference and refers to the growing attention that the theme of *gender mainstreaming*, social equity and the removal of inequalities have achieved within the political debate and public policies. The MA, therefore, in defining its position on this issue, has chosen to make use of a specific evaluation activity on the topic capable of offering a "system" vision that is useful both to draw the sums of the 2014-

**Equity and gender equality: a lexical choice.**

In this paper, the two terms are used synonymously, preferring, however, the term "equality." However, the IE agrees with the meaning of equity as formulated by the EIGE: *"equity recognizes that women and men have different needs and powers and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a way that redresses gender imbalances. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities."*

Source: [gender equity. Glossary | European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

2022 Programming and to inform the initiatives of the 2023-2027 Programming. With respect to the fledgling Programming, the goal is to go beyond equal access to fund opportunities and the removal of obstructive and discriminatory elements as much as to lay the groundwork for the promotion of a fully integrated gender culture within Ligurian territorial policies.

The second refers to the initiative taken by Regione Liguria as part of its Institutional Communication activities in December 2023 and concerning the promotion of a survey of an exploratory nature and referring to the general public. The aim of the same was to *"analyze how the population (citizens, businesses, institutions, professional*

*organisations, etc.) are facing the issue of gender equality by referring to their personal knowledge and reflecting on what are the opportunities offered in the agricultural work environment<sup>5</sup> ". The decision to make use of a standardized questionnaire addressed to an undefined audience of stakeholders is one<sup>6</sup> of the viable ways to take advantage of in order to detect how citizens perceive a given issue by also investigating needs and/or expectations. On that occasion, RL aimed to collect: past experiences, work and life context, expectations, motivations, and values (the so-called. "individual factors" and "cultural factors") that may influence how people perceive the world and, in this specific case, the topic of gender equality.*

With these two stimuli in mind, the main evaluative questions were declined as follows:

**Table1 - Explication of evaluation criteria, gender perspectives and operationalization of evaluation questions.**

| Stimulus | Evaluative question   | Criterion | Gender perspective  | Operational questions   |
|----------|---|-----------|---|---|
| Exterior | How has the 2014-2022 RDP supported women's entrepreneurship in rural areas | Relevance | Verify that the intervention meets the gender-specific needs of the target population and that its objectives are appropriate for addressing equality | 1.How was the gender analysis of the context, sectors, problems, stakeholders, and the subsequent identification of needs considered during program design? How was |

<sup>5</sup> The webpage dedicated to the [Liguria Psr questionnaire - Gender Equality Questionnaire: female entrepreneurship in Ligurian rural development - Agriligurianet](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Improving public policies by surveying and analyzing citizens' perceptions and orientations.](#)



| Stimulus | Evaluative question                            | Criterion            | Gender perspective  | Operational questions  |
|----------|--|----------------------|---|--|
|          | and, more generally, promoted gender equality? |                      | issues in social, economic and cultural contexts.   | gender equality integrated into the Program (Theory of Change)?<br>2. Do output/outcome indicators take into account a gender perspective?   |
|          |  | <b>Efficiency</b>    | Assess the level and adequacy of resources used to address gender inequalities in relation to the other issues addressed by the intervention.   | 1. How much resources are spent on female beneficiaries and how much do they weigh on the total RDP?<br>2. What are the participation levels of the female entrepreneurial component in the RDP?<br>3. Does the Program ensure equitable accessibility to different sources of funding?  |
|          |  | <b>Effectiveness</b> | Assess why, how, and to what extent the intervention contributed to the achievement of equality goals and/or the reduction of gender inequality; how women and men benefited from these changes, as well as whether the intervention or aspects of the intervention led to unintended effects (positive or negative). | 1. Has the RDP strategy effectively supported female entrepreneurship with respect to the characteristics of the regional agricultural environment?<br>2. Have stakeholders (organisations, institutions, indirect target groups) benefited from the program/intervention in terms of institutional capacity building (institutional capacity building) on Gender Mainstreaming and the development of gender competencies in their staff? |

|                 |  |                   |   |  |
|-----------------|--|-------------------|---|--|
| <b>Interior</b> | What are the perceptions on the topic of women's entrepreneurship in agriculture and the opportunities provided by the RDP, gender equality issues in rural areas, from the survey conducted by RL and targeting the general public? | <b>Visibility</b> | Assess the adequacy of knowledge on issues of gender equality in agriculture and rural areas, as well as of the RDP's contribution to women's entrepreneurship. | 1. To what extent are perceptions of gender mainstreaming and RDP action consistent with the relevant socioeconomic and programmatic context?<br>2. What differences in the perceptions of different target audiences? |
|-----------------|--|-------------------|---|--|

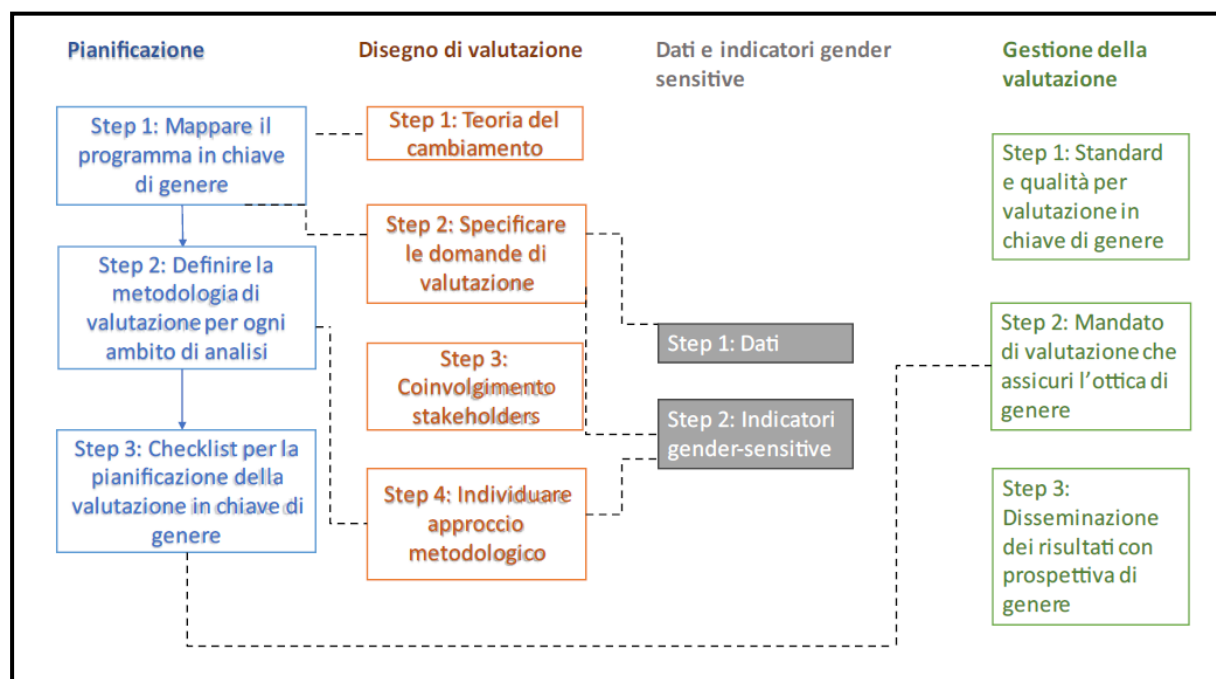
In the following pages, therefore, the evaluation path followed by the IE is made explicit, which acted on two main fronts: to answer the question regarding the role of the Program, the IE systematized the main notions on the topic - European, national and regional legal legislative setting - , applied the **Toolkit "Methodologies and Tools for Evaluation from a Gender Perspective"** that allowed to reread the Program and the context in a "gender perspective" "dropped" it into the programmatic reality of the Liguria Region – so-called. method tailoring process - and identified which additional stakeholders to involve to broaden the knowledge base on the topic. The latter were invited to participate in the formulation of responses to both evaluation questions in the context of the evaluation: this is, as will be seen below, the application of the so-called Bo. pathway. "participatory evaluation," a type of approach that involves the active involvement of people/institutions who are directly involved in or affected by the subject of the evaluation.

Regarding the use of the survey results, the IE made them its own by enhancing their main evidences in the response to the evaluation questions.

## 2. The methodological approach, sources and techniques used

In order to properly integrate the gender perspective in the analysis of the RDP 2014-2022 of Regione Liguria, the IE made use of the methodologies and tools made available by the Department for Equal Opportunities (DPO) of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and collected in the **Toolkit "Methodologies and Tools for Gender Mainstreaming Evaluation"**<sup>7</sup>. The Toolkit, produced as part of the DPO's MeS project - "Evaluation Methods and Tools for Gender Mainstreaming" (funded under Action 3.1.2 of the NOP Governance and Institutional Capacity 2014-2020), is a tool aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity of Italian public administrations and is designed to **promote a gender-evaluative culture in development policies**. It is organized into four tools (*Tools*) - with related steps (*Steps*) - designed to integrate a gender perspective into each of the moments of the evaluation process: planning (Tool 1), design (Tool 2), data collection and gender indicators (Tool 3), mandate and management of the evaluation, and communication and use of results (Tool 4).

Figure1 - Toolkit structure.



Due to the experimental nature of this evaluation and the now advanced-if not conclusive-status of the 2014-2022 RLP, in constructing the evaluation pathway, the IE did not make use of the entire Toolkit, but proceeded to select those tools that could meet the cognitive needs of RL, while still respecting the directions defined at the national and European level to perform a proper *gender-responsive* evaluation.

<sup>7</sup> Lattanzio KIBS . <https://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/media/0a0dqq4r/toolkit-di-valutazione.pdf> contributed to the development of the Toolkit and Tools for Gender-Based Assessment of the Department of Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers .

As suggested by the Toolkit, for the choice of methodological approach, **Theory of Change (TdC)** was found to be a particularly suitable methodology for gender-sensitive evaluation: by providing for an in-depth study of the causal relationships between input-output-outcomes-impacts and the verification of the path of change triggered by interventions, it helps to develop a women's perspective in policy analysis.

In order to apply the Theory of Change and ensure the proper integration of the gender perspective-consistent with the inherent characteristics of Rural Development Programs-the **IE**, in addition to analyzing the existing literature on the topic and regional, national and European equal opportunity legislation, **carried out three main activities:**

1. **Analyze contextual factors, particularly gender gaps, that influence the operation and effects of Program interventions;**
2. **Mapping Program interventions and rereading their rationale from a gender perspective;**
3. **Mapping relevant stakeholders.**

Considering the chosen approach, the IE has oriented its activities to the application of a mix of methods and techniques both quantitative - relying on secondary data - and qualitative with **extensive use of the so-called "participatory evaluation."** Right from the phase of defining the evaluation design, the VI's activity of consultation and discussion with the MA has been fundamental in identifying the Administration's cognitive needs, formulating the evaluation questions and defining the survey instruments for each category of actors involved in the direct surveys. Again, the discussion with the regional referents has, in fact, made it possible to punctually identify those figures relevant to the Ligurian context and with respect to the theme treated - the privileged witnesses - with whom to confront for the detection and analysis of the results. For the primary data collection, 8 in-depth interviews were carried out<sup>8</sup> in which a total of 11 interlocutors between women entrepreneurs and representatives of the main Professional Organisations of the agricultural sector took part (see table below for details).

This made it possible to "read" the direct experiences of RDP participants, placing them in a broader framework, including both the viewpoint of those with contextual knowledge and what is perceived by an extended audience, also measuring to some extent their knowledge and awareness of the issues addressed.

**Table2 - Summary overview of interviews with RDP beneficiaries 2014-2022**

| Province     | Submeasure | Numerosity |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| La Spezia    | 6.1        | 1          |
|              | 16.9       | 1          |
| Savona       | 6.4        | 1          |
|              | 6.2        | 1          |
| Imperia      | 6.4        | 1          |
|              | 4.1        | 1          |
| Genoa        | 16.9       | 1          |
| <b>Total</b> |            | <b>7</b>   |

<sup>8</sup> The interviews were conducted remotely and the questionnaires submitted are attached.

Information from the interviews conducted with beneficiaries and privileged witnesses was enriched by the analysis of the results of the **survey on the perception of the topic of women's entrepreneurship and gender equality among the general public**, promoted by RL in agreement with Liguria Ricerche S.p.A.

### **3. The socioeconomic context of reference and the reinterpretation of the Program from a gender perspective**

The analysis of secondary and primary data cannot be separated from a brief account of the **general socioeconomic situation of women in Liguria, and then move on to that specific to the agricultural sector**, also in order to ascertain the main problems and related opportunities of the context in which the Program operates and which may affect the issue of gender equality.

#### **Box1 - Key socio-economic data (Sources: Eurostat, ISTAT - various surveys)**

***Women's labor participation in Liguria has been increasing since the last census survey.***

As of 2023, **the female activity rate is 65%** (-14 percentage points compared to the Ligurian male rate, -5 percentage points compared to the average European female rate, and +7 percentage points compared to the average Italian female rate), **the employment rate is 60%** (-15 percentage points compared to the Ligurian male rate, -8 percentage points compared to the average European female rate and +6 percentage points compared to the average Italian female rate) and **the unemployment rate is 8%** (+3 percentage points compared to the Ligurian male rate, +1 percentage point compared to the average European female rate and -1 percentage point compared to the average Italian female rate).

Women in Liguria are **employed 81 percent of the time as employees** (+9 percentage points compared to the Ligurian average male incidence), **84 percent of the time with a permanent contract** (-4 percentage points compared to the Ligurian average male incidence) and **63 percent of the time with a full-time contract** (-63 percentage points compared to the Ligurian average male incidence). In terms of income, women in Liguria earn **72 percent of what men earn** (-3 percentage points compared to the Italian average).

Considering **educational qualifications**, the gap, calculated in terms of percentage difference, between females and males **in activity rates** narrows as the educational qualification held increases.

**Women account for 26.5 percent of total sole proprietors** (-0.2 percentage points compared to the national average).

Ligurian women's employment is concentrated in public administration, defense, education, health and social welfare (in 31 percent of cases) and wholesale trade (in 28 percent of cases). **Only 1 percent of women are employed in the agricultural sector.**

**Box2 - Context analysis specific to the agricultural sector: summary of results (Source: ISTAT, 7th Census of Agricultural Holdings, Eurostat - various surveys)**

There are **4,142 female farm leaders** in Liguria, or **33.4 percent of the total number of farm leaders in the entire region** (+1.9 compared to the national average).

In Liguria, **most women farm managers are over 65 years old** (38 percent), which is slightly higher than the male average and lower than the Italian and European female average. However, **the 45-64 age group is more represented in Liguria** than the national and European average. The EAFRD classification for youth is not applicable, but Eurostat data show that **only 9 percent of Ligurian female farm managers are under 40 years old, compared to 12 percent of men**. Compared to the Italian average, the presence of young female farm leaders is 1 percentage point lower, but compared to Europe it is 1 percentage point higher.

**Women are more educated than men:** 12 percent of women farm managers in Liguria hold a university degree, compared with 9 percent of their male counterparts. **Nevertheless, women have a lower propensity to obtain a degree, of any level, specializing in agricultural sciences** (43% gap in favor of males).

At the income level in the agricultural sector, **the wage gap, calculated in absolute values, between men and women is not particularly high** when compared with the wage gap existing between the genders within the category of private employees and amounting to 3,058.93 euros.

In terms of business characteristics, **99 percent of businesses led by women in Liguria are sole proprietorships** (+1 percentage point above the male average and in line with the Italian and European female average).

In line with the male average, **women farm manager are concentrated more in the province of Imperia**, followed by the province of Savona, the province of Genoa, and the province of La Spezia. At the municipal level, as for men, female business leaders in Liguria are concentrated in the following top three Ligurian municipalities: Albenga, Genoa, and San Remo.

**The percentage of farms led by women producing under the organic system - out of the total number of farms led by women - is 4%:** +1% compared to the men's average, -2% compared to the Italian average and +2% compared to the European average - a calculation made in relation to the individual group.

**The percentage of women who lead a farm in which there is also agritourism activity is higher than the Italian average by almost 14 percentage points** (47.7 percent versus 34 percent for the Italian average).

**The relative majority of farms led by women, or 32 percent, specialize in the olive sector** (+ 2 percent and +1 percent compared to the Italian average and + 23 percent compared to the European average).

**Regarding UAA, 70% of farms led by women have a UAA between 0 and 2 hectares** (+3% to the male figure, +28% to the Italian figure and +22% to the European figure).

**Women-led businesses are small in economic size and mainly with less than 8,000 euros** (+1% compared to the male average, +5% compared to the Italian average and -21% compared to the European average).

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### **3.1. Re-reading the 2014-2022 RDP of the Liguria region from a gender perspective**

The purpose of **the Program's gender mapping** activity is to analyze the relevance of planned and implemented interventions with respect to the theme of equality, also taking into account

the context of reference. The assumption, as mentioned above, is that all interventions, regardless of their nature, may have gender implications and effects (**direct, indirect and neutral actions**) that need to be analyzed in advance.

The "rereading" of the RDP included the analysis not only of the Program's intervention measures, but also of the **more specifically strategic and/or operational sections**, which were considered to be of greater interest to the topic, in order to observe all the ways chosen by RL to apply the principle of equal opportunity: section 3.2 "Recommendations of the ex-ante evaluation," section 4 "SWOT Analysis and Identification of Needs," section 5 "Description of the Strategy," section 6 "Evaluation of Ex-ante Conditionality," section 9 "Evaluation Plan," section 15.2 "Planned Composition of the Monitoring Committee."

**RL has fulfilled the criteria of the ex-ante conditionalities** regarding gender equality and non-discrimination (e.g., including in the Plan of training activities, initiatives dedicated to equality policies) and has designated a **Regional Equality Advisor**, also providing in the **Monitoring Committee** three representatives of non-governmental organisations, chosen by the Ligurian Forum of the Third Sector, of which one related to the environment sector, one to equal gender opportunities and one related to anti-discrimination. The ex-ante evaluation revealed the Program's capacity to promote equal opportunities and prevent discrimination, recommending, for effective internal monitoring of the Liguria RDP's contribution to gender equality, the introduction of ad hoc indicators, suitable for identifying, for example, the entry of new female entrepreneurs. RL accepts the recommendation, providing for the profiling of specific indicators on the contribution of the measures to the pursuit of the objectives of social inclusion, poverty reduction and development of the rural economy, present in the monitoring tables attached to the Program. The **Evaluation Plan** specifies the application of horizontal principles as defined in Articles 7 - Promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination and 8 - Sustainable development, of Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013.

In the analysis of the **regional context** (Section 4 - SWOT Analysis), there are some references to the socioeconomic situation of Ligurian women and the role of the female component in the labor market and, in particular, in the agricultural sector. The figure regarding the percentage of women-run enterprises in the total number of enterprises (25 percent), which is higher than the national average (24.3 percent), was reported, as well as on the sectors with a greater presence of women, such as agriculture, trade and business services. Finally, considering the universe of agricultural enterprises (those in which the workers on the farm are part of the holder's family), an incidence of the female component was found to be almost 50 percent.



It is important to point out that **the RDP in question does not provide for the identification of a specific need** that recognizes the difficulties of the female gender in the sector and promotes the improvement of their opportunities, just as there is no provision for the inclusion of award criteria in favor of the female target in the selection of operations, as an equity tool provided for in other RDPs. Nevertheless, also in the light of the indications that emerged from the SWOT analysis, the RDP defines some transversal needs, concerning essential services, accessibility, rural areas, etc., which can be "reinterpreted" from a gender perspective. Even in the **description of the strategy**, although lacking an explicit linguistic reference to gender, the attention that the 2014-2022 programming recognizes to the **social role of agriculture and forestry** is enunciated, understood both as a prospect of employment for individuals with difficulties in entering the labor market, and as an area of interaction between businesses and local administrations for the initiation and development of flexible and widespread social and environmental services in the territory.

#### Beyond formal equality: the role of rewards

Article 3 of the Italian Constitution states, "*All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions.*" This principle of formal equality states that every citizen should be treated equally by the law, without any discrimination. Everyone is entitled to equal opportunities and rights, regardless of personal characteristics. However, substantive equality goes further, requiring the adoption of policies aimed at overcoming social and economic inequalities to ensure that everyone has the same opportunities for personal and professional fulfillment. In this context, the use of tools such as **rewards** could help **counteract de facto discrimination by promoting substantive equality**.

The RDP intervenes, therefore, indirectly on the theme of social inclusion and equality through several requirements, including Requirement 20 "*Improving the delivery of public services and infrastructural endowment to serve the rural population,*" which, in the judgment of the IE, appears to be the one most related to the theme. **F20 intervenes in rural areas, as areas at high risk of exclusion due to the uneven distribution of services and the fragility of the local economy.** Improving public services and infrastructure in these areas would help mitigate structural criticalities, making personal services less burdensome, facilitating work-life balance, and removing some constraints to employment, particularly women's employment.

#### 3.1.1. The needs analysis and identification of direct, indirect and neutral actions

In the following section, the IE reread the Program's Intervention Measures from a gender perspective, making explicit for each one the link to one or more specific needs, the implications on the female component in agricultural entrepreneurship reclassifying these implications into "direct actions," "indirect actions," and "neutral actions" in promoting equal opportunities.

RL's RDP - like all Italian RDPs - did not include any actions directly geared toward combating gender discrimination, but neither did it include any implementation tools (e.g., award criteria) that could be considered indirectly conducive to equity. Despite this, the IE is promoting a

vision that does not believe in the absolute neutrality of planned actions and interventions, recalling that **any intervention has potential effects on gender that are worth analyzing.**

The 14 Measures analyzed were differentiated by the IE into 4 analysis groups:

1. Service-oriented measures of counseling, training and knowledge;
2. Measures on innovation and environmental protection;
3. Measures on investment and services;
4. Measures on cross-sector cooperation and associationism.

This leaves out 6 Measures (M05; M09; M10; M14; M21; M22) that were not subject to "re-reading" due to their specific scope of action (risk management, animal welfare, and special character measures) or their low impact on the overall weight of the Program.

The table below shows the linkage of these 4 groups with the main needs intended to be achieved at the beginning of the planning: the last column anticipates what are the indirect effects reread from a gender perspective.

**Table3 - Gender "re-read" effects of the clusters constructed by the VI**

| Analysis Group   | Linking Measurements and Needs   | Gender "reinterpreted" effects by analysis group   |
|--|--|--|
| Descriptive measures of consulting services, training, dissemination and knowledge transmission (M01; M02) | <b>M01 and M02:</b> F01 "Ongoing information and training on the territorial vocation and production characteristics of enterprises"<br>F03 Fostering the spread of innovation to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of companies;<br>F05 "Promote training, information, integration of practitioners who do technical assistance/advisory work."<br>F06 "Enhancing young people's skills in agriculture and forestry"  | Closing training gaps between female and male farm managers for equal training;<br>Promoting training opportunities for professional figures useful in multifunctionality, in which women are particularly active.   |
| Measures on innovation and environmental protection (M03; M11; M12; M13)                                   | <b>M03:</b> F07 "Promoting participation in community quality and certification schemes on farms"<br><b>M11, M12:</b> F13 "Restoring and maintaining elements of agroforestry landscape and Local eco-forestry systems"; F26 "Strengthening the dissemination of production methods with greater environmental sustainability"; F28 "Promoting the conservation of protected areas and endangered species"<br><b>M13:</b> F23 "Promoting sustainable management of agricultural and forestry activities and multifunctionality of agroforestry ecosystems" | Promoting all-around business innovation.<br>Promote business competitiveness and territorial development through a training and cooperation plan that can help correct gender imbalances in employment quality and working careers and generally create better socio-economic opportunities for women as well.<br>Fostering the development of territories and countering depopulation. |

| Analysis Group  | Linking Measurements and Needs  | Gender "reinterpreted" effects by analysis group   |
|---|---|--|
| Measures on investment and services (M04; M06; M07; M08)            | <p><b>M04, M8:</b> F09 "Support corporate restructuring processes and conversion to Market-oriented production"; F10 "Encourage investment to support competitiveness and innovation"; Facilitate access to credit;</p> <p><b>M06, M7, M8:</b> F12 "Encourage generational turnover"; F16" Encourage the development of new production models geared toward farm diversification in areas"; F17 "Protect and enhance agricultural and forest biodiversity"; F19 "Improve the quality, accessibility and use of ICT in rural areas"; F20 "Encourage the implementation of actions to improve the delivery of essential services to the rural population"; F21 "Organize and enhance the historical, cultural, architectural and environmental heritage of rural areas"</p> | Investing in social and economic development, in an area regeneration plan, can have important results in keeping areas alive by improving their service offerings. This allows families to lighten the management of the care burden of the household.  |
| Measures on cross-cutting cooperation and associationism (M16; M19) | <p><b>M16:</b> F03 "Fostering the spread of innovation to improve the competitiveness and sustainability of the companies"; F04 "Increase the connection between research and the agricultural and rural world, including through the creation of networks and cooperation."</p> <p><b>M19:</b> F29" Increase the participation of local actors in rural land development"</p>  | Promoting social inclusion, cooperation and collective participation: actions to be considered in the overall plan of building a more equal reality. In fact, these stimuli are essential, on the one hand, to ensure that women participate in decision-making processes, and, on the other, to promote collaboration among practitioners in the area with a view to working together for socio-economic development. |

Source: PSR ver. 15.

#### 4. Women's participation in the 2014-2022 RDP Liguria Region.

An analysis is now provided aimed at assessing the contribution of the RDP in supporting women's entrepreneurship in rural areas by looking at levels of participation, amount of resources spent and accessibility to funding sources.

For this purpose, the IE chose to dwell on the universe of beneficiaries who have received payments for structural and area-based measures according to AGEA's OPDBs as of 12/31/2023 (including both resources from the 2014-2022 Programming and those from the previous 2007-2013 Programming).

Overall, there are 6,222 beneficiaries who have carried out at least one operation under the 2014-2022 RDP of the Liguria Region for an amount of resources disbursed of about 286 million euros.

**Women who participated in the RDP, in the legal form of sole proprietorship are 2,050<sup>9</sup> and account for 37 percent of all RDP beneficiaries and 49 percent of the female heads of farms in the region<sup>10</sup> and had a disbursement of about 42 million euros, or about 31 percent of the total resources spent for all the sole proprietorships benefiting from the RDP.**

So, although women sole proprietors benefiting from the RDP during the 2014-2022 Programming of the Liguria Region are 37 percent of the total RDP beneficiaries, the expenditure disbursed for related interventions is proportionately lower than their participation in the Program as 31 percent of the total contributions spent.

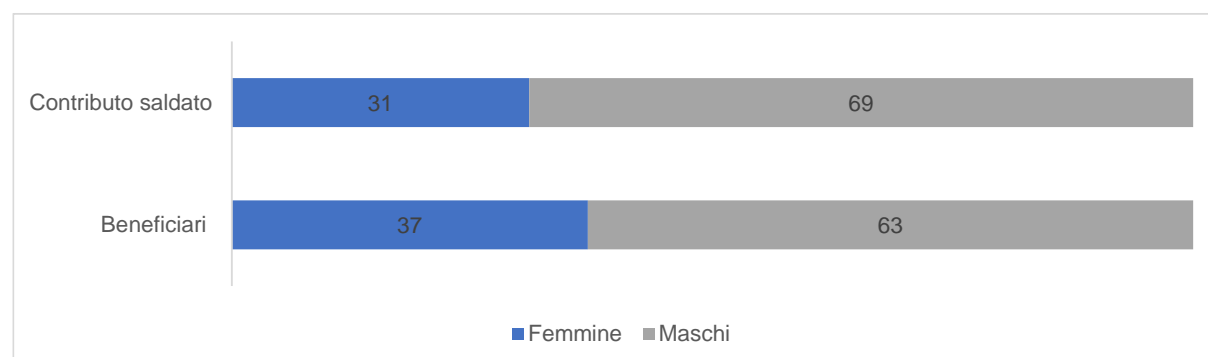
The average contribution spent on financing interventions for women-owned enterprises is about 21 thousand euros lower by about 6 thousand euros than the contribution paid for men-owned enterprises (about 27 thousand euros). On average, women in the RDP spent about 76 percent of the resources spent by men (see table below).

**Table4 - PSR beneficiary sole proprietorships and their welded contributions and average welded contributions by gender**

|         | Beneficiaries<br>(n.) | Contribution welded<br>(€) | Average welded<br>contribution (€) |
|---------|-----------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Females | 2.050                 | 42.736.270                 | 20.847                             |
| Males   | 3.488                 | 95.515.219                 | 27.384                             |
| Total   | 5.538                 | 138.251.490                | 24.964                             |

Source: OPDB AGEA data

**Chart1 - Sole proprietorships benefiting from the RDP and their welded contributions by gender (%)**



Source: OPDB AGEA data

Considering now only the structural measures, the percentage of women-owned RDP beneficiary sole proprietorships and the percentage of contribution paid out for women-owned RDP beneficiary sole proprietorships relative to their respective totals remains largely unchanged from the percentage distributions calculated for all types of measures. Women leading sole proprietorships benefiting from RDP structural measures account for 36 percent of the total beneficiaries and have spent 31 percent of the contributions spent on structural

<sup>9</sup> For the reasons already given in the text, the gender figure is not present for 11 percent of the RDP beneficiaries in AGEA's OPDB; therefore, the analysis was carried out on a reduced reference universe of 5,538 sole proprietorship beneficiaries and not 6,222 as stated at the beginning of the paragraph.

<sup>10</sup> Relate the latest Istat data to 2020.

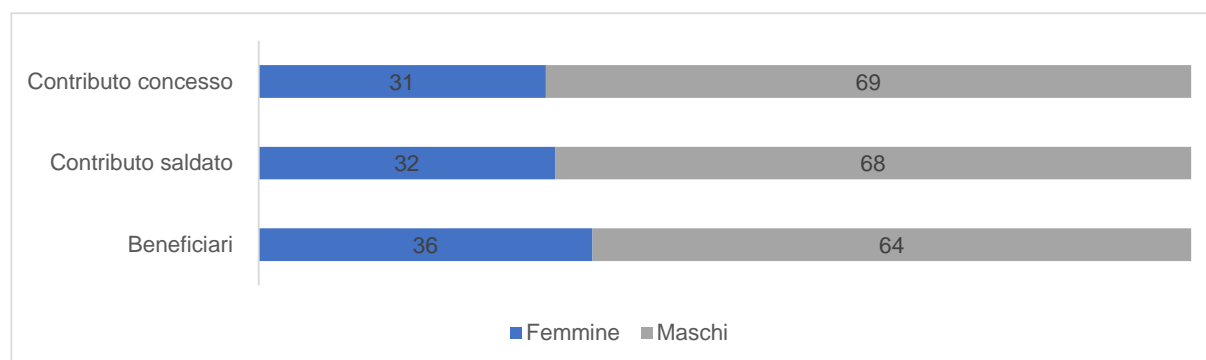
measures. The latter percentage widens, albeit by only one percentage point, when considering the contributions granted: women were granted 32 percent of the approved contributions. In terms of the average contribution granted the male one is always higher than the female one, by 4,000 euros, and even more so the average one spent, where the male one exceeds the female one by about 5,000 euros.

**Table 5 - PSR beneficiary sole proprietorships and related grants awarded, grants paid, average grants awarded, and average grants paid of structural measures by gender**

|         | Beneficiaries (no.) | Grant granted (€) | Welded contribution (€) | Average granted contribution (€) | Average welded contribution (€) |
|---------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Females | 1.471               | 29.783.823        | 27.076.392              | 20.247                           | 18.407                          |
| Males   | 2.638               | 63.834.459        | 60.868.284              | 24.198                           | 23.074                          |
| Total   | 4.109               | 93.618.283        | 87.944.676              | 22.784                           | 21.403                          |

Source: OPDB AGEA data

**Chart 2 - Sole proprietorships benefiting from the RDP and related grants awarded and grants paid of structural measures by gender (%)**

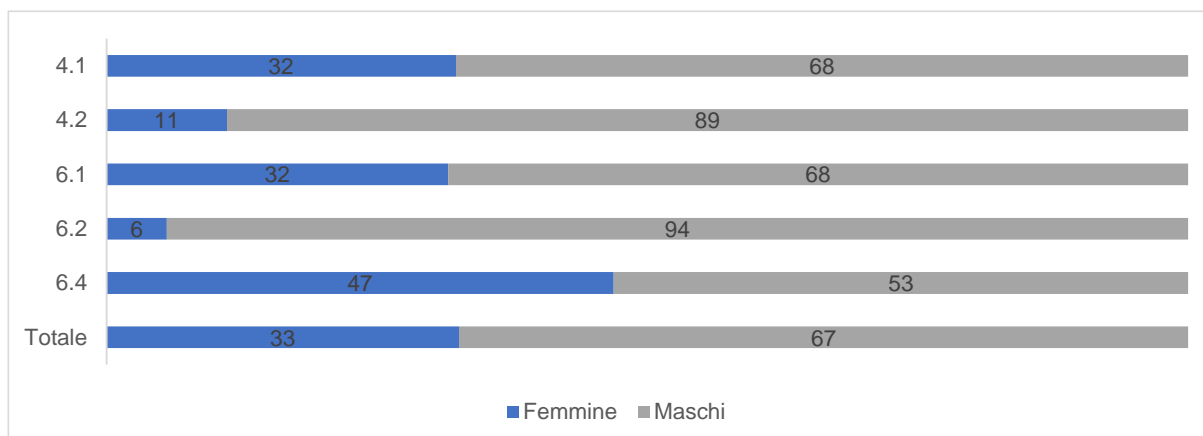


Source: OPDB AGEA data

Considering now only those beneficiaries who have carried out at least one operation under UM 4.1, 4.2, 6.1, 6.2 and 6.4, which are load-bearing measures for the Program and are attentively addressed by this in-depth study<sup>11</sup>, the percentage of women calculated out of the total number of RDP beneficiaries considered (visible in the following graph) is lower than the overall average (equal to 37 percent) by 4 percentage points, women being 33 percent of the beneficiaries. Looking, however, at individual UM the percentage of women is higher, by 10 percentage points, than the overall average (equal to 37 percent) only in the case of UM 6.4 "Investment in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities," women being 47 percent of the beneficiaries.

<sup>11</sup> UM 16.9 is not present, although important for analysis purposes, because it is related to observations excluded because they do not have gender data.

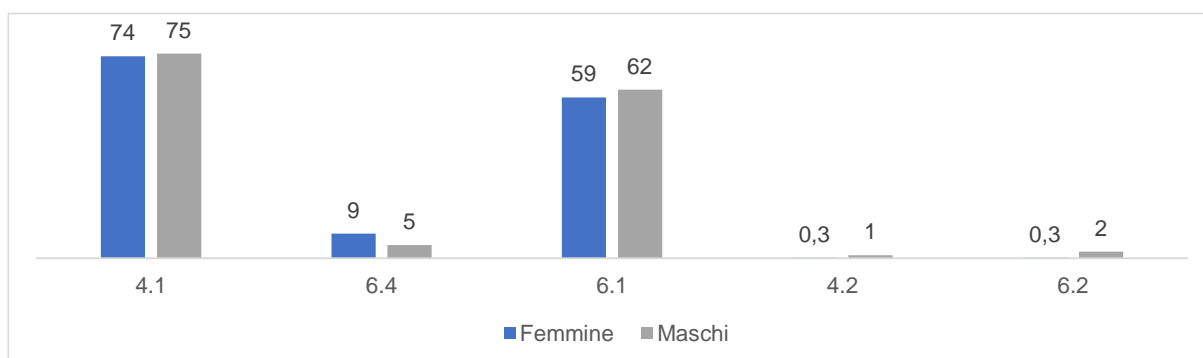
**Chart 3 - Individual firms benefiting from the RDP by UM and gender (%)**



Source: OPDB AGEA data

The percentage of beneficiaries who participated in each UM out of the total number of beneficiaries considered overall (and counted once) within each gender group and UM, as visible in the following graph, appears very similar: 74% of women implemented interventions under UM 4.1 *"Encouraging farm restructuring"* and men in 75% of cases, 59% of women implemented interventions under UM 6.1 *"Farm start-up aid for young farmers"* and men in 62% of cases, 9% of women implemented interventions under UM 6.4 *"Investment in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities"* and men in 5% of cases, and 0.3% of women implemented interventions under UM 4.2 *"Improving the integration of primary producers into the supply chain"* and 6.2 *"Start-up aid for non-agricultural activities in rural areas"* and men in 1% and 2% of cases, respectively).

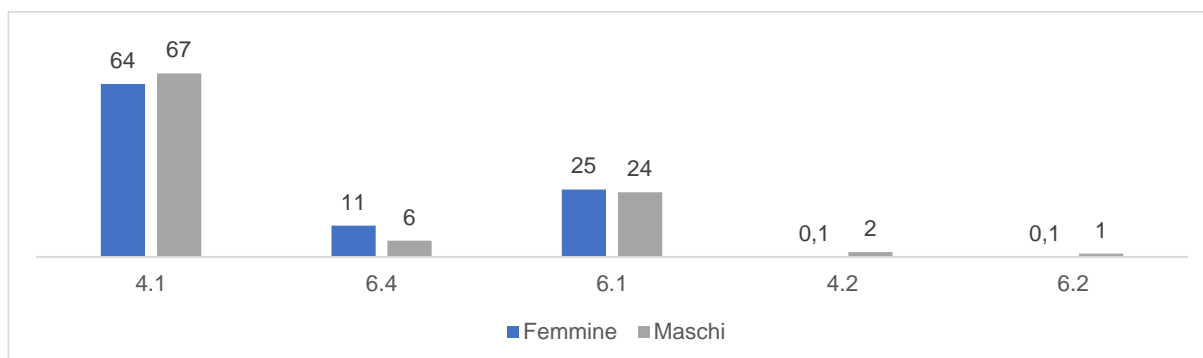
**Chart4 - Individual firms benefiting from the RDP by UM calculated in each gender group (%)**



Source: OPDB AGEA data

The amount of subsidies spent in relation to the UM of interest also appears fairly homogeneous within each of the two groups - females and males - (as visible in the following graph) and in proportion with the number of beneficiaries under each UM.

**Chart5 - Welded contributions for RDP beneficiary sole proprietorships by MS calculated in each gender group (%)**

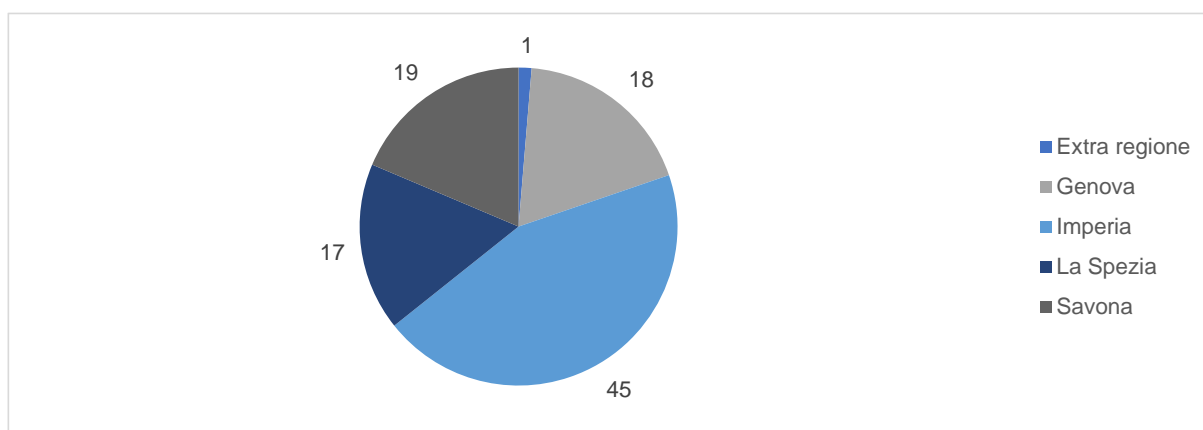


Source: OPDB AGEA data

However, some substantial differences in terms of average expenditure between the different MS emerge: the individual beneficiary firms of the RDP with female ownership spent on average more contributions in the implementation of UM 6.4 aimed at investments in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities, with an amount of about 64 thousand euros, although they accounted for only 11% of the total contributions paid by them, while the individual beneficiary firms of the RDP with male ownership spent on average more on the implementation of interventions related to UM 4.2 aimed at improving the integration of primary producers in the supply chain, with an amount of about 89 thousand euros, although, again, they accounted for only 2 percent of the total contributions paid by them.

**Regarding territorial distribution, sole proprietorships led by women who participated in the RDP are located, as for men, predominantly in the province of Imperia**, in 45% of cases, followed by the principia of Savona (19% of cases), the province of Genoa (in 18% of cases) and the province of La Spezia (17%). Only 1 percent of women-owned businesses have their registered office outside the regional borders (in the "Extra Region" graph).

**Chart6 - Female-owned PSR beneficiary sole proprietorships by province (%)**

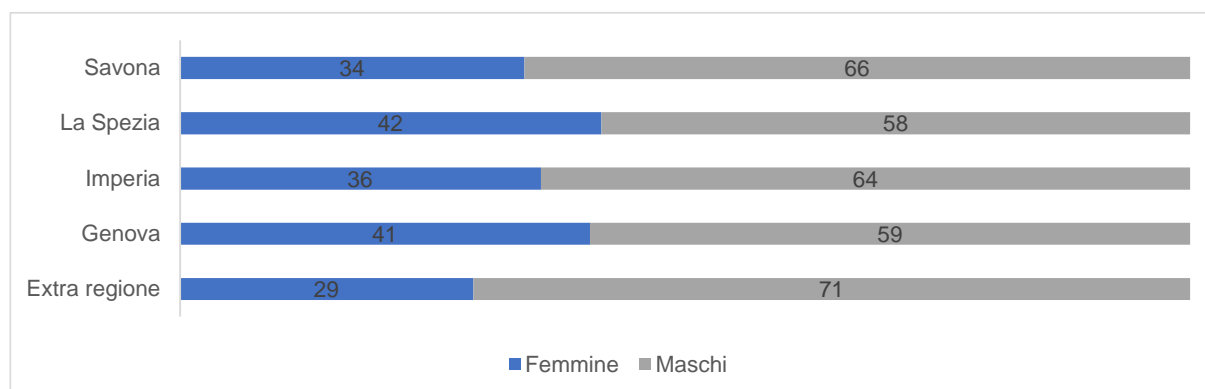




Source: OPDB AGEA data

When relating the number of women to the total number of participants for each province, always keeping in mind that 37 percent of the RDP beneficiaries considered for this analysis are women, there is a particularly strong representation of women in the provinces of La Spezia and Genoa where female beneficiaries are respectively 42 percent and 41 percent of the beneficiaries surveyed in that province.

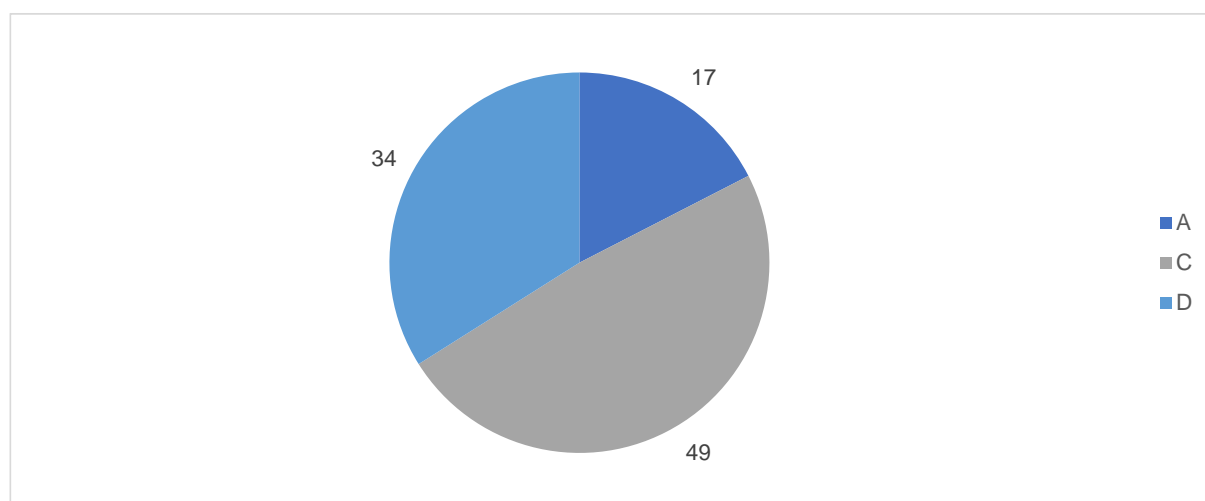
**Chart7 - Sole proprietorships benefiting from the RDP by gender and province (%)**



Source: OPDB AGEA data

In terms of RDP areas, sole proprietorships led by women beneficiaries of the Program are mainly located in RDP area C (49 percent), followed by area D (in 34 percent of cases) and area A (in 17 percent of cases).

**Chart 8 - Female-owned RDP beneficiary sole proprietorships by RDP area (%)**

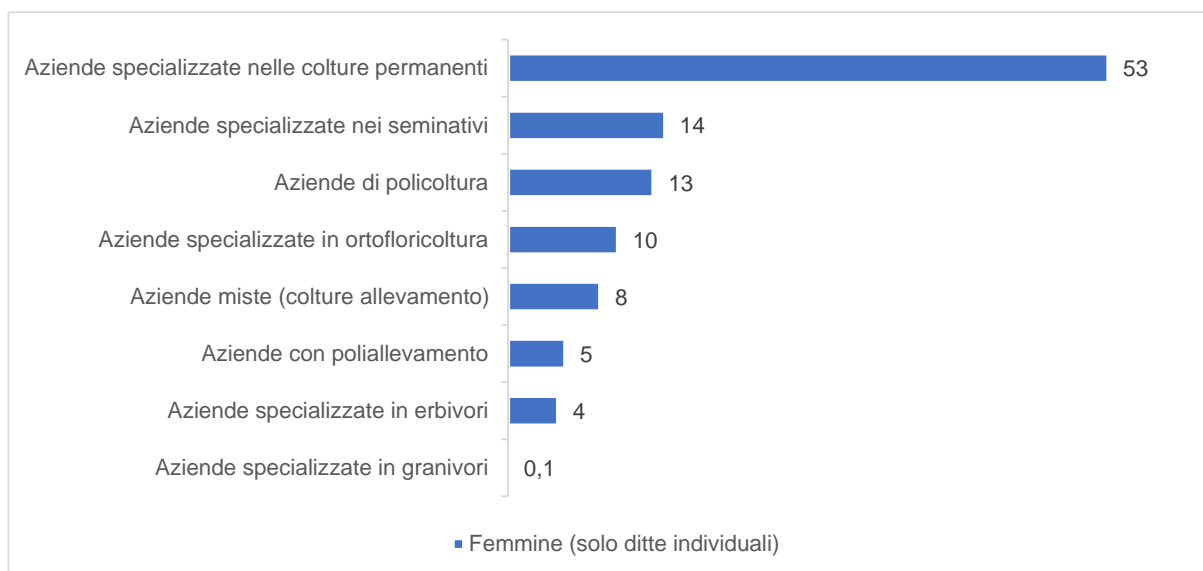


Source: OPDB AGEA data

**Looking at the percentage distribution calculated by prevailing Type of Economic Orientation (OTE) in each gender group, female-owned PSR beneficiary sole proprietorships are mostly specialized in permanent crops (in 53 percent of cases) and**

more specifically in olive growing - with a 39 percent specialization rate - followed by those specialized in arable crops (in 14 percent of cases), polyculture (in 13 percent of cases) and horticulture (in 10 percent of cases). These distributions are similar to those existing among sole proprietorships led by male RDP beneficiaries.

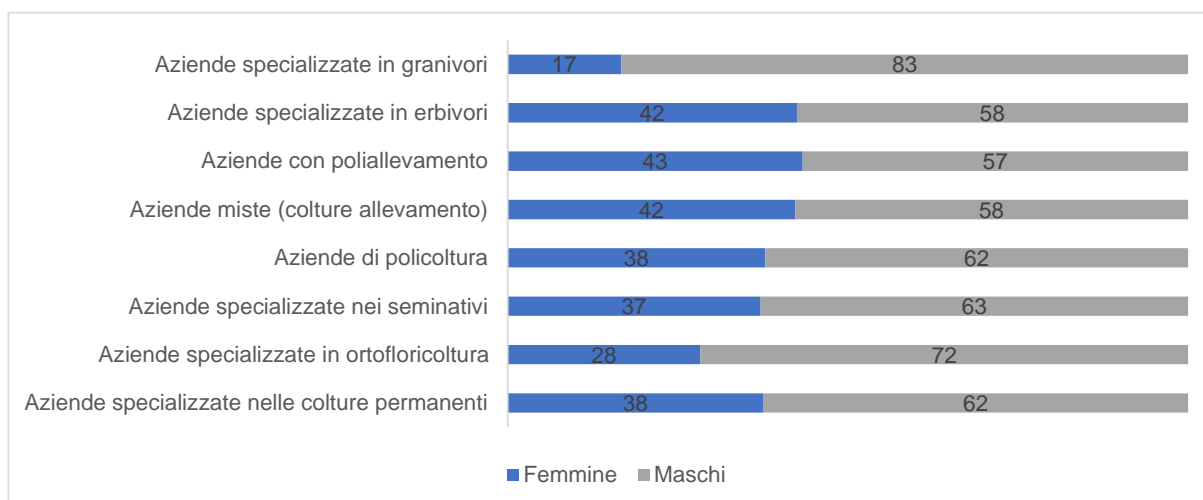
**Chart 9 - Female-owned PSR beneficiary sole proprietorships by prevailing OTE (%)**



Source: OPDB AGEA data

Regarding the female incidence in the total number of individual firms benefiting from the RDP by OTE, there is a higher than average presence (equal to 37 percent) in the sector of permanent crops and polycultures, greater than 1 percentage point, in mixed and specialized herbivore farms, greater than 5 points, and in the sector of poly-breeding, 56 points.

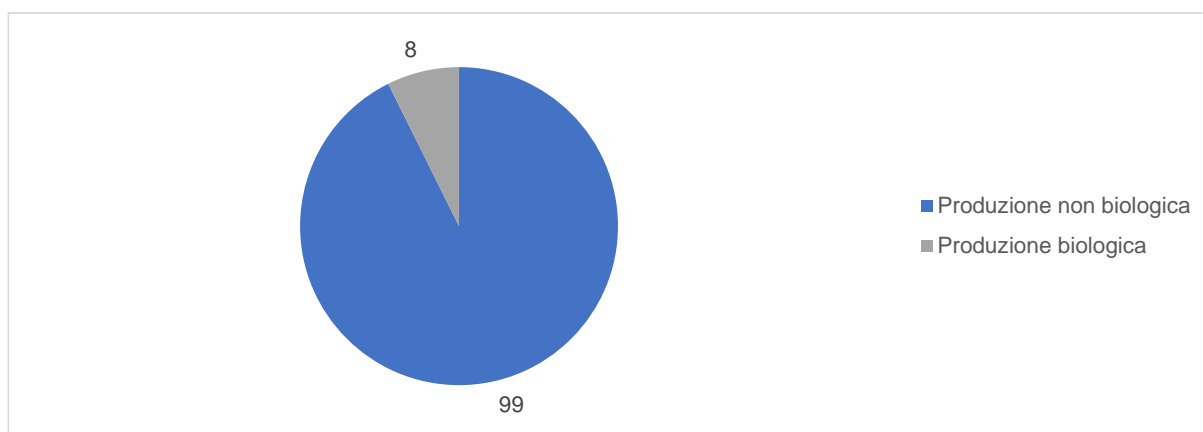
**Chart 10 - PSR beneficiary sole proprietorships by gender and prevailing OTE (%)**



Source: OPDB AGEA data

Finally, in terms of organic production among the women-owned sole proprietorships benefiting from the RDP, 8 percent produce organic, which is double the regional percentage and two percentage points higher than the same percentage calculated among the male-led sole proprietorships that benefited from the RDP. Women who produce organic and participated in the RDP account for 77 percent of women who run a farm regionally according to Eurostat data as of 2020.

**Chart11 - PSR beneficiary sole proprietorships led by women by organic production (%)**



Source: OPDB AGEA data

Regarding the female incidence in the total number of sole proprietorships benefiting from the RDP for organic production, women account for 43 percent of the total beneficiaries.

## 5. The answer to the evaluation questions

In answering the evaluation questions, the IE refers to the findings of the study on gender equality-both at the European and Italian levels-and the contributions that have emerged from the field surveys.

Below the evaluation questions and their answers are organized according to the evaluation criteria chosen upstream and linked to the main elements that contribute to the emergence of the gender perspective in the treatment of the topic within women's agricultural entrepreneurship.

### 5.1. How has the 2014-2022 RDP supported female entrepreneurship in rural areas and promoted gender equality more generally?

| Criterion        | Gender perspective   | Operational questions   |
|------------------|--|---|
| <b>Relevance</b> | Verify that the intervention meets the gender-specific needs of the target population and that its objectives are appropriate for addressing equality issues in social, economic, and cultural contexts. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How was the gender analysis of the context, sectors, problems, stakeholders, and the subsequent identification of needs considered during program design? How was gender equality integrated into the Program (Theory of Change)?</li> <li>2. Do output/outcome indicators take into account a gender perspective?</li> </ol> |

|                      |   |  |
|----------------------|---|--|
| <b>Effectiveness</b> | Assess why, how, and to what extent the intervention contributed to the achievement of equality goals and/or the reduction of gender inequality; how women and men benefited from these changes, as well as whether the intervention or aspects of the intervention led to unintended effects (positive or negative). | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Has the RDP strategy effectively supported female entrepreneurship with respect to the characteristics of the regional agricultural environment?</li> <li>2. What are the participation levels of the female entrepreneurial component in the RDP?</li> <li>3. Have stakeholders (organisations, institutions, indirect target groups) benefited from the program/intervention in terms of institutional capacity building (institutional capacity building) on Gender Mainstreaming and the development of gender competencies in their staff?</li> </ol> |
| <b>Efficiency</b>    | Assess the level and adequacy of resources used to address gender inequalities in relation to the other issues addressed by the intervention.   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the resources spent on female beneficiaries and how much do they weigh on the total RDP?</li> <li>2. Does the Program ensure equitable accessibility to different sources of funding?</li> </ol>  |

**Applying the gender lens to the 2014-2022 RDP of Regione Liguria reveals the absence of a specific reference, even lexical, to gender both within the Strategy and in the definition of intervention needs**, despite the fact that the previous sections (starting with the context analysis) deal with gender. In addition, no award criteria were included as an equity tool as provided in other RDPs. As we will see from the numbers just below, this state of affairs has not slowed down women's participation in the opportunities of the Program: **there are 4,142 farms led by women surveyed by ISTAT or 33.4 percent of the total number of farms in Liguria** (a percentage higher than the national average of 31.5 percent) **of these as many as 49 percent<sup>12</sup> are beneficiaries of the RDP as of 12/31/2023 (effectiveness criterion). The criteria of relevance and effectiveness are therefore met** through the gender reinterpretation of the individual sub-measures of interest, which has allowed to bring out the contribution, albeit indirect, offered by the Program to women's entrepreneurial development. Indeed, within the objectives of the sub-measures, there are clear references to the desire to train specific entrepreneurial figures for diversification - a sector where 47 percent of the conductors are women - and to fill the training/information gaps of female conductors - as seen female entrepreneurs register a gap in specialized agricultural qualifications (diploma or degree) compared to men.

**Again with reference to the criterion of effectiveness, as anticipated in the introduction, the enhancement of female entrepreneurship should be read within a broader strategy of promoting the sustainable economic development of rural areas. From the cross-analysis of the Program's monitoring data as of 12/31/2023 and data from the 7th ISTAT Census referring to 2020, there are a total of 2,050 female beneficiaries in the legal form of sole proprietorships, and many are "young women"** (in 2020, women under 41 years of age accounted for 21% of RDP beneficiaries). This is a satisfactory result that rewards the transversality of the choices made by the Program: the Ligurian female entrepreneurial

<sup>12</sup> According to Istat's latest agricultural census data dating back to the year 2020

initiative is supported by the tout-court recognition of the social, economic/employment role accorded to the regional agricultural sector.

**The sole proprietorships of women beneficiaries of the RDP are mainly located in RDP areas C (in 31 percent of cases):** these are likely to be small farms - from ISTAT data, most of the farms headed by women are in the 0-2 ha class - with a production orientation specialized in olive growing. The percentage of women growing organically is very large (about 8 percent) compared to the overall regional average of farms led by women.

The **efficiency criterion** can be associated with the resources disbursed. With regard to structural measures, despite an overall average expenditure of about 5 thousand euros less than men per single investment, the results regarding female participation can **also** be said to be satisfactory **in light of the lack of gender-specific reward criteria as highlighted just above. This highlights the lack of formal limitations to accessing Program opportunities:** the female agricultural entrepreneurs interviewed share their choices either with the reference technician or with their professional organisation but do not shy away from independently reading a call for funding.

The following section will also highlight the importance of the Institutional Communication carried out by RL on the web pages dedicated to the RDP and closely related to the issue of access to information.

## 5.2. What are the perceptions on the topic of women's entrepreneurship in agriculture and the opportunities provided by the RDP, gender equality issues in rural areas, from the survey conducted by RL and targeting the general public?

| Criterion         | Gender perspective  | Operational questions  |
|-------------------|---|--|
| <b>Visibility</b> | Assess the adequacy of knowledge on issues of gender equality in agriculture and rural areas, as well as of the RDP's contribution to women's entrepreneurship. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>To what extent are perceptions of gender mainstreaming and RDP action consistent with the relevant socioeconomic and programmatic context?</i></li> <li><i>What differences in the perceptions of different target audiences?</i></li> </ol> |

For the response to this evaluative question, the views of 3 different target groups were collected: the general public, reached through the survey carried out by RL, women beneficiaries of the RDP, and professional representatives reached through direct surveys. The different results are presented below: as repeated several times, these are views that are as partial as they are rich in insights with respect to gender mainstreaming. **The perceptions collected were in fact compared with real data by going to verify how far the "perceived" deviates from the real on the issue of gender.**

Beginning with the results of the survey - in which a total of 74 people took part, with 60 percent being women and the majority coming from the agricultural sector: - in general, **"60 percent of the women respondents believe that there are no equal opportunities between men and women in the world of agricultural entrepreneurship** (men of this same opinion are 21

percent). ***In contrast, 54% of men have the perception of substantial equality***" However, both men and women think, according to another question, that women have more difficulties in dealing with the following aspects: access to credit, lack of services, and recognition by the relevant community. All these 3 aspects will be confirmed by the respondents who reflect that, precisely these 3 aspects, could be related to a traditional view of women's role both in agriculture and within the family, which represents a fundamental point of reference.

Still on the topic of labor, survey respondents underestimate a whole range of issues: first, there is a mismatch between women in agriculture and their role as entrepreneurs/managers. Respondents think that women in the sector are less than 20 percent while they not only make up 35 percent of the total workforce in agriculture but also represent 33 percent of farm managers in Liguria. Participation is also underestimated with respect to participation in the central sub-measures of the Program, but the idea that associates female entrepreneurs with running agritourism and/or multifunctional farms would seem to be emerging. Here the Professional Organisations urge not to generalize: the IE grasps this aspect with interest, sharing the desire to give specific boundaries to each issue to be addressed. A further interesting aspect is the scant recognition of women in a managerial role. This position, in the VI's opinion, could be influenced by rather generalized beliefs ranging from a lack of financial education for women, a schooling not related to economic and/or technical subjects, a lower propensity for risk, or even, much more trivially, by the fact that given the small size of the company, business management activity is not particularly expensive. However, the self-description of female entrepreneurs is quite different. The latter, in fact, have a lucid and clear vision of their own potential and their role within the companies they lead--mainly on their own--including administrative activities. They know perfectly well their own potential and that of the company. Consequently, they choose to move wisely with respect to the paths to be taken for business development through investments. Remaining on the profile of the female respondents, they were asked to express an opinion with respect to the advantages related to the premium when selecting applications for support to compensate for the difficulties in terms of initial conditions of access ("fewer chances" related to being a woman for cultural, social reasons, such as the period of maternity, breastfeeding, greater domestic workload, etc.): again, the premium is not seen as a priority element unlike, as mentioned above, the lack of services or difficulties in accessing credit. **Essentially, then, there is a demand for emergence, visibility and recognition that comes from the awareness of one's role in agriculture that respondents intend to pursue with resourcefulness and determination.**

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## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

**This in-depth evaluation contributed to the emergence of useful evidence to answer the two main evaluation questions:** how has the Liguria RDP 2014-2022 supported women's entrepreneurship in rural areas and, more generally, promoted gender equality? What are the perceptions on the topic of women's entrepreneurship in agriculture and the opportunities provided by the RDP, on gender equality issues in rural areas, from the survey conducted by RL and addressed to the general public?

**Reconstructing the role of the Rural Development Program 2014-2022 and women's perception of their working environment, their entrepreneurial weight in the agricultural fabric contributes to the recognition of the space they occupy within society.** Beyond a certain stereotypical and traditional view of women within the family - which would seem to make them predominantly bear the burden of family care - there emerges a progressive awareness of the process of emancipation thanks to work on the farm where women become entrepreneurs acquiring more and more professionalism and autonomy - economic and social - regardless of the size and potential of the farm.

Thanks to the contribution of the women entrepreneurs who participated in this survey by telling not only their own stories but also experiences - direct or indirect - of discrimination and success, some general conclusions are included below. At the outset, it should be emphasized, as is evident from some of the results that emerged, a change especially within social and cultural perspectives cannot be addressed by rural development policies alone, but a systemic action that enhances a joint action of the different tools available must be promoted. **Such systemic action may focus, in the judgment of the IE, on some specific issues that emerged more frequently during the interviews - presence/absence of services, territorial marketing, etc. - and which are set out below.**

So, wanting to trigger a pathway of institutional political awareness with respect to gender mainstreaming, in addition to strengthening moments of sharing, exchange of information with other actors dealing with gender policies, a reflection could be initiated on the elements listed below:

1. For the future, the IA would like the Programmer to be able to foresee in the update of the 2023-2027 Program and its Evaluation Plan additional surveys and in-depth studies (e.g., *"evaluation from a gender+ perspective"*) also in synergy with other Programs. This path, as with all other policies, proves all the more useful also in order to understand present or new, emerging needs and define clear strategies for intervention. It involves, among other things, intervening wherever possible in **addressing the collection, management and storage of gender disaggregated data beyond the regulatory requirements related to EAFRD monitoring**. It would, in effect, be a matter of following up on the main recommendations of the **Court of Auditors' Special Report on Gender Equality (2021)**, which point out that improving gender analysis goes through the systematic repetition of surveys, through the implementation of qualitative-quantitative insights, and through the collection of statistical data. These steps are essential for the construction of regional benchmarking in order to be able to assess the progress of a policy or interventions dedicated to gender by including **gender-sensitive indicators** where possible-as, moreover, desired within the 2014-2022 RDP to record the entry of young women entrepreneurs. Strengthening the monitoring system and reiterating moments of reflection over time also allows for the improvement of the **Evaluation function with a view to capacity building within the administration**.
2. **Although it does not fall within the scope of actions on which the MA of the Program can act directly, it might be appropriate to put in place a shared and collaborative**



system of decision-making by the various MAs responsible for the other EU and/or national funds insisting on the territory. This would be a matter of following up on the recommendation that initiatives to make the provision of key services - personal, care, economic, etc. - effectively synergistic and complementary. - in rural areas and, with specific attention, in marginal areas (where the RDP also intervenes with the Leader approach and where other integrated policies such as SNAI intervene). As highlighted by all stakeholders, the beauty and naturalness of the Ligurian territory "clashes" with the demands of daily life: the main services are not guaranteed equally among Ligurian citizens. 54.2% of the population lives in Genoa but the remaining part has to ensure the maintenance of the territories, communities, traditions, and inland productions where, however, access to essential services - school, hospitals, etc. - is difficult. - or digital. The burden of family care - for example, of preschool children - is managed within the "extended" farm family, often without the possibility of using essential services that should be guaranteed so that communities can live in dignity in rural areas.

**This conclusion is also meant to include the proper stimulus aimed at discussing the issue of** deseasonalized and sustainable **tourism** more aimed at inland accommodations often left out-in the opinion of the interviewees-from more targeted territorial marketing policies.

3. **Finally, the continuation of investigations such as quantitative on the subject could broaden the range of issues worthy of further study. The first could be aimed precisely at the advisability of providing - or not - a specific reward criterion for the female gender. Aware of the need to curb the opportunistic behaviors already recorded in the past especially in the area of generational turnover, the Programmer could try to understand whether there is room to stimulate women's participation in the various opportunities of the Program** by building a concrete incentive for women's businesses in agriculture even outside the sectors typically ascribed to her (ag, social/educational initiatives), An additional opportunity could help bridge specific disadvantages related to objective physical differences in field work and could foster the promotion, the visibility of women's role in the economic fabric beyond more generalized cultural and social conditioning (e.g. motherhood, child and elder care, etc.).

**The issue of propensity to invest in innovation could also be explored further:** are women more or less likely to invest in innovation? Is the low propensity dictated by small company size or lack of financial education? Conversely, are the women who invest, the ones-as revealed in some interviews-ready to explore the full development potential of their companies (however, from a prudent perspective)? **In addition to the issue of the propensity for innovation and investment in general, among others, the IE suggests exploring the dimensions of the social farming phenomenon in the Liguria Region. Strengthening the range of services offered by social agriculture farms would meet the needs of those who receive such services** (e.g., inclusion of non-EU persons, disadvantaged individuals, people embarking on a path of recovery or rehabilitation, etc.) **and at the same time would benefit the farms themselves, which would thus be able, for example, to solve at least in part widespread problems such as labor shortages.** This aspect, from the words of the interviewees, would seem to be rather central given the experiences of several women entrepreneurs within social agriculture projects and/or active

reintegration into work, experiences that are suggested to be given **visibility** so that they can become common heritage for those who work in certain contexts and can glimpse the benefits. **The data on the average expenditure allocated to UM 6.4, which are higher by women** (amounting to about 64 thousand euros compared to about 43 thousand euros for UM 4.1) than the average resources disbursed on the other UM, **also** show a certain interest in initiatives not only related to farm hospitality but also towards the other spending options (educational farms, care services, creation of workshops for non-agricultural products).

In order to investigate the possible causes of the gender discrepancies between average grants awarded and average grants paid, it is considered useful to suggest an in-depth study of the spending progress of interventions supported under the structural measures (cf. "Thematic Report: Structural Measures Expenditure Progress Analysis") to see whether these discrepancies stem from a greater difficulty for women in sustaining project implementation, for example by analyzing the figure of revocations, waivers and extensions, from which it might follow that implementation progress should be monitored in order to deal with any problems in a timely manner.

Finally, below are the main concluding remarks and recommendations in the form of a "Logbook."

| Theme                           | Conclusions  | Recommendations   |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Main elements of context</b> | <p>Women's labor participation in Liguria has been increasing since the last census survey. As of 2023, the activity rate for women is 65% (-14 percentage points compared to the Ligurian male rate, -5 percentage points compared to the average European female rate, and +7 percentage points compared to the average Italian female rate), the employment rate is 60% (-15 percentage points compared to the Ligurian male rate, -8 percentage points compared to the average European female rate and +6 percentage points compared to the average Italian female rate) and the unemployment rate is 8 percent (+3 percentage points compared to the Ligurian male rate, +1 percentage points compared to the average European female rate and -1 percentage points compared to the average Italian female rate). Women in Liguria are employed 81 percent of the time as salaried workers (+9 percentage points compared to the Ligurian male average incidence), 84 percent of the time with a permanent contract (-4 percentage points compared to the Ligurian male average incidence) and full-time (-63 percentage points compared to the Ligurian male average incidence). In terms of income, women in Liguria earn 72 percent of what men earn (-3 percentage points compared to the Italian average).</p> <p>Women account for 26.5 percent of total sole proprietors (-0.2 percent compared to the national average).</p> <p>Ligurian women's employment is concentrated in public administration, defense, education, health</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With reference to 2023-2027 programming (and likely post-2027 programming), this evaluation report could represent the beginning of an institutional path to be used systematically to inform decision makers about what is happening <i>in practice</i> with regard to gender mainstreaming. Indeed, to avoid the obsolescence of the policies that are proposed, the ECA calls for this issue to be constantly manned to avoid stereotypical or outdated views. In this direction, wide-ranging policies - in which the different tools available can operate in a coordinated and synergistic manner - defined on the basis of up-to-date information and data and whose results can be subject to monitoring and evaluation, could be promoted.</li> <li>This is accompanied by the issues of recognizing and promoting substantive as well as formal equality: that is, the need to leverage a positive culture of gender capable of enhancing its qualities. Training/information as well as capacity building actions that can be activated within the administration go in this direction.</li> <li>As can be seen from the data, it is, in essence, a matter of reasoning about the opportunities to be offered to the 35 percent of the agricultural workforce and the 4,142 farm leaders surveyed in the Liguria Region. From this perspective, the gender issue should be properly included not necessarily in "inclusive" policies, but rather within effective territorial and economic development</li> </ul> |

| Theme | Conclusions  | Recommendations  |
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|       | <p>and welfare (in 31 percent of cases) and wholesale trade (in 28 percent of cases). Only 1 percent of women in Liguria are employed in agriculture (2.4 percent for the national average).</p> <p>There are 4,142 female heads of farms in Liguria, or 33.4 percent of total heads of farms in the region. (+1.9 compared to the national average. ISTAT data, 2020).</p> <p>Women farm managers are mainly over 65 years old (38 percent, -1 percent compared to the male figure, -6 percentage points compared to the Italian average and -2 percent compared to the European average).</p> <p>Women are more educated than men: the percentage of female business leaders holding a bachelor's degree in Liguria is 12 percent, while the percentage of men holding a bachelor's degree is 9 percent of men. Nevertheless, women have a lower propensity to obtain a degree, of any level, in agriculture.</p> <p>In terms of business characteristics, 99 percent of farms run by women in Liguria are sole proprietorships (+1 percentage point above the male average and in line with the Italian and European female average).</p> <p>In line with the male average, women farm managers are concentrated more in the province of Imperia, followed by the province of Savona, the province of Genoa, and the province of La Spezia.</p> <p>The percentage of women-led organic farms producing organically - out of the total number of women-led farms is 4% (+1% compared to the men's average, -2% compared to the Italian</p> | <p>policies capable of enhancing the potential represented by women.</p> |

| Theme   | Conclusions  | Recommendations  |
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|   | <p>average and +2% compared to the European average - values calculated with same intra-group comparison).</p> <p>The percentage of women who lead a farm in which there is also agritourism activity is higher than the Italian average by almost 14 percentage points (47.7 percent versus 34 percent for the Italian average).</p> <p>The relative majority of farms led by women, or 32 percent, specialize in the olive sector (+ 2 percent and +1 percent compared to the Italian average and + 23 percent compared to the European average).</p> <p>Regarding UAA, 70% of farms led by women have a UAA between 0 and 2 hectares (+3% compared to the male figure, +28% compared to the Italian figure and +22% compared to the European figure).</p> <p>Businesses led by women have a small economic size and mainly with less than 8 thousand euros (+1% compared to the male average, +5% compared to the Italian average and -21% compared to the European average).</p> |  |
| <b>Women's participation in the 2014-2022 RDP Liguria Region.</b> | <p>Women who participated in the RDP, in the legal form of sole proprietorships number 2,050 and account for 37 percent of all RDP beneficiaries and have spent resources amounting to about 42 million euros, or about 31 percent of the total resources spent for all sole proprietorships benefiting from the RDP.</p> <p>Although women sole proprietors benefiting from the RDP during the 2014-2022 Programming of the Liguria Region account for 37 percent of the total</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Check whether there are any elements of difficulty for women accessing the Program in the implementation of projects, for example, by analyzing the data of revocations, waivers and extensions and their causes.</li> <li>▪ Beyond the results of this evaluation, check whether there are appropriate conditions to incentivize investment by women-led enterprises (e.g. SM 4.1) by providing specific rewards.</li> </ul> |

| Theme | Conclusions  | Recommendations |
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|       | <p>RDP beneficiaries, the expenditure disbursed for related interventions is proportionately lower than their participation in the Program as 31 percent of the total contributions spent.</p> <p>Considering only structural measures, the same figures as above are 36 percent and 31 percent, respectively.</p> <p>The latter percentage widens, albeit by only one percentage point, when considering the grants awarded: women were granted 32 percent of the approved grants. In terms of average contribution granted the male one is always higher than the female one, by 4 thousand euros, and even more so the average one spent, where the male one exceeds the female one by about 5 thousand euros.</p> <p>Looking, however, at individual UM, the percentage of women is higher, by 10 percentage points, than the overall average (at 37 percent) only in the case of UM 6.4 "Investment in the creation and development of non-agricultural activities," women being 47 percent of the beneficiaries.</p> <p>Looking at the characteristics of the sole proprietorships run by women beneficiaries of the 2014-2022 RDP of the Liguria Region, women RDP beneficiaries were less than 41 in 21 percent of cases (in the year 2020), concentrated mainly in the province of Imperia in 45 percent of cases and located mainly in RDP Area C (49 percent), and specialized more in olive growing (in 39 percent of cases) and organic production in 8 percent of cases.</p> |                 |

| Theme   | Conclusions  | Recommendations  |
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| <p><b>How has the RDP supported female entrepreneurship in rural areas and promoted gender equality (relevance, effectiveness and efficiency)</b></p> | <p>Applying the gender lens to Regione Liguria's RDP 2014-2022 reveals the absence of a specific reference, even lexical, to gender both within the Strategy and in the definition of intervention needs. The use of reward criteria is absent; however, it emerges that 49% of farms surveyed by ISTAT that are run by women are also beneficiaries of at least one measure of the Program (as of 12/31/2023). Of these, 21% are young female entrepreneurs under 40.</p> <p>The individual intervention measures, each for its specificity, seeks to contribute to an aspect that characterizes women's farms (e.g., territorial marginality, the need for specific training, etc.). It is therefore as much an indirect as a "broad spectrum" contribution that rewards the transversality of the choices made toward the agricultural system tout-court.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The IE considers the Program's performance in attracting female entrepreneurial participation present in the Ligurian territory to be satisfactory.</li> <li>▪ However, as is most clearly noted in the analysis of direct survey results, requirement 20 "intervenes in favor of rural areas, as areas at high risk of exclusion, due to the non-homogeneous distribution of services and the fragility of the local economy" reported as the one most pertinent to the gender theme, should be pursued with greater determination, including with regard to gender mainstreaming. The issue of improving public services and infrastructure, in fact, is still described in all its criticality especially with regard to aspects of travel and work-life balance.</li> <li>▪ Further qualitative-quantitative insights on the beneficiaries of the Program, could be made by expanding the scope of the survey to the gender of the legal representative (information inferable from OPDB AGEA). Clearly, for RL, this is a limitation dictated by the structural lack of data not collected by the National PO. It should be the latter which, on the other hand, should collect the gender-disaggregated data (according to Infocamere's definition of women's enterprise) in the case of non-individual farms going beyond the regulatory obligations of reporting .</li> <li>▪ Regarding, on the other hand, the possible introduction of a reward criterion, this could be a choice to be made following further investigation. In the case this could operate as part of a broader political/institutional strategy that wants to support</li> </ul> |



| Theme  | Conclusions  | Recommendations   |
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|  |  | <p>one territory/area rather than another, one sector rather than another on the basis of new evidence or one category of beneficiaries rather than another (new entrants to agriculture?).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Here, however, the IE would like to point out that, usually, reward scores are provided to make up for a disadvantage specific to the intended target (women in our case). Or also, reward scores are introduced to incentivize a certain type of planning (e.g., modernization on a certain strategic sector).</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Perceptions on the topic of women's entrepreneurship and gender equality in agriculture and the opportunities provided by the RDP (visibility criterion)</b></p> | <p>The results of the survey conducted by RL in which a total of 74 people participated, 60 percent of whom were women, revealed a certain discrepancy between the perception of women in agriculture (particularly the weight of farms led by women) and the contextual data or actual participation in the RDP. In particular, participation in the Program within the pivotal measures (4.1 and 6.1) is underestimated.</p> <p>Instead, the main perceived problems for female entrepreneurship coincide with those represented by female entrepreneurs surveyed and PTs, which are inherent in access to credit and lack of work-life balance services.</p> <p>Women entrepreneurs, on the other hand, are aware of their role and potential and, despite accepting rather traditional roles within the family, are leading their businesses independently.</p> <p>In this they are supported by the Professional Organisations, which, far from wanting to stereotype the view of women in agriculture (e.g., by relegating it to the trinomial "woman-</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the first instance, the IE wishes to highlight the positive and proactive role of institutional communication, which, in grasping the growing importance of the gender mainstream, initiated an "exploratory" initiative-the survey launched toward the general public in December 2023-that later laid the groundwork for a true vertical deepening on the issue.</li> </ul> <p>It is therefore intended, in general, to highlight the attention of the MA: precisely in order to nurture the "visibility" criterion, it will be important over time to provide space for the theme within the political/institutional debate. In fact, the theme of gender equality and non-discrimination can still be nurtured by informed choices: indeed, it is crucial that these themes are clearly identifiable with respect to the overall action of rural development policies. It is also appropriate to keep gender-related initiatives separate from those specific to other Program targets (such as, for example, youth) despite the cross-cutting nature of some</p> |

| Theme | Conclusions  | Recommendations   |
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|       | <p>diversification-multifunctionality"), want to push the issue of visibility and recognition out of the gender issue but across the board for a renewal of agriculture.</p> | <p>issues/needs (the presence/absence of services, access to credit, etc.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ With respect to the results of the direct surveys, it is clear that there is a need to move steps forward between formal and substantive equality, thus passing through a real recognition of the entrepreneurial role of women in agriculture, which can be promoted through awareness-raising and information actions. In a more targeted way, it is therefore suggested that the MA assume the repetition of the survey both among the population and among farms/RDP beneficiaries. In the latter case, professional organisations could also contribute by sharing specific address books. Other communication campaign initiatives and/or specific awareness/information meetings could also arise from these activities.</li> </ul> |

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## **Annex I - Survey instruments**

The objective of the in-depth thematic study entitled "*Equal Opportunities and Women's Agricultural Entrepreneurship in the RDP 2014-2022 Liguria*" is to reconstruct perceptions related to equal opportunities and the topic of women's entrepreneurship in agriculture by analyzing, in general terms, how the RDP 2014-2022 has supported women's entrepreneurship in different territories.

The main dimensions of analysis to link and contextualize the issue of gender to rural development were explored through the following questions broken down by categories of respondents

### **Interview track Agricultural entrepreneur**

- A. The entrepreneurial project: account of the career path and the investment made
  1. Tell us about your experience: did your family of origin already work in the industry? When did you start your profession? What is your educational/professional background?
  2. Can you tell us about the birth of the project implemented at the company in terms of initial objectives, planned interventions, results obtained, etc.? What do you think were the most successful aspects or elements of the intervention and the results it is producing (also with respect to the sector, supply chain and/or territory of reference)?
- B. The main considerations of women farmers on gender equality in agriculture based on their own experience and/or with reference to the context in which they operate
  3. What do you think is the profile of Ligurian women agricultural entrepreneurs (*Do they invest? Where do they invest? With what capital? Etc.*). Has this changed over time?
  4. How would you describe the main needs of Ligurian women entrepreneurs in agriculture and/or rural areas? What is your direct experience? (*e.g., is there an issue of facilitating work-life balance time? In your opinion, do women express--or should they express--a greater propensity for aggregation, cooperation, and networking to address specific professional and/or work-life needs?*)
  5. What are the opportunities and what are the main obstacles to women's entrepreneurial development in the Liguria Region, and what advice would you give to women who intend to become agricultural entrepreneurs? (*e.g., have you experienced particular difficulties in accessing credit? And in accessing RDP calls for proposals?*)
  6. In this context, what merits does the RDP have and what more can Region Liguria do in rural development in this new programming phase? What is your position regarding premium as a gender equity tool?
- C. The role of professional organisations and the recognition of the external environment
  7. Do you recognize an active role for Professional Organisations in promoting women's entrepreneurship and, more generally, gender equality in rural development?

8. Do you have a perception that it is difficult, as a woman, to be recognized by the relevant community?

#### **Interview track Professional organisations**

1. In a nutshell, what is the profile of Ligurian women agricultural entrepreneurs (do they invest? Where do they invest? With what capital? Etc.) How has this profile changed over time?
2. Why do you think women entrepreneurs have a greater propensity for multifunctionality and diversification?
3. What are the opportunities and what are the main obstacles to women's entrepreneurial development in Liguria Region? *Answer also considering the presence and distribution of services in the area and multifunctionality*
4. What are the opportunities that could come from investing in more than just maritime tourism and seasonal adjustment?
5. What contribution did the 2014-2022 RDP make to gender equality, and what other opportunities were missed and could be better attended to in the 2023-2027 period with CSR? In your opinion, is the premium is a tool to be considered for the new programming?
6. With the above in mind, what is the role of trade associations in promoting gender equality in rural development?
7. Compared to past programmatic experiences that have not had much follow-up (e.g., ISMEA's Women in the Field, former UM 2.2 replacement services, Women in Agriculture thematic subprograms) what would you recover? Which one has been significantly underestimated? What do you think of More Enterprise (low-interest loans)?