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THE SERVICES OF THE ANDALUSIAN INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN: IMPROVING EMPLOYABILITY, TRAINING AND QUALIFICATION FOR WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS

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The Andalusian Institute for Women (IAM) was created in 1989 as an independent body within the regional government of Andalusia (Spain). Its key aim is to promote the proper conditions for real and effective gender equality in Andalusia by employing every possible means to encourage women to participate in the political, economic, cultural and social life.

A series of programmes and services were set up with the First Andalusian Plan for Equality (1990-92). They became firmly established with the Second Plan (1995-97), and are currently ongoing. With the Second Plan for Equality, the IAM created a service for occupational information, pre-training and occupational guidance for women, in collaboration with local authorities.

In 1995, the IAM promoted the NOW Chapter, an OPEM programme, within the framework of the Community Human Resources and Employment Initiatives. The OPEM services were opened to the public in January 1996. Subsequently, they were financed by the European Social Fund within the Community Support Framework 2000-2006.

The Programme to Promote Employability developed by the IAM is an orientation programme for women that seeks to combine a number of solutions for each participant enabling them to develop their own pathway to becoming integrated into the work force. Participants will receive customized support, as well as specific information, guidance and advice. The gender perspective should be the key principle in all the methods used to help women seeking employment. Thus, the work developed by the counsellors is the keystone on which the success of support services depends.

The aims of the Programme to Promote Employability are the following:

- Improve women's access to employment, taking into consideration the needs of the labour market.
- Support and assist them in looking for alternatives and solutions with which to get through the barriers they may be faced with.
- Motivate and reinforce the increased presence of women in community life.

The Programme offers information and labour orientation through several modules:

- *Pre-training*, to stimulate self-confidence, reinforce self-esteem, develop new abilities and skills, and detect training and integration needs.
- *Occupational Guidance*, to provide assistance in seeking concrete information that will allow women to make decisions when choosing an occupation.
- *Job Search*, methods that provide knowledge and practice in search strategies. Furthermore, to prepare a Search Plan adapted to each participant's possibilities and interests, and to the needs of the market in which they will look for a job.
- *Encouragement to use New Technologies that will help to understand the importance and impact of new technologies on current employment. Likewise, to stimulate a desire to undertake training on new technologies.*
- Support and *monitoring* of the entire process through individual tutoring and workshops.

The above services are distributed throughout Andalusia. They are managed directly by the Andalusian Institute for Women's eight Provincial Departments, and in rural and semi-rural municipal districts with the collaboration of the Town Councils.

In addition, the services include another resource in the shape of courses provided through the Programme for Women's Training in Agriculture. A market research is performed to detect training needs in relation to the needs of the local labour market, and a follow-up is made of the entire training process.

The services are also used to coordinate nurseries for women's children and free transport to the training centres.

THE PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN'S TRAINING IN AGRICULTURE

The “Women and Agriculture” programme is promoted by the Andalusian Institute for Women (IAM) and the Institute for Research and Training in Agriculture, Fishing, Food and Ecological Production (IFAPA). Both Institutes belong to the regional government of Andalusia, within the framework of a Collaboration Agreement for positive actions targeting Andalusian women who live in rural areas. The programme is on-going since 1992. It was co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Community Support Framework 2000-2006 and its continuation is envisaged through the European Fund's Community Framework 2007-2013.

Its purpose is to extend the occupational training for rural women, in order to facilitate their integration into training and employment, and to improve the qualification of women workers.

Some of their overall aims are the following:

- Provide incentives for women to take part in productive activities.
- Facilitate access to employment through courses related to local productive needs.
- Encourage the employment of new technologies.

The courses are programmed to give priority to occupations with future prospects in the agricultural sector, on the one hand, and to find new sources of employment for women that facilitate occupational diversification in rural areas, on the other hand. During the programme, courses with a variety of topics are provided. The duration of the courses varies from 30 hours for more specific activities to 300 hours for courses at a higher level.

The Training Courses include guidance and integration into the world of work, the promotion of business initiatives and company management, and specialization in the agricultural, stockbreeding and fishing activities that take place in many different areas of rural Andalusia. Likewise, the courses provide training in how to handle food and on food safety. A module on Guides to Employment and Self-Employment from a gender perspective is also given.

The activities are carried out in collaboration with the Agricultural Research and Training Centres (CIFA), which exist in all the Andalusian provinces. The Centres belong to the Institute for Research and Training in Agriculture, Fishing, Food and Ecological Production), which in turn is part of the regional government of Andalusia's Ministry for Innovation. The courses are provided on a face-to-face basis.

In 2006, a total of 105 courses in which 1,611 students participated were provided as part of the Women and Agriculture programme. 41 of those courses concerned food preparation and handling and food safety, and were attended by a total of 709 women students (Table 1); a list of the courses is given below.

Table 1. The “Women and Agriculture” programme's courses on food production and handling and food safety (edition 2006)

Course Name	No. of Courses
High-Risk Food Handlers	5
Food Handlers	4
Nutrition and Dietetics. How to Prepare Diets	8
How to Prepare Traditional Desserts	1
How to Prepare Milk-Based Desserts	2
How to Preserve Vegetables	3
How to Preserve Fish	1

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Course Name	No. of Courses
Preserves in Olive Oil	1
How to Make Traditional Cold Meats	1
Food Hygiene and Food Safety	2
Ready-Made Dishes for Catering. Food Hygiene and Food Safety	6
Food Handler for Fruit and Vegetables	1
How to Prepare Table Olives	1
How to Handle Dried Fruits	1
Nutrition and Dietetics, Food Safety and Responsible Consumption	2
How to Make Chestnut Products	1
Total Number of Courses on Food and Food Safety	41
Total Number of Courses in the "Women and Agriculture" Programme	105

The Andalusian Institute for Women (IAM), through its Information Centres for Women, carries out research on training needs and is responsible for disseminating, capturing and selecting students. The Institute also pays the cost of nurseries for students' children and student transport.

The courses are completely free of charge. The IFAPA's (Instituto Andaluz de Investigación y Formación Agraria) Agricultural Research and Training Centres (CIFAs) coordinate and execute the training actions, which are part of their ordinary programme. They are responsible for providing the students with teaching material, teachers, accommodation and subsistence, as well as hiring the necessary equipment for the courses not held in CIFA facilities.

The budget is used to finance the subsidies for transport and child care, and the full investment in graphic design and printed literature for dissemination purposes. IFAPA and IAM coordinate the program at national level.

The Institute for Women also develops the Unit for Equality and Gender, in collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Treasury. The Unit's mission is to facilitate the incorporation of the gender perspective in the analysis, monitoring and assessment of the plans and programmes developed by the regional government of Andalusia during the EU programme period 2000-2006. One of the Gender Unit's lines of intervention is specific training in Equality and Gender Mainstreaming Policies, targeting Andalusian regional government staff who is involved in planning and managing the measures that make up the 2000-06 Operations Programme. That is why Training in Gender was offered to CIFA teaching staff through this Programme, giving priority to the teachers involved in the Women and Agriculture Programme.

The programme primarily targets unemployed women, but also women farm workers or owners with a low to middle level of education, a wide spectrum of ages, and whose aim is to start playing a role in emerging sectors of the rural economy in their area, and to improve their level of occupational qualifications.

Participants in the Women and Agriculture programme are in the 36-50 age range, while the remaining ones are either above or below that range in almost equal proportions. A high percentage of participants have *dependants*, and only 18% have no dependants. The average number of dependants per users is 2-3.

Unemployed women and women domestic workers total 77.5%. The number of businesswomen and wage-earners does not exceed 10% for each category. Thus, there is a high percentage of women (three quarters of the participants) who don't receive any income (Figure 1). Considering the *levels of education*, close to half of the women have a primary education certificate, followed by secondary school/vocational training (24.6%), and school-leaving certificate (21.9%) (Figure 2). The others have university degrees and other qualifications whose percentages are too low to be noticeable.

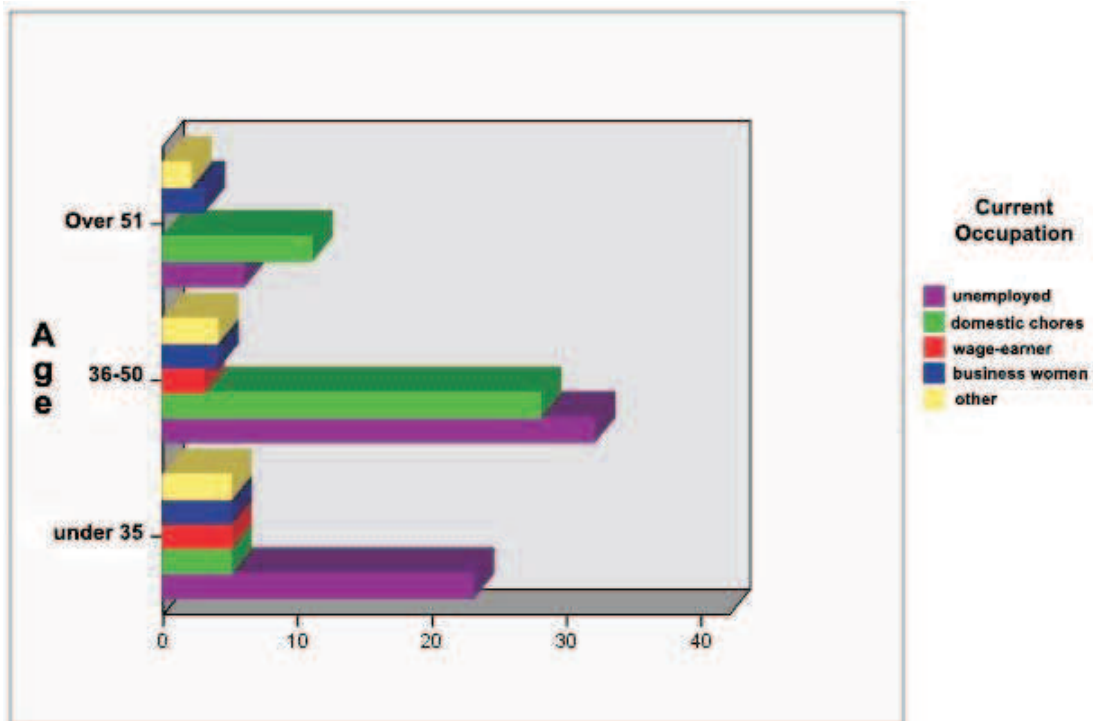


Fig. 1. Age and current occupation of the participants in the Women and Agriculture Programme

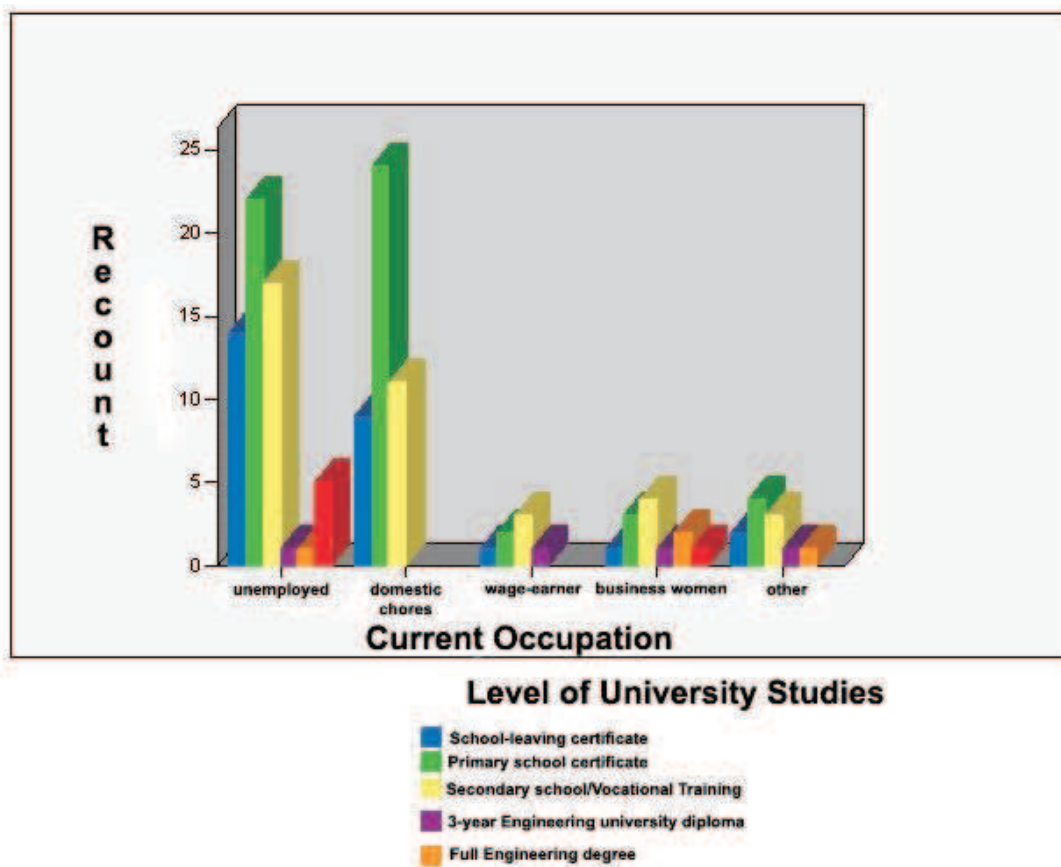


Fig. 2. Current occupation and level of education of the participants in the Women and Agriculture Programme.

The fact that women can leave their environment, assimilate and take part in other forms of production and explore other possibilities means a significant personal change for the programme participants.

Women's self-esteem is strengthened by the empowerment implied in their exposure to community life during conferences and seminars where they can show their successful business outcomes. It also serves as advertising and helps other women to come closer to the same possibilities.

The training provided by the Programme qualifies participants to become part of the working world. The Programme as such becomes a benchmark for the business community as a source providing qualified and expert women. The traditional restrictions that prevent women from holding jobs outside the domestic sphere are being left behind in rural areas, although they still exist.

THE PROGRAMME'S STRONG POINTS

- In some provinces there is good coordination between the two participating organisations, consolidated by many years of collaboration.
- In some provinces a module for Equal Opportunities and Employment Guidance based on the gender perspective has been set up.
- The programme's flexibility in detecting training needs.
- Student transport free of charge
- Availability of places to hold the courses within CIFA, which provides facilities, teachers and a residential building where women can be trained and accommodated.
- The course has become firmly established in many municipal districts.
- The training provided leads to the possibility of self-employment.
- The courses encourage subsequent training in an area of expertise.

Figures 3, 4 and 5 show the evolution of the courses from 1993 to 2006, their distribution by provinces and the number of students that attended them.

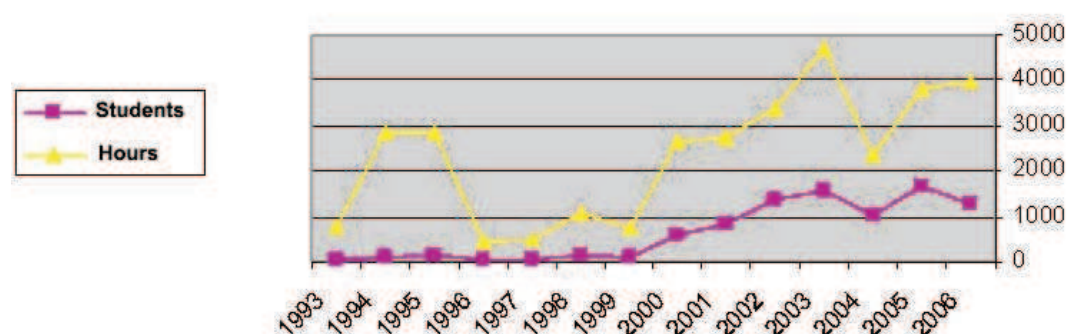


Fig. 3. Evolution of the courses, students and hours, 1993-2006

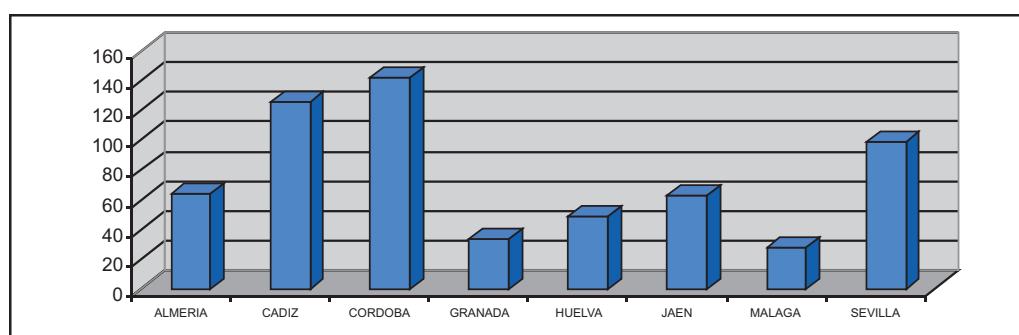


Fig. 4. Number of courses provided by each province, 1993-2006

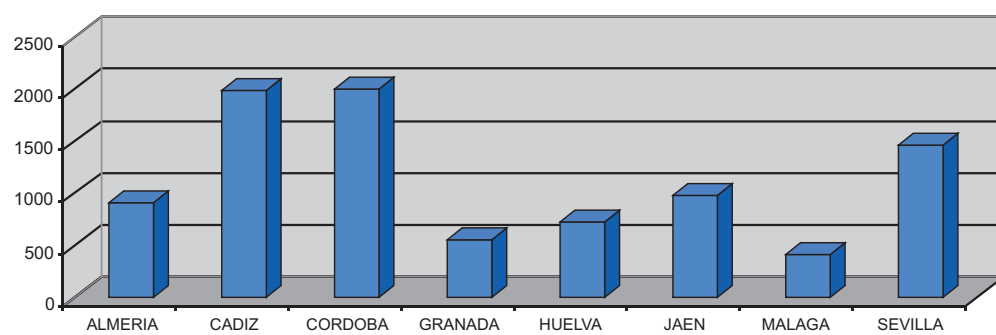


Fig. 5. Students who attended the courses by province, 1993-2006