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THE ONILFA ORGANISATION AND THE GEWAMED PROJECT

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ABOUT THE ONILFA

The Observatory for female enterprise and labour in agriculture has been developed from an idea thought up by female representatives of the professional agricultural organisations, stimulated by the work of the European Day for the Female Agricultural Worker in 1996, which was held in Brussels. On that occasion, in an "open letter written by female agricultural workers", the Ministry for Agricultural and Forestry Policy (MiPAF), was officially asked to set up an Observatory for Female enterprise in agriculture. The Ministry accepted the request and the Observatory was founded in 1997.

Setting-Up and Function

The Observatory was set up by the MiPAF further to a Ministerial Decree (D.M. dated 13 October 1997). It is made up of 30 members, who represent the main and lesser institutions connected with the national agricultural and rural sectors. In particular, the Observatory, headed by the Minister, comprises the following representatives:

- Ministry of Agricultural and Forestry Policy;
- Ministry of Employment and Social Policy;
- Ministry of Manufacturing Industries;
- Ministry of Economy and Finance;
- Equal Opportunities Department;
- The agricultural organisations CIA, Coldiretti, Confagricoltura and Copagri;
- Autonomous Regions and Provinces;
- INEA and ISTAT.

For the purpose of favouring synergies in the female employment field, the Observatory works in collaboration with the players (public and private) who play a part in the agricultural and rural development sector.

The Tasks

The Observatory's main aim is to further its knowledge of the reality of female enterprise and labour in the agricultural and rural sectors, and to put forward proposals and solutions.

In particular, the Observatory aims at:

- Gathering and processing statistical data;
- Analysing the legislation regarding female employment and matters of equal opportunities;
- Examining the interventions started up by the European Union and Central and regional governments that are aimed at promoting various initiatives in the world of female enterprise;
- Creating links with information sources, information publication means and with the research world;
- Promoting pilot schemes, together with Regions and Provinces, aimed at female rural enterprise.

Activities

The Observatory's main activities involve:

- The organisation of conferences, seminars and information days, with the aim of creating opportunities to talk about themes, spread knowledge and compare experience on matters regarding the female status in rural areas;
- The setting up of information-gathering surveys on matters concerning the role and function of women in the development of rural areas, in order to supply the public administration with useful indications needed for the planning of specific interventions;
- The processing and publication of information (brochures, documents, papers, deeds, etc.) on themes that the Observatory deals with;
- The designing and setting up of a web site, which can be used to facilitate the diffusion and circulation of information.

WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE; THE CASE OF ITALY

In 1999, the ISTAT (The Italian National Institute of Statistic Science) published, upon the cognitive acts expressed by the Observatory, "The Womanish Agriculture", a report about the agricultural structure and production as well as women's conditions, which consisted on the first work realized in Italy about women situation in the Italian agriculture. In Italy, the agricultural firms managed by women is about 599 000, covering about 3.4 millions of hectares, from which 2.5 millions are cultivated. In addition the most important data is that their weight on the whole nation is equal to 26%. Consequently, it's clear that the situation is highly significant, and indicates an interesting mentality and behaviour. This data, also, originates the fact that women's presence in the Italian agriculture is very important.

Between the 70's and 80's, when the farmers were unable to stand the market competition, they left the agricultural activity in order to find jobs in the other economical sectors such as industry, building or extra-agricultural activities, which implied an increase of the women's presence in the field. Reaching the 1996, this presence increased in a significant way.

During the period 70's and 80's, the Italian agriculture was facing several problems: competitiveness, acquisition of the technological innovation, process innovation, product innovation, and as a whole, everything the technology was placing at the agricultural disposal.

It was sustained that all of this was attributed to the weight of both factors: ageing and feminization. During that period, hence, women presence in the agriculture sector was considered negative. However, nowadays, the situation is completely different. Women acquired consciousness, especially in meeting the fundamental lines of the agricultural policies. Agenda 2000, for example, identifies in the programmes of rural development, the multi-sectorial and multi-functional activity as an activity able to sustain the agricultural changes in order to face the increasing competition of the market.

WORK PLAN

1. ONLIFA will hold a special session of the members of the ONILFA Board to inform about the GEWAMED project and will identify possible collaborative actions.
2. ONILFA together with the University of Casino and the ISTAT has undertaken an important survey with the purpose of having a clear vision of the role of women in the Italian agriculture. The results of the survey have been presented in a seminar and are available at web site of the University of Casino.
3. ONILFA will also collaborate with ITALICID in the preparation of the national event on gender dimension awareness at different society levels in Italy. The event will consist on the organisation of a national meeting to discuss the importance of the gender dimension in water management for rural development in Italy and to provide a report on raising public participation and awareness of Italian rural women on irrigation decision making policy.

4. Establishing in the website of ONILFA a GEWAMED window including contacts of GEWAMED partners, existing GEWAMED documents, documents related to gender issues in the Mediterranean region, links with the regional GEWAMED site and others.
5. Participate to the three regional workshops:
 - Mainstreaming Gender dimensions in water management for food security and food safety.
 - Mainstreaming Gender dimensions in water management for rural development.
 - Political and institutional Gender dimension in water resources.
6. Participate to the Regional Conference on integration of Gender dimension in water management.
7. Develop information and communication skills: generating knowledge and putting that information to a useable form requires skills in communication and delivery.