

# GRASS CEILING – Gender Equality in Rural and Agricultural Innovation Systems

Duration: From 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2025

## Project Summary

GRASS CEILING will develop a context where women can drive socio-ecological transitions, that is, develop innovations in response to socio-ecological challenges and strengthen the resilience of rural areas. This is essential to deliver the UN's goals on gender parity, realise the EU gender equality strategy, and achieve the goals of the Green Deal, the Farm to Fork strategy, the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas and the European Pillar of Social Rights.

GRASS CEILING is a multi-actor project that will increase women-led socio-ecological innovations in farming, the rural economy and in rural communities (i.e., smart-agri skills, eco-tourism, pasture led agriculture, organic cheese, energy neutral village halls, community gardens, elderly care cooperatives). Socio-ecological innovation in farming and rural areas is a developing area in Europe, and GRASS Ceiling will co-create tools to ensure women can fully participate. Our consortia include end-users (women innovators), stakeholders and researchers in case study Member States, as well as European bodies and stakeholders who can influence EU policy such as the EU Women's Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP), Copa-Cogeca (EU representatives of farmers and agri-cooperatives), The European Association for Information on Local Development (AEIDL), and the European Environmental Bureau (EEB). GRASS Ceiling brings together leading academic partners with many years of experience in research and practice projects that seek to empower and support women in agriculture and rural areas throughout a variety of contexts in Europe. The project involves women-innovators on farms and in rural areas who will participate in our 9 socio-ecological women innovator living labs in 9 case study countries. Our Living Labs are practical, women-led, interactive innovation initiatives that will increase knowledge and provide tools to assist women innovators and policy and support organisations at Member State and EU level.

## Objectives

GRASS CEILING will:

1. Establish a testbed through the living labs: Create a space for co-creation of knowledge between science, policy, business & industry, and women innovators, where women innovators discuss their socio-ecological innovative initiatives, the barriers encountered, and the support needed with relevant multi-actors to co-design changes in the rural and Agriculture Knowledge Innovation System (AKIS) to meet the needs of women; GRASS CEILING Living Labs will identify ways in which digital inclusion can increase women's access to training and improve their capacity to undertake innovative actions to achieve socio-ecological transitions; GRASS CEILING will also offer specific (digital) tools and (online) networks for support, train and advise for rural women innovators.
2. Create tools to improve policies that impact on agriculture and rural women innovators: Establish The European Policy Forum for women-led innovation in agriculture and rural areas as a European-wide Science-Society-Policy interface; develop and use tools to assess and inform policymakers on how they can better use the innovations of women in the transition of agriculture and rural areas; Benchmark farming and rural development policies and legal frameworks to assess how effectively they adhere to the EU Gender Equality Strategy and foster women led socio-ecological innovation in farming and rural areas; Interrogate the governance structure of agriculture and rural development in the Member States and at EU level to establish policy drivers and barriers for women-led innovations.
3. Provide an analysis of the current position of women vis-a-vis the megatrends in European agriculture and rural areas, including their engagement in farm labour and farm management, regenerative farming initiatives, their labour market participation, innovative and civic activities, and an analysis of women's current engagement in sustainable innovations in agriculture and rural development; deliver a foresight exercise with stakeholders and women-innovators to explore the current position of women, identify different and common features between and within countries and to develop a vision for women's future role in transitioning to resilient farms and rural areas in 2040.
4. Co-create knowledge of gender norms and the drivers/ enablers of women-led innovation; Using this co-created knowledge, the Living Labs will actively support women innovators to find out about the specifics of women-led innovations in farming and rural communities, including idea development and reimagining techniques within the innovation process, network learning, accessing relevant knowledge and training, and finance.

## Activities

- GRASS CEILING provides knowledge of the specifics of socio-ecological innovation by women (drivers & barriers); disseminates a foresight of their impact in 2040 (wp1); and identifies the support women need (wp3)
- GRASS CEILING gender-proofs and benchmarks national & EU agricultural & rural policies (wp4); it recommends how to empower women innovators through policy and develops tools for policymakers to assess, design inclusive policies (wp5) & tools that support women innovators (online training academy) & (A)KIS to better support women (wp6); this includes an open access online training how to lead LLs for women innovators (wp3)
- Learning & networking in & across LLs (WP3) support women to confront gender norms; engaging key mainstream actors in the LLs raises awareness and makes them ambassadors in combating gender norms in the mainstream system; dissemination to a wider public combat stereotypical images & offers new role models (wp6)
- In the LLs (wp3) we train 72 women & 18 leads, who network across LLs & key actors, who learn about the potential & specifics of women innovations

## Results and project impact

- Insights into what drives and inhibits women will provide more recognition of what women's innovations can do for the sustainable development of agriculture and in rural and coastal areas and identify how they can be supported to do so by policy and (A)KIS
- Recommendations and tools enable policymakers and (A)KIS to support the women and their innovations
- The 72 (young) women innovators provide solutions & act as role models for others to engage; the digital tools and recommendations render policies and (A)KIS more inclusive to women also in (remote) rural areas
- Tools, such as the online training academy with toolbox and the training how to lead women innovators LLs will empower women in the future, including in remote areas to engage in socio-ecological innovations, develop ideas into projects and

implement them successfully and realise change; they also promote networking among women; key actors in the mainstream innovation eco-system will have learned to recognise women innovators, have to tools to support them effectively; policymakers have learned to develop gender inclusive policies and instruments that fit diverse rural context

**Role of CIHEAM Zaragoza in the Project:** Communication, dissemination & exploitation

**Webpage:** <http://www.grassceiling.eu/>

**Contact:** No contact person provided so far

**Coordinator:** South East Technological University (SETU), Ireland

**Funding:** European Union – HORIZON EUROPE

**Budget:** 2,817,498.75 €

**Partners:**

- Wageningen University (WU), the Netherlands
- European Environmental Bureau (EEB), Belgium
- Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP), Belgium
- Association Européenne pour l'information sur le développement local (AEIDL), Belgium
- CIHEAM Zaragoza (CIHEAM-IAMZ), Spain
- Centro Internazionale di altistudi agronomici mediterranei (CIHEAM-IAMB)
- Università di Pisa (UNIFI), Italy
- Lietuvos Socialiniu Mokslu Centras (LCSS), Lithuania
- Stiftelsen Ruralis Institutt for rural og regionalforskning (RURALIS), Norway
- Universidad de Valladolid (UVA), Spain
- Sveriges Lantbruksuniversitet (SLU), Sweden
- Comité des organisations professionnelles agricole de l'union européenne COPA Association de fait (COPA-COGECA), Belgique
- Cooperativas agro-alimentarias de España u de coop sociedad cooperativa (CCA), Spain
- Hrvatska Poljoprivredna Komora (HPK), Croatia
- Sveučiliste u Zagrebu Agronomski Fakultet (UNIZG FAZ), Croatia
- OI! Trondersk mat of drikke as (OI!), Norway
- AgriFood Lithuania DIH (AFL), Lithuania
- Kilpatrick Innovation LTD (Kilpatrick Inno), Ireland
- Zuidelijke Land en Tuinbouworganisatie Vereniging (ZLTO), the Netherlands
- Lega Regionale delle Cooperative e Mutue (LegaCoop Puglia), Italy
- Lansbygderadet Jonkopings Lan (Hela Sverige), Sweden