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# JOURNAL OF RURAL COOPERATION



Centre international de recherches sur les communautés coopératives rurales  
International Research Centre on Rural Cooperative Communities

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CIRCOM, International Research Centre on Rural Cooperative Communities was established in September 1965 in Paris.

The purpose of the Centre is to provide a framework for investigations and research on problems concerning rural cooperative communities and publication of the results, to coordinate the exchange of information on current research projects and published works, and to encourage the organization of symposia on the problems of cooperative rural communities, as well as the exchange of experts between different countries.

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# **Farm Women's New Vocational Activities: Prospects and Problems of Women's Cooperatives and Small On-Farm Businesses in Greece**

*by*

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## **Abstract**

Farm women's pluriactivity is nowadays estimated as a strategic means of upgrading their economic and social position at the farm and the local society's level and of preserving environmental and cultural heterogeneity in rural areas. This paper deals with women's new roles in agro-tourist and handicraft cooperatives as well as in small self-owned on-farm businesses in rural Greece. The aim of the paper is to give a picture of women's participation and attitudes towards these new activities and to investigate the problems and perspectives of these activities to secure a professional identity for farm women. We use data collected on the basis of personal questionnaires of 1,459 farm women who participated in vocational training programs implemented by the Rural Extension Home Economics Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture. The investigation pointed out that women are interested in these jobs. But cooperation as well as activities in personal small businesses face many problems. Till now they cannot manage to offer a stable and sufficient income so as to operate as a serious alternative solution to their employment problem and to be attractive for young women (their daughters) to enter these jobs.

## **Introduction**

The rearrangement of the organization and social distribution of labor in the rural area, caused by the productionist system of the post-war era, shrunk the range of traditional occupations that have been substituted by machinery and monopolized by men. Farm women became almost invisible in the agricultural production sector.

In an area dominated by role standards and leisure alternatives mainly for men (Dahlstrom, 1996), farm women remain an unexploited labor source and tend to lose their professional status. At the same time the particular structure of labor in the family farm, resulting from the family relationships, supports the patriarchal forms of the rural household (Stratigaki, 1988; Berlan-Darque, 1988).

The empowerment of farm women position passes through their own employment, by obtaining a vocational identity and occupational consolidation. One way to this end is pluriactivity.

The globalization of economy in the recent years stimulates the homogenization of production and culture internationally, as well as the convergence of particularities of each nation-state or area (Bonnano, 1992; Munton, 1992). It also causes a degradation of the traditional labor model, calling for flexibility, part-time work, telework, etc., forms that will play an increasingly important role in the future labor regime. In this framework, solutions should be found at a local level, through the utilization of endogenous resources and the development of non-agricultural activities. The European countries and mainly the southern regions still preserve a significant environmental and cultural diversity, which contributes largely to the development of new employment opportunities out of the urban congested areas (Whatmore, 1994). Hopes are placed on services and mainly those provided for the leisure time of people who live in cities.

In this new context, farm women play a fundamental role. New forms of women's labor are introduced in the countryside, so that their informal tasks take the form of vocational activities, this promoting their exceptional abilities to convert the rural household works into market activities, to develop personal relations and to be sensitive in issues concerning nutrition and environmental protection (Bock, 1994; O'Hara, 1994.).

The promotion of individual or collective initiatives to develop small scale enterprises in the mild tourism sector (mainly tourism in the farm), the construction and sale of handicrafts, in combination with the conservation of the country's cultural heritage, the production of quality products using traditional practices as well as organic farming, constitute the main expressions of vocational activities of farm women in new roles (Ventura, 1994). The advantage of these jobs is that they are in conformity with the new working conditions, *i.e.* part-time jobs, self-employment and keep pace with the women's overall commitments to the family farm and the difficulties that have to be faced in the off-farm labor market, *i.e.*, insufficient jobs, distance and difficulties of transport, inadequate support services and facilities, etc. (Braithwaite, 1994).

Incorporation of women into the market, not only in terms of quantity but also better quality, is improved through education and training. In Greece, training of farm women in home-handicraft activities, with the purpose of supporting family incomes, developing their intellectual and cultural level, as well as strengthening their self-confidence started in the 1950s, when the Agricultural Extension Service was introduced in the Ministry of Agriculture. Since then, the first women's cooperatives have been established, some of which do not exist any more, while others have been established in the meantime. However just a few (about 10) still operated in

the beginning of the previous decade. Since the 1980s, there has been a European Community awareness of women's issues, with the provision of vocational training aiming at the creation of small-scale home industries and artisan enterprises in agro-tourism either on a cooperative or individual basis. In addition, vocational training has been provided for women in sectors of agricultural production. In Greece the interest in farm women issues have been expressed since the mid 1980s with the establishment of the agro-tourist cooperatives of Petra in the island Lesvos (Giagou and Apostolopoulos, 1996). Today there are 74 women's cooperatives registered, with over a thousand members in total. Out of them 10 are agro-tourist with a capacity of 660 beds. Their functioning is under research. At a country level there are also 960 farmholdings engaged in agro-tourism, with 4,327 rooms to rent and 10,025 beds. The number of these farmholdings is increasing as it passed from 515 in 1993 to 815 in 1996 and to almost a thousand in 1999. Farm women have the legal responsibility of 30 percent of these. In this study we will make an attempt to give an overall view of the additional farm women's employment, to find out their attitude towards these new roles, to point out eventual problems and look into the prospects to ensure an alternative employment for farm women.

### **Rearranging farm women's new roles**

The scientification of agriculture and its attachment to the agro-industrial chain have reorganized family work in the proceedings of production. Traditional jobs, ever since in women's domain, have been mechanized and new jobs that acquire new skills have appeared. Scientification research and empirical observation underline the fact of agricultural masculinization (Almås and Haugen, 1988 cited by O'Hara, 1994; Stratigaki, 1988; Gidarakou, 1990). In the last decades in Greece, the gap between men's and women's labor force in agriculture is widening. The rate "women/men" active in agriculture passed from 1:1.5 in 1961 to 1:2.3 in 1981 and 1:2.8 in 1991 (Greek National Statistical Service), while today in the countryside there is a remarkable shortage of women aged 20-29 years old in relation to men (Greek National Statistical Service). Agriculture represented the 65 percent of the women's labor force in 1961 and this proportion was down to 30 percent in 1981 and to 15 percent in 1991 (Greek Official Counts of Population). However, a great number of farm spouses, even not registered as farmers in the official statistics, are often involved in several farming tasks helping their husbands, doing manual work, supporting the farm with secretarial work, etc. (Gasson and Errington, 1993). A field study in Greece reveals that 69 percent of farm women say that they have agriculture as their main occupation, but 92 percent say that they are involved in farming tasks regularly or occasionally (Gidarakou, 1996a). As women's work in the sphere of production has been marginalized and the woman herself has been transformed into an all-purpose labor force, it's hard for her to acquire professional acknowledgment as there is no proof of what she offers in the farm. The increasing invisibility also

has consequences on her social security situation, taxation, presence legitimization in professional agricultural organizations, as well as on training and decision-making in the process of production. So, living in the farm becomes not a privilege for women, as they feel that their contribution to the farm economy is not rewarded. The importance of family and power relations that develop inside the household as key considerations for understanding the woman's position and her role on the family farm, has been a central concern of researchers since the beginning of the 1980s (Sachs, 1983; Rosenfeld, 1985; Stratigaki, 1988; Whatmore, 1988; Shortall, 1992, etc.). These research studies have shown that in the process of modernizing agricultural production the replacement of a large part of the spectrum of traditional farming tasks with mechanized operations has favored retention of the patriarchal model of work organization and associated women's work with production that is not destined for the market. So, farm women have been transformed into a source of reserve labor and have accordingly become a less visible part of the work force in official statistics too (Shortall, 1992; Braithwaite, 1994).

The empowerment of farm women's position passes through the enhancement of their professional status. Today challenges for professionalization emerge for farm women, as new tensions, prevailing in the world-wide economic and social environment force a reorganization of agricultural policy targets concerning the approach to rural development. The necessity of securing the nation state identity and the cultural and environmental diversity of rural Europe, which is finding renewed political vigor in the face of the pressures for open market relations across Europe and the world, and the danger of social exclusion of people and marginalization of regions unable to apply a competitive agriculture, all these create new challenges in the field of research and rural development policy. New approaches have, of necessity, begun to redefine farming and rural life in ways that admit women's experiences and perspectives. In these new approaches food preparation, childcare, domestic work, etc., are confronted as qualitative different kinds of work experience and labor relations, extending the concept of labor to a more broadly defined "informal economy" and identifying new types of work that can give vocational context to occupations of informal economy with all the advantages this entails (Braithwaite, 1994; Whatmore, 1994). On the other hand, from the point of view of agricultural policy, the future of family farming and the viability of cultural and environmental diversity depend, to a great extent on aspirations and talents being fully recognized and addressed through the strategic budgetary programs of agricultural and regional policy as well as through social policy initiatives at the European and national level (Whatmore, 1994). The gravity center of rural development policy targets has been shifted from the sector (agricultural) to the regional character of development. According to European policy, rural regions must be supported by ways beyond subsidized prices of agricultural products and these ways must be fitted into the



conditions and dynamics of each region (Ray, 1997). Special attention is paid to the informal measures and to the procedures through which these can be transformed into market activities (Miele, 1994; Ventura, 1994; Petrin, 1997). The development of small enterprises in the service and in cottage industry-handicraft sectors is especially appreciated as a way of increasing the employment situation in the countryside. According to Petrin (1997), rural development is – today more than ever – linked with the development of entrepreneurship.

In the case of the farm household, it is essential to widen the farm business to include all the non-agricultural uses made possible by available resources other than those related solely to agriculture. New occupational opportunities, beyond agricultural scientification, emerge in biologic production, agro-tourism, revitalization of niche markets, etc. The increasing sensitivity of people to issues of environment protection, and increased demand for leisure time and safer and more natural products, generate new farming styles. Through this prospect, new roles open up for farm women on an individual or cooperative basis. These include agro-tourism, light industrial and workshop manufacture of goods derived from the processing of local agricultural products – also organic – and selling them at the farm gate, as well as in producing and selling traditional items. Most of these activities involve the professionalization of occupations in the informal economy with which women have always been engaged and through which they have played an important part in establishing heterogeneity in European agriculture and in preserving cultural heritage. Women have considerable ability in converting these local resources into marketable commodities, as well as facility in building interpersonal relationships and professionalizing the role of the housewife. They have an anthropocentric approach to country life and are more sensitive than men to issues of diet and environment (Fonte *et al.*, 1994; Miele, 1994). What is new about these occupations is that they transform traditional women's actions of an informal economy in exchange for values offering vocational outlets. This should mean also a change in the relationship model of the couple concerning power, responsibilities and authority within the household itself; the woman's recognition as a co-manager of the family farm; a change of social ideas about the woman's role and the creation of new jobs locally (Bock, 1994; Miele, 1994; O'Hara, 1994).

Due to the particular physical conditions of southern regions, agro-tourism presents favorable perspectives for the development of business activities by women. New roles mean new necessities, and training is the tool to make farm women efficient. Since recently farm women's training has been focused on use-value production (Gidarakou, 1996a) and this is a general phenomenon in the agricultural world, since training is connected with the farm woman model as a wife. Women enter agriculture looking for a husband rather than a profession (Shortall, 1996). Their new roles, however, call for a vocational training in a wide range of

agricultural and para-agricultural issues. Research about women's responding to the professionalization of activities of an informal economy is still restricted. The extent to which these outlets actually constitute noticeable employment alternatives and contribute to farm women's empowerment; the problems (organization, functional, gender relation, etc.) faced by these women; the extent to which these jobs are acceptable work outlets to young women in the countryside, are among the critical questions arising in relation to the new women's roles. The present study attempts to answer these questions.

## **The data**

The data are derived from personal questionnaires being filled by the farm women (1,459 in number) who took part in the Vocational Training Programmes for women implemented by the Rural Extension Home Economics Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture during 1996.

Training courses were realized within the framework of continuous vocational training programs in the primary sector, financed by the Community Support Frame B'. Women who attended them were aged from 16 (after having finished school) to 58 years old, the average age being 36. The vast majority of these (77.3 percent) were married, 20.1 percent single and 2.6 percent divorced. Women involved in para-agricultural home industry-handicraft and agro-tourist activities were 109 (7.5 percent of total). These women constitute a quite representative sample of Greek farm women vocationally involved in such activities. The majority of them (56 percent) were members of a women home industry-handicraft or agro-tourist cooperative and the other were working on an individual basis.

## **Results**

### ***Farm women's pluriactivity***

Agriculture constitutes the main occupation of 60.1 percent of the women. Householding shares 28 percent and the remaining 12 percent are employed in a wide range of jobs, the majority of which are in home: industry, agro-tourism and small businesses. In a group consisting of relatively young and ambitious women, as in this case, 18.9 percent has a sole or additional non-farming occupation, while the respective figure for men is 46.3 percent. Low indices of farm women's pluriactivity are observed at country level, as well as all over the European south, where small farms predominate and the husband is the one who mainly looks for a supplementary job. According to the data given by the National Statistical Service of Greece in 1993, less than 10 percent of rural households show women's pluriactivity, while the respective figure for men is 30 percent. This fact supports an increasing feminization trend of small part-time farms, though creating a new role for farm women in the rural sector, who can now become the heads of the farms, not only typically by lending their names to their husbands, but also substantially (Ventura, 1994).

The structure of farm women's pluriactivity, in the present survey, shows that 40 percent of pluriactive women deal with home industry, handicraft and agro-tourist activities, while 60 percent are occupied in other non-agricultural activities (Table 1). In the first case, the main occupation is home industry-handicraft on a cooperative basis, comprising the vast majority of women, while in the second, women are employed as workers in industrial or artisanal units followed by a third case where women are in other professions (like dressmakers, hair dressers, etc.), or small trades.

**Table 1.** Farm women's pluriactivity

Type of additional work	Frequency	Percent
Member of agro-tourist cooperative	4	1.5
Member of home-industry and handicrafts cooperative	61	22.2
Owner of an agro-tourist business (rooms to rent)	16	5.8
Owner of small handicraft businesses	28	10.2
Other off-farm occupation	166	60.4
Total	275	100.0

Women's pluriactivity bears low profits. The majority of pluriactive women (67.6 percent) declare that their supplementary income constitutes a minimum contribution to the total household income and 24.4 percent state that their contribution is sufficient. Concerning the husbands' supplementary income the situation is different. 29.3 percent of wives declare that their pluriactive husbands contribute largely, while 20.9 percent that they contribute a little (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Contribution of additional occupation income to the household economic situation

Level of income	Women's income		Men's income	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Small	186	67.6	141	20.9
Sufficient	67	24.4	336	49.8
Much	22	8.0	198	29.3
Total	275	100.0	675	100.0

The position of the Greek farm women in the labor market is identified through their standpoints about the employment conditions both in the rural sector and in extra jobs. A minimum percentage (7.1 percent) out of the 1,459 farm women is satisfied, while about half of the population (40 percent) states definitely not.

#### *Current status and problems of women's new occupations*

As we have mentioned, only 109 of the whole number of trained women transformed their informal work into vocational job. We can distinguish three groups

of women, according to their cooperative or individual type of work and the kind of products they produce: 1) the group of women employed in agro-tourism or the production and trade of handicrafts, as well as processed products of agricultural origin through cooperatives; 2) the group of women employed in farm-based tourism individually; and 3) the group of women who produce and trade handicrafts on an individual basis. A group employed in organic farming was absolutely marginal due to the limited numbers of women dealing with this sector and therefore will not be studied.

*Women in agro-tourist home-industry and handicraft cooperatives.* Most of these cooperatives have been established in Greece since 1985. At country level, there are few women cooperatives offering accommodations on the farm accompanied or not by traditional meals of local kitchen. The main category is home-industry and handicraft cooperatives, which carry out a variety of activities, mainly on the basis of traditional culture (textiles, knitwear, embroidery, articles of popular art, etc.). There are also some cooperatives handling processed and standardized agricultural products of conventional farming. The number of cooperatives dealing with organic farming is even smaller. One of them is already inactive. The total number of farm women participating in a women's cooperative represents about 0.6 percent of the women labor force in agriculture.

This outlines the activities of farm women in the context of the present survey. Out of the 109 women employed in such activities, 56 percent are members of home handicrafts cooperatives, 25 percent are employed in handicraft-home industry on an individual basis, 14 percent have a small individual farm-based tourist enterprise, and 3.7 percent are members of agro-tourist cooperatives. The fact that most Greek farm women are employed in additional para-agricultural activities through cooperatives stems to a great extent, from the fact that national organizations (e.g. Agricultural Extension Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, General Secretary on Gender Equality Issues, the Agricultural Bank of Greece) who have elaborated programs in activating and training women to professionalize their informal activities, have especially encouraged them to form cooperatives. People like to belong to teams and feel acceptable as equally honored members (Sdrolas, 1995). Women tend to work more in teams, as compared to male entrepreneurs, are less self-centered and personal ego is less important to them than success of the organization or business idea they are pursuing (Petrin, 1997). Possibly, the trend towards group work is also due to an inner shyness of women, as they must change from a subordinate role to a role of responsibilities.

The vast majority of women (70.3 percent) take part in the cooperative through the production of articles, while just 8 percent by renting rooms, and the remaining by providing services. Although most women in cooperatives are married, young and single women seem to have a greater interest in collective activities.

**Table 3.** Reasons for participating in the cooperative

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Faster renting rooms	1	1.4
Contribution to the household economics	40	54.8
Satisfaction in group working	17	23.3
Recognition by the family and social environment	11	15.1
Non-farming work	1	1.4
Other	3	4.1
Total	73	100.0

The main factor that urges women to participate in the cooperative is to ensure an additional income. This is also the case when considering their participation in relation to age and training. Over half of the women (54.8 percent) state that their financial contribution to the household is the main reason to work, 23.3 percent declare that they like team work and 15.1 percent mention social reasons (Table 3). These statements imply that women work due to the small farm size and low agricultural incomes. The fact that the economic reasons are the most important motives for seeking employment, as compared to the social ones, also emerges from their evaluation of the benefits accruing from their work. About half of them appreciate that their financial contribution to the household has been the most important benefit. The development of personal relations has been appraised as the main benefit by less than 1/4 of the women, while the recognition of personality and rise in the families and the community's esteem has been considered as the main benefit by 16.2 percent only.

This faint social impulse in combination with low incomes earned by supplementary women's work could raise a question whether the specific weight of social benefits is connected to the economic results. That means that in case professionalization of informal types of para-agricultural activities becomes an important motive for changing authority and decision-making relation within the household and society in general, this might lead to an economic competition between spouses. In the well organized farms of Scotland where farm based tourism is carried out by women, many farmers have to face the fact that they contribute less than their wives' farm based enterprises and therefore there is an inevitable change in the balance of powers (Burr, 1997).

In any case, these positive aspects concerning the improvement of the social farm woman model in the countryside, although less important than the financial factor, should be considered as an indication that the operation of cooperatives has achieved its primary social objective to a certain extent.

Almost all women in cooperatives (89.2 percent) complain that their cooperatives present problems. According to relevant replies, two problems have been identified: marketing of products and financial issues (low profits, lack of capitals, lack of investments) (Table 4).

**Table 4.** Problems of cooperatives

Type of problems	Frequency	Percent
Organizational and operational problems	10	16.4
Products marketing problems	31	50.8
Economic problems	18	29.5
Competition by mass tourism	1	1.6
Other	1	1.6
Total	61	100.0

*Women with an individual farm-based tourist enterprise.* During the last decade, a serious effort has been made through the continuous vocational training programs, at promoting agro-tourism in mountainous and less favored areas of the country. All over Europe, these enterprises are considered appropriate to employ farm women, as these are mainly engaged in the rural household duties and are good at developing personal relations (Bock, 1994; Burr, 1997).

Since Greece is a country with a rich cultural and natural diversity, agro-tourism has been estimated by policy makers as a serious alternative for the rural population. The lack of infrastructure (parallel to mild tourism forms) to support the farm-based tourism constitutes a significant factor for most districts where agro-tourist individual enterprises have been developed. In the majority of the established enterprises (about 70 percent), representation and judicial liability is to the husband, as there are certain restrictions concerning the main occupation and the management of the farm, as laid down by regulation on financing (Reg. 2328/91 and its successor 950/97). However, the 30 percent of enterprises managed by women is a remarkable figure, while farm women, even in case they are not financially liable for the enterprise, can participate in vocational training programs. This possibility is indeed a step out of the shadow of the enterprises, where they are mainly the persons who do the duties. Among the women being trained and taken into consideration in this study, this category comprises 18 women, a number that is extremely limited, as compared to the total women (1,459) who received training. The basic problem in these enterprises is that few rooms have been rented; only 12 rented 50 percent of their rooms, while 3 enterprises did not rent at all.

Farm-based tourism is considered the best way to diversify the production activities of the rural household. On the other hand, it enables people of the city to come into contact with several activities carried out in their natural environment. The available data are not enough to support firm conclusions, however they show that the message of farm based tourism has not yet spread enough and efforts are needed to promote the agro-tourism product. To a large extent, this is due to the fact that efforts at developing this activity have been intensified only in the recent years. In Greece, farm based tourism is mainly translated to accommodations of bed and breakfast. At country level figures show that 33 percent of the agro-tourist holdings

offer only bed accommodations, 55 percent offer bed and breakfast and 12 percent offer to agro-tourists a kitchen use too. It is true that the bed and breakfast type of agro-tourism is more suitable to Greek small farms and farmhouses, but this fact cannot absolutely explain the small efficacy of women's agro-tourism enterprises. There are still lots of things that must be done in the improvement of infrastructure, in marking the agro-tourist households in the countryside, in advertisement of this type of enterprises as an alternative tourism solution, etc.

The present study also underlines that women's farm based tourism enterprises are mainly restricted to accommodation only of bed and breakfast. Most women (11 out of 18) declare that they produce articles that can be purchased by tourists, however only 3 say that most tourists buy, while 7 that nobody buys. In addition, 13 women out of 18 declare that tourists do not participate in the household or farm activities, and only 2 that most tourists take part. The majority of women who run farm based tourism enterprise (66.7 percent) say that they earn a low income and 27.7 percent a satisfactory one. The rest of them (4.6 percent) say that the income is almost non-existent. Once more, the main benefit of employment is the additional income to support the household.

Owing to low agricultural incomes and their shrinking trend, even a small increase in the financial resources provided by the enterprise is a factor inhibiting its eventual abandonment. No woman intends to stop its operation having fulfilled financial commitments. This of course does not guarantee their viability, since a significant number of women have never thought about this subject.

*Women with a small-scale home industry and handicrafts business.* Self-occupation in production and marketing of popular handicrafts or processed products of agricultural origin, always familiar ways of informal occupation of women in their rural households, is also a way of vocational occupation and additional income. Even though, women already working professionally are a few. In this survey, they are only 34 of the 1,459 trainees. At least half of them are producing handicrafts and the others are divided in house clothing production and processing of products from their farms. The main problem of these women is the marketing of their produce. The usual way of marketing, followed by all of them, is direct sale to the customers. Much less (4 of 34) have agreements with local shops and only one is marketing her products to stores in big cities.

Finding customers seems to be the major problem for 70.3 percent of the women while 1/4 of the women underline the lack of know-how, to improve quality and make packaging more attractive. Also, financial problems, concerning taxation and invoicing seem to trouble women occupied in this sector (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Problems of self-owned home-industry and handicraft businesses

Type of problems	Frequency	Percent
Products marketing	26	70.3
Know-how	9	24.3
Taxation invoicing	1	2.7
Other	1	2.7
Total	37	100.0

### ***Farm women vocational training***

As it has been emphasized in the introduction, training of farm women in home-industry and handicraft activities has started since the beginning of the post-war period. However, the systematic effort at professionalizing these activities has started since the mid-1980s when the wealth of research into the women's issues brought about the challenge of re-identifying employment in the rural sector, as far as the informal types of employment were concerned.

New roles are accompanied by new necessities and training is the tool to make farm woman efficient. About 60 percent of the women in this survey attended vocational training courses for the first time and only 17.2 percent took part in training courses over twice. The maximum length of these courses was 25 days. The Ministry of Agriculture provides a wide range of specialization for men and women farmers, however participation of women in actual agricultural issues ranges from minimum to zero. Out of the total number of women only 2.1 percent have attended horticultural and floriculture courses and 0.5 percent, 0.1 percent and 2.3 percent courses in plant production, structural policy and viniculture, respectively.

Training of Greek farm women has always been focused on the correlation between the farm woman and use-value production (Gidarakou, 1996a). This is of course a general phenomenon in the agricultural world, since training is connected with the farm woman model as farm wife (Shortall, 1996). Her new role, however, as a manager of the farm in small part-time farms calls for her vocational training in a wide range of agricultural issues. A survey in the context of a FORCE project concerning the future of farm women's employment in southern countries has shown a keen interest in issues of farm management (Georgiadou, 1993).

The results of the survey on women vocational training, show that about 60 percent of those who were occasionally trained, used their knowledge, improving the quality of their household activities, in the frames of the rural household informal economy, while 16.7 percent didn't use it at all (Table 6). Only 11.7 percent of the trained women were led to vocational occupation or were better informed, if they were already working.

Access to vocational training has to overcome obstacles, especially when it involves moving away from the community. The main problem is the difficulty of the women's replacement in their household (it was adduced by 31.1 percent



**Table 6.** Use of vocational training

Way of use	Frequency	Percent
Entering a cooperative	19	3.5
Creating a self-owned business	13	2.4
Improvement of their work in the cooperative or the self-owned business	31	5.8
Improvement of farming work	69	12.8
Improvement of household work	316	58.7
No use	90	16.7
Total	538	100.0

of those who faced problems). Also, another serious matter was children's care. Nevertheless, women proved free from psycho-social reasons that seemed to be obstacles, when off-farm occupation was sought, especially in the southern countries of the Union, considered to be more conservative (Braithwaite, 1994). Hesitation to be in an unfamiliar place, probably with men, in fear of being criticized by their social environment was only mentioned by 4.8 percent of those who faced problems. Women who had already developed a para-agricultural occupation seem to seek opportunities to repeat training.

As to the purpose of those women who were involved for the first time in such a training procedure, it seems that a great majority of 82.1 percent simply wished to improve their knowledge of home handicraft matters, 4.3 percent intend to participate in a cooperative, 1.1 percent to work, on farm based tourism on an individual basis, 1.8 percent to be professionally engaged in agriculture, while a percentage close to zero wishes to practice biological farming. Out of a list of issues proposed, their concern was mainly focused on food technology and handicrafts marketing matters (34.1 percent), handicraft production know-how (29 percent), and cooperative management principles (11.8 percent) (Table 7). Matters concerning agricultural know-how production, use of machinery and agricultural holding management, are seen by a great number of women as an important subject, second in preference, an element proving their increased involvement in roles such as heads of farms.

### ***Prospects of additional occupations***

It is well known today that the two sexes are prepared to play different roles in the family holding. Mothers play an important role in socializing their children and especially their daughters towards their career and through that, towards the agricultural profession and living or not in the community (Gasson and Errington, 1993). Young women taking advantage of the education procedures are looking for occupations in the tertiary sector, its presence in the countryside being very limited. Are the additional occupations, the new roles promoted for the farm women, offering a satisfactory frame of professionalism for the young women - daughters

**Table 7.** Training subjects requested by farm women

Subject	First priority		Second priority	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Cooperative management principles	172	11.8	72	4.9
Products processing and marketing	498	34.1	295	20.2
Tourist communication psychology	126	8.6	168	11.5
Home-industry and handicraft know-how	423	29.0	347	23.8
Farm management	48	3.3	99	6.8
Farming know-how	78	5.3	163	11.2
Organic farming	49	3.4	86	5.9
Other	7	0.5	3	0.2
No answer	58	4.0	226	15.5
Total	1,459	100.0	1,459	100.0

of the presently active farm women? Viability of farm holdings is dependent on their ability to keep young women. These viable farms are crucial as a binding tie between farming and para-agricultural activities and a prospect for maintenance and revitalization of the rural areas threatened by collapse.

The position of women in the light of the effects of agro-tourism development in their areas is optimistic. Their great majority think that there will be positive effects on the economy, occupation, creation of new jobs, revitalization of traditional arts and techniques, women's image in the community and maintaining the population on the countryside. Concerning the above mentioned effects, a great majority (90.4 percent) think that the contribution of agro-tourism is very positive for the economy of the rural areas, while matters of social nature, such as the ability to maintain young women in their communities, are far more difficult (65.6 percent). About 2/3 of rural women agree that women cooperatives offer young women a good chance to find a job, get married and live in their villages. Most of farm women agree that the additional on- or off-farm occupation is a good solution for them, but not for their daughters, or have not opinion and only 12.8 percent disagree on this issue. The majority of farm women who have unmarried daughters 16 years old or older, don't believe that their daughters will be occupied in agriculture in the future (66 percent) and only 8 percent say yes. Almost the same result is shown considering the combination of farming with an additional occupation. Half of these mothers are certain that their daughters will not be occupied in the additional job of their mothers and only 3.7 percent are certain that their daughters will follow. The remaining 47.2 percent do not know.

Other recent studies in Greece also reveal that farm women adopt a negative stance towards the prospect of their daughters being involved in farming solely or in conjunction with an additional work. In a field study in the Peloponnese only 10 of 115 farmers' wives questioned on the subject said that they would like their daughters

to marry a farmer and of those, four would be happy to see their daughter herself working on the farm (Gidakou, 1996a). Also, a field study in Greece, concerning young women's (girls') view towards the new roles, reveals that most of them saw such employment as a stop-gap solution until such time as they succeeded in securing a better paid and more stable work. Unemployment was not perceived by the young women as a factor strongly conducive to undertaking such work (Gidakou, 1999). Doubts as to the capacity of agro-tourism, in its present-day form, to provide realistic alternative work prospects for the new generation of women have also been expressed by Burr (1997) in relation to agro-tourist business in Scotland. Because, in the writer's view, new generations of women can, from both a financial and a career viewpoint, find more promising employment opportunities away from the farm, they are less inclined to engage in agro-tourist undertakings.

Training, as we already know, is the way for women to the urbanized sector of the economy and the way to abandon countryside. In the present study, the mothers who were in the position to know their daughters' (16 years old or more) plans about their future occupations, state that 50.4 percent of them plan to study and find a respectable job, while 21.3 percent aim to find an office job, without higher level studies. Only 1.9 percent plan to work in farming and 4 percent to combine farming with an additional occupation. As also emerges from a previously mentioned study (Gidakou, 1999), the first preference of mothers for their daughters is to find an office job and next a liberal profession, while very few mothers (4 out of 50) wanted their daughters to work in farming as their only occupation or in conjunction with some other activity.

## **Conclusions**

Obtaining an occupational identification, followed by any benefit (recognition, consolidation, and access to professional organizations and financial agents) is a strategic means to strengthen the position of farm women (Braithwaite, 1994; O'Hara, 1994; Boeraeve-Derijcke, 1994). Endogenous development is the key word for modern agricultural policy (Long and van der Ploeg, 1994). These two elements constitute the challenge of supporting women's farm and off-farm activities.

The survey data show that additional occupation of farm women in Greece is not extended, low skilled and low paid. Occupation in new roles is not yet very obvious, although trained women seem very interested, a fact that should contribute to increased participation. Under the circumstances, additional occupation data cannot give conclusions on substantial changes in the power relations in the rural households, or the society in general. More specifically, the structure of pluri-activity shows a dynamic development of the business role, being realized through participation in cooperatives which successfully use cultural aspects of the rural areas. Such an image of cooperative work, is an expression of the various life styles, characterizing a post-productionist rural society (Theater, 1996).

The social aspect of occupation as well as the establishing targets of the women cooperatives, seem less important, under the pressure of securing financial advantages for the household, given that they contribute to its survival, under agricultural incomes continually depressed.

The most important concern of the rural women trying to play their new roles, is the viability and continuity of such activities. In spite of the low levels of incomes, almost all rural women occupied in such activities, don't think to discontinue, a fact showing that these are highly appreciated as alternative occupations. Traditional handicrafts, offering the base to most para-agricultural activities of rural women, as well as cooperative or individual business activities, face problems. Viability of those activities involves double efforts, concerning marketing and financial matters. Marketing involves information of consumers (advertising, etc.) on those activities and products. The rural women themselves should be trained on subjects concerning marketing packaging, processing, interrelations between cooperatives and financial issues, such as accounting, taxation, etc. Most of the women stated that tourists don't buy their products or do not participate in rural household activities, a fact proving that they are not yet used to the new style of tourism promoted.

Agro-tourism has not been very successful in creating an alternative, realistic vocational occupation for farm women. Most of the agro-tourism business activities are under the responsibility of the husbands, meaning that women, despite their active involvement, are not able to be professionally secured, a fact that could improve their position in the holding. The main obstacles are in the condition of the EC Regulation 2328/91 on financing the head of the agricultural holding, or the full-time farmer. Agro-tourist cooperatives are a minority of women cooperatives, despite the great financial and training support they had during the period 1985-1989 (Tsartas and Thanopoulou, 1994; Gidarakou, 1996b). Agro-tourism as a factor of resisting marginalization of disadvantaged and mountainous areas of the Mediterranean zone plays till now a limited role. Even for countries where farm based tourism is a long standing feature, like Scotland, this type of pluriactivity offers a low net profit, in disproportion to the time consumed by farm women (Burr, 1997). In Greece, efforts to develop alternative types of tourism have recently been intensified (through the EC Reg. 2328/91 and its successor 950/97 and the Programmes LEADER). It is expected that agro-tourism, in the near future, will have a more meaningful presence.

The way to obtain professional identification for farm women comes through training. Women ask to be trained, and the range of the subjects is very wide, extending to matters of agricultural know-how.

Under the present circumstances, viability of those activities is uncertain because they are not well founded. These findings raise the question: are these roles going to be an adequate occupation for the daughters, wives of the future farmers, the persons who are the successors of the farms which link the various activities of the

countryside? Will they provide role models to women, in a society made for men, as stated by Dahlstrom (1996), structured on the basis of gender, where jobs and leisure time opportunities are also made for men and finally, even immigration depends on gender? The position of the farm women group when asked about the new roles, is positive but only for themselves. When the issue comes to their daughters, they seem very pessimistic. Only 12.8 percent of the women disagree that their additional occupation is a solution for them, but not for their daughters. Education seems the only way for these girls, towards the urbanized sector of economy. According to the mothers, agriculture is considered as a marginal sector of occupation and even its combination with some additional occupation is in the future plans of very few girls.

As a conclusion, this survey proved that farm women respond positively to the challenge of their new roles. Cultural heritage offers, at present, the most important alternative. Women need support to overcome difficulties, involved in the process of opening their traditional occupations to the market.

Agro-tourism needs more work so as to be an alternative occupation for farm women.

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