



Rural Women to
Sustainable Food and Farming
Fresh Food from Farm to Table



NETWORK OF WOMEN FROM RURAL COMMUNITIES (NWRC)

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Background

The Network of Women from Rural Communities (NWRC) was created as the outcome of work on the project RWSFF - Rural Women to Sustainable Food and Farming - Fresh Food from Farm to Table co-funded by Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union; Key Action: Strategic Partnerships in the Field of Adult education - KA204.

The NWRC is fundamentally partnership endeavour. It is a new construct but based on existing cooperation models. The Network is an extension of existing partnership's efforts in seeking to enhance the outcomes of empowering rural women involved in agriculture or agriculture supply chain across the geographical extent of the Network. The NWRC appreciates and celebrates the long-term partnerships that have preceded its establishment and have helped steer the Network towards this collaboration model. These long-term partnerships are surely the cornerstone and models for success.

Beginning and development

The RWSFF project partner organisations have formed this network. A shared vision of empowering rural women has tied them.

The organisations recognised the same passion and commitment - the network building and providing help to rural women in a confrontation with the current challenges.

In December 2019, four adult education practitioners' organisations held a transnational partnership's meeting within the RWSFF project. During that, they set up the NWRC as a European informal network to support empowering and teaching rural women involved in agriculture or the agriculture supply chain.

Exactly the network is originated from the said project and is one of its results with a tendency to expand and continue its existence beyond the project life span.

NWRC has been founded:

- to support joint work of women agro-producers from different areas to learn and help each other
- to provide connections and exchange ideas, initiatives, actions of regional or European agriculture, social innovations and cooperation under the aspect of agriculture and food system
- to provide cross-national know-how about farm-related development, production and commercialisation in different areas

NWRC PURPOSE is to harness the capacities and capabilities of all members/partners to support empowering rural women involved in agriculture or the agriculture supply chain and to serve as a strategic forum for collegial collaboration, coordination, and integration.

Taking about modern trends, the NWRC is ready to share their rich experience to contribute to empowering rural women and enhancing rural development.

Our VISION

Together we can empower rural women through lifelong learning and connecting.

Our MISSION

Our dedication is to empowering, connecting and supporting rural women through education, collaboration, opportunities and initiatives based on the needs of economic independence, dignified work and fulfilled lives, and focused on facilitating them to make positive, sustainable change and progress in their lives and communities.

NWRC AIMS



- ⇒ **To implement and support competency-based and work-based learning**
- **to launch an exchange of knowledge and initiatives** for empowering rural women involved in agriculture or the agriculture supply chain
- ⇒ **To enhance the quality and effectiveness of learning mobility experiences (physical and virtual mobility)**
- **to support the process of networking and develop access to exchanges and mobility** connecting women with women (women-to-women approach)
- **to create conditions for exchanging lecturers** and organising interstate sessions of lectures for women in rural areas
- **to develop models for international visits with the goal of learning and acquiring/improving skills and competencies** for food production and agricultural entrepreneurship

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

→ WILLINGNESS TO LEARN AND IMPROVE

We recognise the importance of lifelong learning as a mechanism to support the development of skills and the social position of rural women.

→ RESPECTING AND APPRECIATING DIVERSITY

We give respect and appreciate the uniqueness and needs of each one of the person. We respect all differences and specific needs, potentials, abilities, affinities and attitudes of each individual.

→ GENDER EQUALITY

We believe that women have the same skills, rights and capacities as do men. We believe in complete gender equality in political, social and economic arenas.

→ EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

We believe that all humans have the same rights and deserve to make decisions that can influence their futures. We, following the principles of Sustainable Development, encourages and respects equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

→ SOLIDARITY AND LOYALTY

We believe that empowering women is the key to sustainable change. We believe in the solidarity and loyalty of empowered women to support other women (Woman to Woman Approach).

→ PARTNERSHIPS AND COALITIONS

We believe in the power of working together, so we encourage working with a wide range of actors to understand the issues, advocate resolves, and collaborate to deliver change.

SCOPE OF WORK

The members of NWRC recognises the transitions that occur in a fast-changing world. Therefore, they foster employability, socio-educational and personal development, as well as participation in civic and social life through improving language skills, entrepreneurial mindset, critical thinking and creativity, as well as forward-looking skills in domains that are strategic for smart economic and social progress.

1. NWRC promotes Fresh Food Access and rural women's education empowering them to participate fully as an actor for a change

2. NWRC increases networking among rural women, especially highlighting the process of networking and developing access to exchanges and mobility by connecting woman with a woman (women-to-women approach)

3. NWRC as the transnational network facilitates partnerships, including capacity development and training initiatives

The success of the Network depends both upon the success of individual self-directed partnerships in addressing the needs most important within their geographies, as well as the NWRC collective ability to address goals at even broader geographic scales.

NWRC is fully committed to education, social inclusion and employment and strives that permanent learning becomes a reality.

THE MAIN TASKS

- **provide cross-national transfer of know-how** about programs of rural development, production and commercialisation agricultural productions

- **provide mobility of facilitators/educators** belonging to community groups and grassroots organisations

- **establish a mechanism of direct contact between rural women** included in the network to organise learning and transfer of good practice by virtual and physical mobility

- **provide to rural women virtual or physical meets** to exchange experience and know-how or arrange study visits

JUSTIFYING THE CALL FOR TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION

The NWRC was designed to relate and exchange among approaches of European regional economic activity, social inventions and cooperation under the aspect of agriculture and food system, to provide cross-national know-how about rural development programs, production and commercialisation that take place in different areas mostly carried by civil commitment for the greater good and hence fructify region.

The NWRC emphasises the international element - mutual learning and cooperation between members/partners from different country backgrounds to develop applicable outcomes that can be adapted and used across Europe.

The broad geographic scope of the Network is necessary to facilitate and support integration efforts and mechanisms that address large-scale issues of challenges such as creating opportunities for rural women, reducing barriers faced by women in rural areas as well as alleviating their unemployment through teaching and empowering entrepreneurial spirit.

Working collectively, members/partners across the entire Network can face complex problems that no single organisation or entity can solve alone.

All of these require cooperation among different countries and transnational strategic approaches through networking and projects.

Co-operation within transnational networks can bring ideas to markets, and help develop new products and services.

NWRC also contributes to numerous priorities of the EU - environment care, food safety, employment, education, growth, jobs, social equity, inclusion, etc.

The NWRC develops joint initiatives in the REGION:

- contributing to better collaboration on joint issues and bringing prosperity to the target area
- supporting food sovereignty initiatives and offering an outlook on how to meet the needs of regional circulation and enhanced cooperation between rural areas (open up new perspectives, increase the attractiveness of the regions, reduce dependence from the global flow of goods and strengthen resilience)
- promoting economic and social prosperity and growth in the region by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity



GRASS-ROOTS FEATURES

Hopefully, NWRC will create the critical mass required to achieve transformation within local communities and bring positive effects to the systems of social inclusion, empowerment rural women and farming.

NWRC offers to increase Fresh Food Access by communities' involvement.

By increasing the amount of food purchased from local growers, NWRC can help make farming more profitable and ensure that farmland and healthy, flavorful food will be available for future generations.

The NWRC is committed to a healthy, sustainable local food system that recognises and encourages the interdependent relationships between individual food sectors (from production to waste disposal) while

improving access to nutritious, fresh foods for all citizens, promoting health, protecting our agricultural assets and natural resources, supporting the local farmers, and contributing to the economic well-being of regions.

Impact of NWRC by working bottom-up:

- provides awareness of concepts and opportunities of small communities to equip with the needed tools to engage in co-operation on major issues of social inclusion and farming development by empowering rural women, offering adult education services and networking
- helps the effective functioning of the markets and an entrepreneurial mindset of rural women
- improves access to better foods on rural communities and their inhabitants

NWRC sets three essential pillars with two ubiquitous and permeating horizontal priorities.

Three essential pillars 3E:

→ EDUCATION

The primary devotion is to raise the educational and cultural level of women in the rural area through lifelong learning and provide support to rural women in acquiring and developing skills and competences.

Approach: among others, supporting actions to apply competency-based and work-based learning and enhancing the quality and effectiveness of learning mobility experiences (physical and virtual mobility). There particularly highlight the process of networking and developing access to exchanges and mobility connecting women with women. This aspect is found in the fact that rural women themselves must be actively involved in encouraging knowledge transfer, networking and learning from each other.

→ EMPOWERMENT

An educated and advanced woman can be a progressive farmer who knows what she wants and stands firmly on her feet. Then her work will not be evaluated by different criteria, she will not be considered less valuable than a man, according to an existent understanding, nor will she withdraw from the socio-political events of her village. She will be ready for all the functions that her the society was intended.

Approach: providing prospects to self-expression, empowerment, creativity and leadership by strengthening the women-led initiative and networking, including activities which have a Sustainable Development purpose – where rural women will personally and socially get something out of it.

→ ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Work on helping rural women to recognise the possibility of linking their potential and appropriate decisions with the requirements of the market. Understanding this connection and seeing it, they can develop ideas in a creative way and with an entrepreneurial sense. Also, running on personal development, they will increase inclusion in the community and employability.

Approach: enhancing entrepreneurial skills and increasing independence through production and commercialisation to generate income and employment.

Two ubiquitous and permeating horizontal priorities:

→ SOCIAL INCLUSION

Cross-cutting endeavour for social inclusion and enhancing access for disadvantaged people, especially for persons from vulnerable categories, such as rural women, small-scale farmers who are located in less-favoured areas and felt social exclusion and limited market entry due to lack of entrepreneurial skills.

Approach: encouraging self-empowerment, actively engage in society, make visible of obstacles and problems they face.

→ GENDER EQUALITY

Deep commitment to inequalities reduction in opportunities associated with the women background, experiences and expectations.

Approach: addressing issues in ways that respond to their priorities, interests, and needs allowing them to take part in a supported and empowered environment, particularly where the issues are personally confronting or challenging.



NWRC documents

The Strategic Plan, as a guide to the implementation of the Network of Women from Rural Communities (NWRC) work, was created out of the need for defining future guidelines that would enable continuity of operation, more systematic monitoring of accomplished results and better assessment of effects.

This Strategic Plan contains, apart from other existing elements, Communication Strategy and Fundraising Strategy, as well as their accompanying Action Plan.

The Strategic Plan came out from the need to establish the following aspects of the newly formed Network: Designating internal structure; Setting priorities for the next two years; Defining clear directions; Determining targeted actions; Anchoring pathways and mechanisms of growth, expansion and sustainability; Specifying communication, promotion and visibility framework and Outlining blueprint financing and fundraising

The purpose of the NWRC Strategic Plan is to create a strategic framework with shared goals for how members/partners will aspire to achieve the NWRC vision through collective impact.

The strategic framework contains common and shared elements to help individual members/partners work collaboratively as a Women from Rural Communities network understanding of the way NWRC as a whole will achieve performance goals while communicating how broader NWRC collectively functions.

This Strategic Plan articulates a path for two years, from 2020 to 2021, for achieving the NWRC's vision and mission. It will be updated in the next two years.

STRATEGIC TRENDS

1. Providing support and educational services to Rural Women
2. Fostering cooperation with stakeholders
3. Strengthening Network capacities (constant striving for sustainability)

Each Strategic Trend has a set of goals with objectives and some example tactics designed to illustrate the kinds of actions that can help achieve the Network's mission.

NEEDS ANALYSIS

⇒ **IDENTIFYING AND TESTING** of probable practical solutions to help rural women who are small food producers to contribute to generating income and employment:

- activating and empowering them by networking and supporting self-initiative
- increasing their awareness, competences and skills by learning and self-initiative
- connecting and enhancing cooperation between rural women

⇒ **UNDERSTANDING AND EXPLORING** new trends "Fresh Food Economy" and agricultural entrepreneurship with stimulating and increasing awareness of citizens about the consumption of local and quality food

⇒ **INITIATING AND INCREASING** awareness of new products and innovative ideas by disseminating and exploiting

Based on the NEEDS ANALYSIS, NWRC focuses on the economic autonomy of women in the villages and provide opportunities for women through education.

The NWRC as an entity will listen, evolve and support a diverse array of members/partners all working collectively to fulfil its vision for empowering rural women together through lifelong learning and connecting.

THE CORE CHALLENGES

- interregional and European cooperation to contribute to the well-being
- promote social inclusion and rural women as a key player in economies and societies
- support female farmers
- promote trends "Fresh Food Economy", agricultural entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development
- strengthen agricultural-related segments of the economy, improve rural development contributing to creating profit and hiring
- promote a healthy, sustainable local food system, consumption of local and quality food from small producers and encourage interdependent relationships while improving access to nutritious, fresh foods for all citizens
- promote health, protect the agricultural assets and natural resources

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the Network is open and based on free will.

An individual (person) has the status of the associate member while the legal entity has the status of a full member or partner.

Individually, each member/partner is a self-directed, but collaborative that connects partners and pre-existing local partnerships to the NWRC vision. Members/partners undertake work specific to the needs of their geographies and collaborators.

The possibilities of cooperation are broad open, as well as involving new partners.

1. An individual (person) - an associate member status

NWRC is open to:

a) All women living in rural, especially for:

- Rural women, small-scale farmers, who experience social exclusion and limited market entry due to lack of entrepreneurial skills
- Rural women, who are involved in agriculture or the agriculture supply chain

b) Experts or practitioners: facilitators, educators, specialists, professionals, researchers

2. A legal entity - a full member or partner status

The Network is open to:

a) Adult education providers, especially those working with women in rural areas

Whether or not engaged with NWRC, they produce valuable knowledge and skills and deliver services that intertwine with NWRC goals.

b) Entities dealing with women's issues, gender equality, social inclusion or engaged in the field of agriculture:

- CSOs/NGOs, associations, cooperatives, organisations, groups, institutions, public-private partnerships, universities, public entities - public bodies and agencies, etc.

NWRC supports and does not abrogate or diminish the authorities and responsibilities of members/partners. It is anticipated members/partners will engage in those goals and objectives that are meaningful to them and align with their unique mission. Through individual partner responsibilities, authorities and accomplishments, the Network will achieve success.

We encourage national and international leaders to support the Network through information, policy, funding, and recognition action.

Also, we invite all organisations and interested parties of similar interests to join us.

SEE MORE INFORMATION ON OUR WEBSITE

ruralwomen.eu

Our web space (the Community Access to Fresh Foods Platform) will be developed and updated regularly, and serve as the e-learning and knowledge-sharing platform.

FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

Facebook: **@RWSFFproject**

Instagram: **@rwsff_project**