



## THE GENDER ANALYSIS COMMITTEE

The agri-food sector is increasingly becoming more digital and will continue to adopt advanced technologies in the near future. The European Commission has emphasised the digitalisation of agriculture as part of its Digital Agenda as have numerous other countries. However, if the future of agriculture is indeed digital and women have been found to be underrepresented in both agricultural management and ICT sectors, there is a serious concern about the future of women in agricultural and related technology sectors. While there is substantial research on the inclusion of women in STEM, the connection between women and ICT in the context of developing countries and to some degree within rural studies (e.g. digital skills and gender), it has not been fully explored in the context of the agri-tech sector in Europe and other developed countries. A substantial knowledge gap exists concerning women at the cross sections of agriculture and ICT sectors and the future impact that this would have on women and their participation in, and contribution to, an increasingly important yet changing sector.

The gender analysis committee is an initiative of two large-scale H2020 innovation actions IoF2020 (Internet of Food and Farm 2020) and SmartAgriHubs (SAH) whose aim is to build inclusive and exponential agri-digital communities and network building, showcasing agri-tech innovations which lead to more sustainable and competitive European agriculture. The project management teams of IoF and SAH set up a Gender Task Force with two connected teams of communications and analysis. From the analysis side, some preliminary internal research was carried out in both projects and revealed the difficulties the agri-ICT sectors face in both attracting and retaining women in mid to higher management positions, combined with vertical gender segregation, where the majority of women are represented in lower level occupations and only a minority in managerial roles. Lack of representation is also present in the public sphere of the agri-sector.

Clearly, this is not an isolated or new issue. The European Commission's study *Women in the digital age* and the *Women in Digital* initiatives found that few women participate in the digital sector. Numbers are decreasing when compared to 2011. However, the Commission's study found that if more women were to enter the digital jobs market, it could create an annual EUR 16 billion GDP boost for the European economy. McKinsey (2019) estimated a global amount of 12trillion USD. Other studies have found that companies with gender-balanced boards demonstrate better decision making and that companies with more women in management have better financial performance. PwC (2017) observed that such under-representation does not do justice to the abilities and participation of women, and in addition, excluding all these perspectives also has implications for doing business, technology development, and policy formulation. These far-reaching consequences reveal that in order for the current situation to improve, it will require changes to organisational design, agri-tech business practices and processes, leadership structures, as well as government policy. Our Gender Analysis group hopes to contribute to finding evidence based solutions.

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