

## **Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)**

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### **Women in agriculture**

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Agriculture and rural development cannot be sustainable unless they involve women. In Norway, as in other western countries, women are leaving rural areas. They leave for more education, employment and independence. The Government of Norway wishes to reverse this trend. Women are thus a key factor for achieving the Government's goal of keeping the countryside populated. At the same time, female representation in the Norwegian agriculture sector has actually increased over recent years. Today, about 13 per cent of the 55 000 Norwegian farmers are female and approximately 25 percent of all farms are owned by women.

A particular strategy called *Equality in the Agriculture Sector* has been developed to encourage this trend. The aim is to make rural areas more interesting for women in general. Promoting diversified economic activities in rural areas, thus creating new job opportunities is a pillar of this strategy. Traditional agriculture shall be upheld while at the same time we promote niche marketing within a broad range of fields.

Co-operation between authorities and farmers' organisations to increase female participation in the agricultural sector aims at reaching a female participation of 40 per cent in all agricultural businesses. The strategy involves several stake holders, ranging from official bodies to the individual farmer and farmeres' unions. Some of the most important instruments are financial support directed especially at young female farmers, and strengthening female participation in farm cooperatives.

Protection and opportunity through property rights for women is an essential ingredient in the Legal Empowerment agenda. Thus, it should be emphasized also in development efforts and assistance programmes. Both customary law and users' and collective rights can and must serve women to obtain tenure security and thus make them stronger in developing both market and societal relations. In many countries women are often excluded from their rights both at birth, as wives, widows, and sisters. The Rule of Law must be extended to women in reform processes. Easily accessible and low-cost legal advice and formal titles can serve this end. It is important, though, that these processes are demand-driven and bottom-up. Norway has had a keen eye on the global Legal Empowerment agenda and is now seeking to take the advices of the Commission on Legal Empowerment into the portfolios of development assistance programmes.

Gender equality is a matter of both justice and human rights. It is also smart economics. That's why women's empowerment and gender equality is one of five priorities of Norwegian international development cooperation policy. It is also one of three areas for intervention in our Aid for Trade policy.