



University of Novi Sad
Faculty of Agriculture



Gender Identities in Agriculture

Bojana Komaromi, PhD, Assistant Professor, linguist

Mirela Tomaš Simin, PhD, Assistant Professor, agricultural economist

Marica Petrović, PhD, Assistant Professor, sociologist





Gender Studies in Rural Areas and Agriculture *-AgriGen*



- ❖ Erasmus+ Jean Monnet Module programme, module *AgriGen*, No 101047646
- ❖ Duration of the project: 01.02.2022 – 31.01.2025
- ❖ Final year students of Agricultural Economics, elective course
- ❖ Multidisciplinary module: Sociology, Agricultural Economics, Linguistics
- ❖ Web site: <http://agrigen.polj.uns.ac.rs>



The main goals of the module



- ❖ to introduce students to **the role and importance of the gender paradigm** in the processes of rural and agrarian development;
- ❖ to recognize the **gender regime** in different rural social processes and relationships;
- ❖ to introduce students to the notion of **gender inequality**;
- ❖ to develop **critical thinking** and ability to identify different **forms of gender inequality and discrimination**;



The main goals of the module



- ❖ to understand the importance of recognizing **gender as a social group** with similar or common positions, interests, values, needs, ability to organize, articulate and identify itself, which is a very important factor in **empowering women in rural areas**.
- ❖ to enable students to articulate themselves in this matter on one hand, and on the other hand to be able to contribute to creating opportunities to articulate these interests and **strengthening the internal developmental capacities of women** to become actively engaged in development activities in their rural communities.

Introduction



❖ Recognizing the gender regime and the basic assumptions of gender equality is a basis of an open, democratic and healthy society, constituted in accordance with the fundamental European values and the principles of social justice.

Gender regime and equality are reflected in equal opportunities to exercise any aspect of human rights for both women and men.

Introduction



- ❖ Modern Serbian society is facing major social changes – especially changes of rural areas – and it is searching for a key that would trigger the mechanism of development.
- ❖ Serbian villages face **economic, demographic and social problems**.
- ❖ Villages are threatened to lose their rurality – either by blending into urban spaces that are expanding at the expense of the rural areas or by undermining their own vitality.
- ❖ One of the basic requirements for villages is revitalization of the social life and rural economy.

Introduction



❖ The first step in the contemporary research of development potentials is analysis of human capital, i.e. analysis of the **constraints** as well as the **development potentials** of selected social groups in local rural communities.

The role of rural women in the development of local rural communities is viewed through the prism of their **roles** and by considering the **problems and constraints this social group faces**.

❖ In this way, it is possible to determine to which extent developmental changes in rural women can enhance social vitality of the communities they belong to.

Introduction



- ❖ Serbian villages traditionally had **patriarchal gender roles and identities**, which implied that women are inferior to men.
- ❖ In the transitional society in the today's Serbian villages, there are **different gender regimes and different gender identities**.

gender regimes
and gender identities
are influenced by

- socio-economic positions of women and men
- their working status and stability
- generational and national affiliation

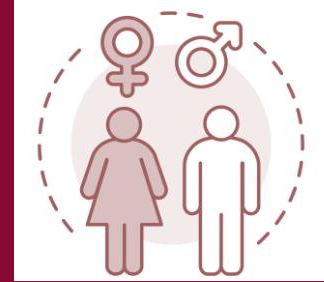
I Social constructions of gender



❖ Gender is a social and cultural construct.

In this respect, a distinction should be made between sex and gender:

- Sex is naturally given to us – Sex defines the male and female body, emphasizing anatomical and physiological differences, as something given to us by birth.
- Gender is socially assigned – Gender refers to the psychological, social and cultural differences between men and women.
- Many differences between men and women are not biological in their origin.
- Being a woman by sex implies different gender positions depending on cultural and religious environments. Gender is socially constructed depending on other ethnic, class and generational identities.



Gender is a very important factor in determining life opportunities of individuals and groups and their roles in social institutions (from family to the state level).

In this sense, gender creates privileged or unprivileged starting positions in one's life.

I Social constructions of gender



❖ Transmitting and learning gender roles takes place through both primary and secondary socialization, and through different socialization agents.

➤ Primary socialization acquired within the family and transmitted by the mother is considered to play a key role in gender constructs referring to intrinsic values, although peer groups and the media also have a great influence, especially in adolescence.

➤ In the contemporary Serbian rural communities, there are still traditional patriarchal gender constructions, which are at odds with the social gender constructions of the postmodern era, especially the gender constructions in the media. For this reason, it is not uncommon that gender identities collide, resulting in searching and frustrations related to what is socially desirable and expected in one's immediate environment.



II Contributions and challenges of feminist theories



❖ Historically, feminist thoughts, as theoretical and practical initiatives to redefine the concept of gender, are commonly divided in so-called “three big waves of feminism”.

➤ The first wave of feminism during the 18th and 19th centuries marks the period of the first mass gathering of women who sought change in gender relations to power. The first wave was aimed at gaining the right to vote, the right to education and professional work.

➤ The second wave emerged in 1960s, arising from the realization that the exercised rights did not lead to a complete change in the gender relations of power. The aim of the second wave was not only the division of power in the existing society, but also its radical change.

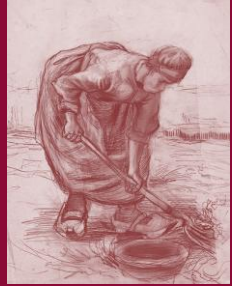
➤ The third wave is related to feminist thought and movement that emerged in 1980s. Thematically, in addition to sexuality and the balance between professional career and parenting, the third wave is increasingly addressing topics such as race and class relations, the role of the media, emerging technologies and popular culture.



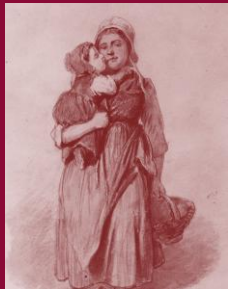
III Gender stereotypes and stigmatization



- ❖ Gender stereotypes are an integral part of every culture and every civilization, and there are numerous stigmatizations in this regard.
- ❖ Stigmatizations are especially present in small, closed rural areas with pronounced collective customary and moral rules that tend to mark every expression of individualism and diversity.



In Serbian patriarchal villages there were numerous stereotypes related to women's role and their behavior, and any deviation from these stereotypes was subject to collective stigmatisation and rejection.



- ❖ The position of women in a traditional villages was tied to **their work role and the role of mother.**
- ❖ The women's role of mother was extremely significant as it was the role for which the girls had been preparing since birth. Giving birth of a male child was especially appreciated, so a woman who did not live up to these expectations was in an extremely difficult position and was considered less worthy.

III Gender stereotypes and stigmatization

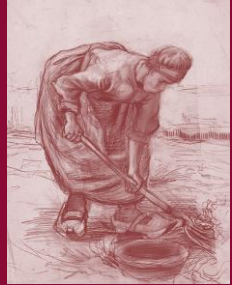


❖ In the most unfavorable positions were women who couldn't have children at all. Their husbands had the right to make them leave, or bring in another woman, with no condemn of the community. A woman without children was subject to mockery and pity of the whole community and severely stigmatized.

❖ In traditional society, only in older age were women liberated from certain taboos. As women by aging lose their reproductive role, in the eyes of the traditional male world, they become asexual and are allowed to act more relaxed.

❖ Over the years, women have gradually become allowed behavior that was previously reserved only for men: for example to drink, smoke, laugh loudly, etc.

❖ Older women could also give opinions on some decisions or participate in their making, from which they were completely excluded when young.



IV Gender and Language



❖ Language was for a long time treated entirely isolated from the social context in which it is used.

❖ Today, however, language is considered as a variable system determined by social, political, economic, cultural and other extra-linguistic factors, reflecting different roles, values and power relationships within a particular community.



Therefore, language can be seen as an indicator of the social status of certain social groups or phenomena, including gender equality.

➤ Examples from English:

- *woman doctor/lady doctor*, but also *male nurse* - modifiers diminish a person's prestige, drawing attention to their sex
- '*lady*', '*madam*', '*mistress*' – initially has neutral connotations, but gradually acquires negative connotations (particularly pertaining to sexual behaviour).

IV Gender and Language



- ❖ In Serbia Law on Gender Equality was adopted in 2021:
 - The use of gender-sensitive language becomes a legal obligation
 - By changing the language we change perception of the gender roles and identities of women in our society.
 - Language is not only reflection of the ongoing social changes and an indicator of the existing gender categories, but it is also a powerful tool for their creation.
- ❖ The provisions of the law have caused controversy in the public between – those who believe that this is a way to increase the presence of women in important positions in the language (since women were previously rarely engaged in socially important professions and occupied high positions) and circles who consider gender-sensitive language as “abuse of language” or “language corruption”.

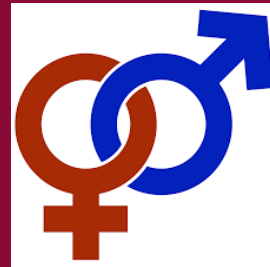
It is necessary to raise awareness of gender stereotypes and discrimination in language in both public and private spheres, including all levels of education and as well as the media.

V Gender in transition and transition of gender



- ❖ Serbian society is considered to be in a belated and difficult post-socialist transformation. Also, the way in which social changes take place, as well as their effects, are not evenly distributed.
- ❖ Rural areas have less wealth and social power, and are thus less attractive, which is reflected in characteristics of rural families, their survival and developmental strategies, as well as their role in reproducing the rural way of life and reproducing gender roles. In this sense, social transition largely affects the transition of gender and creation of new and different gender constructs and/or the revival of old ones.

In this sense, social transition largely affects the transition of gender and creation of new and different gender constructs and/or the revival of old ones.

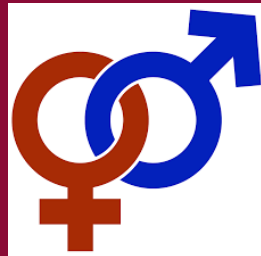


V Gender in transition and transition of gender



- ❖ The position of women in Serbian traditional culture was extremely inferior to men, full of negative stereotypes and with assigned social roles that women should adhere to. She was expected to be a good mother, wife, self-sacrificing member of the family community, loyal and submissive. Her position in society is closely related to what position she had in the family. She was excluded from most political, cultural, economic spheres of social life.
- ❖ The **change in traditional patriarchal gender roles in Serbian society** is due to increased education of women and their inclusion in public and socio-political life. These changes occur **in the period after World War II**, with the increase in education and the acquisition of legal, political and economic independence.

In **post-communist Serbian society**, gender structures are once again changing. A woman loses the self-respect gained in socialism in the period of wars and transition when she loses her economic independence. Rural gender roles of modern society are created under the influence of **new value systems of modern society** and **the action of old ones** that have unevenly persisted depending on the regional development of certain parts of Serbian society.



VI Family Gender Regime



The family has a great influence in creating, transferring and realizing gender roles.

"ACHIEVING GENDER
EQUALITY REQUIRES
THE ENGAGEMENT
OF WOMEN AND
MEN, BOYS AND
GIRLS. IT IS
EVERYONE'S
RESPONSIBILITY."

BAN KI-MOON

- ❖ Rural families in Serbia are not the pre-modern form of urban families. They are separate entities, shaped by special characteristics of the rural social structure.
- ❖ In the traditional, patriarchal Serbian villages, a woman's social position was entirely determined by her position in the family, since the family was the only sphere of her activity, influence and self-actualization.
- ❖ Gender role socialization thus used to take place solely in the primary, family environment, with gender roles being matrilineally transmitted. In this regard, it is very important to emphasize that gender is constituted in the micro-sphere, for long remaining trapped in it.

VI Family Gender Regime



- ❖ The Serbian contemporary rural family (although largely “resembling” urban families and households) still has (partly) preserved traditional features (multi-generational household, relics of the role of family leader) that helps them in facing the risks of transition.
- ❖ It is important to emphasize that retraditionalization is usually forced, serving as a mechanism to mitigate the uncertainty of the process, as well as the effects and outcomes of social transformation to which villages are particularly exposed. In areas that are more socially attractive, i.e. where the risk of social exclusion is lower, the process of retraditionalisation is less pronounced.

The described social processes present new challenges in empowering and liberating women from the imposed, predetermined roles, amidst the collision of old and new gender values.

VII Gender identities in agriculture



- ❖ Active participation of women in agricultural labour on family farms has always been implied, but has never been clearly recognized and valued. In this sense, the role of women is often marginalized and devalued.
- ❖ Working on family farm is specific as it implies interaction of work and life.
- ❖ Women on farms commonly perceive themselves as housewives, rather than as agricultural workers, regardless of their almost equal engagement in agricultural work. *In this way, women show that they see their place in the house, thus devaluing their contribution to the family farm business, which is not at all negligible and is recognized as feminization of agricultural labour.*



VII Gender identities in agriculture



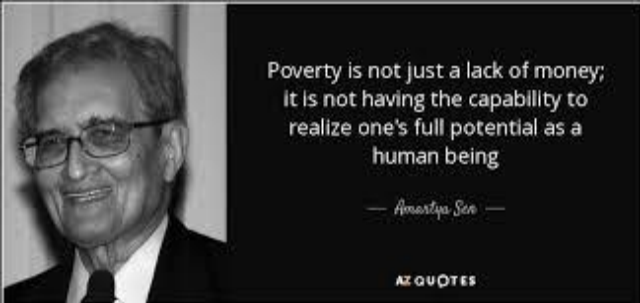
- ❖ This is especially noticeable when it comes to the sphere of decision-making, where there is still a pattern according to which decisions related to the daily organization of household chores are left to women, while decisions concerning the economy (that is, agricultural production itself) are made by men.
- ❖ Women are rarely the owners of land and/or houses and the owners of agricultural holdings, which makes it even more difficult for them to access, financial resources for the development of entrepreneurship.
- ❖ The assumption is that in cases where the woman/wife is more educated and economically active, as well as when the family lives in a developed local rural community (which implies the modernization of everyday life), more egalitarian forms of decision-making are developed and strengthened.
- ❖ In the conditions of the continuous crisis of villages and agriculture in Serbian society, the idea of diversification of farm income is revived, and **women's rural entrepreneurship** is seen as a way to realize that idea.

VIII Gender and Poverty



Gender inequality is often a form of social injustice closely linked to poverty.

- ❖ Women are exposed to double risk based on gender (as a social construct) and socio-economic status.
- ❖ The feminization of poverty is due to a number of structural factors, such as stereotypes, differences in earnings, mismatches between work and family life, and various forms of gender discrimination.
- ❖ Laws and strategies related to the area of social protection are not gender sensitive - there are no specific normative segments that address the specifics of social protection for women in rural areas, and there is also insensitivity to the specific needs of the rural relative to the urban population.
- ❖ Rural women are in a particularly disadvantaged position in the labor market, since they account for more than half of rural unemployed people, and rural women find it difficult to obtain information on possible measures by the National Employment Service.



VIII Gender and Poverty



❖ In rural areas, due to cultural biases in favor of men, "investments" in women's human capital are at an extremely low level because it is thought that the profits from such investments will be much lower than those invested in men in the household(farm).

This means that in the said value system, women and girls are expected to put their needs behind the needs of other household members, which puts them at a disadvantage when it comes to access to the social protection system and other resources.

❖ Poverty risks of rural women are increasing with a more pronounced focus on low-productive agricultural production that does not provide them with sufficient living standards and often access to pension and disability insurance, since mostly males are household heads and those insurances are being realized through them. With the territorial distance from the city center there is also the problem of lack of institutional integration.

IX Gender and Education



❖ The role of education in modern society is ambivalent, at the same time mitigating and reproducing the existing system of social inequalities. *In modern societies / economies, knowledge, i.e. information is the basis of social power and the most effective means for achieving goals.*

Developing knowledge and skills is considered to be an important factor in changing the economic mentality, as one of the goals of the economic (as well as social) transformation. In this way, rural conservatism (as a relic of the traditional economic mentality) loses its strength.

❖ Strengthening of the educational capital of the working rural population, accompanied with their experience, enables them to clearly perceive their role and position in production / market processes, analyze the opportunities in the rural economy, plan and combine available resources.

IX Gender and Education



"THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN IS THE BEST WAY
TO SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT."

E. O. WILSON

© Lifesack Group

❖ The strengthened educational capital of women can be adequately included in development processes, enabling women to be emancipated and develop themselves individually, as well as to actively participate through their roles in rural development.

Education becomes one of the most important means of their social mobility, and through personal engagement women can create their destiny, which is no longer predetermined as in a patriarchal society.

- ❖ However, there is still the problem of *low educational structure* of women in Serbian villages.
- ❖ According to the latest census, nearly a third of the female rural population is not educated, and more than half of them have no qualifications. In addition, rural women are a group with the highest proportion of computer illiterate women.

X Changes in gender structures and gender legal regulations



- ❖ Unfavorable position of women in patriarchal Serbian villages arises also from the inheritance law, i.e. general legal regulations which are unfavorable for women.
- ❖ The legal position of village women, in fact women in Serbia in general, was regulated in the first half of 20th century by the Serbian Civil Code, which was valid from 1844 to 1946. It established the privileged legal position of men in almost all areas. Women's position in rural communities improved after World War II, when female children began to acquire more education, which was legally prescribed.

It is very important that women have not only formal but also real rights, i.e. to achieve gender equality de facto and de jure.

XI Gender paradigm in rural development



"GENDER EQUALITY IS MORE THAN A GOAL IN ITSELF. IT IS A PRECONDITION FOR MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF REDUCING POVERTY, PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING GOOD GOVERNANCE."

-KOFI ANNAN

❖ The concept of sustainable rural development emphasizes the unity and synergies of the various dimensions of development within the concept of sustainability: from the economic, social and political to the cultural and environmental dimensions of rural development.

❖ The essence of neo-endogenous rural development lies in the synergistic action of local and global processes at the level of rural communities.

❖ The idea is to activate the internal, specific and available developmental human, social and environmental potentials of rural communities.

XI Gender paradigm in rural development



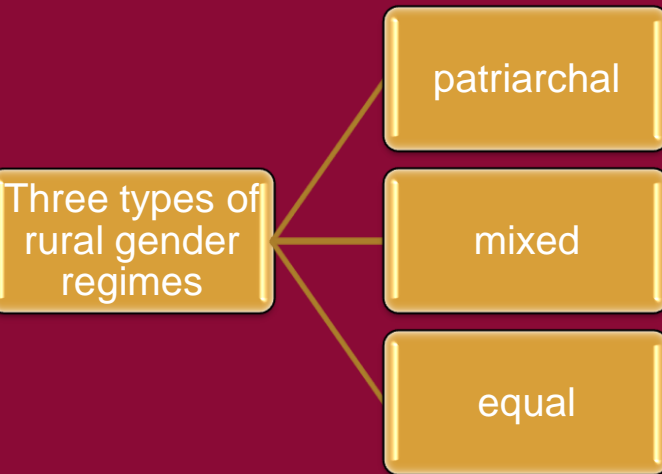
- ❖ A common feature of the concept of neo-endogenous rural development and sustainable livelihoods is the orientation towards human needs and opportunities, supporting the ideas of active participation and developing partnerships, finding ways to overcome the situation of vulnerability and exclusion.
- ❖ Achieving the sustainability of livelihoods, among other things, involves enhancing efficiency in the use of available resources, as well as synergistic development of small scale economies.

With this in mind, the issue of women's participation in sustainable rural and agricultural development is increasingly being linked to the socio-cultural and political component of sustainability.

XI Gender paradigm in rural development



❖ Rural women participate in all three dimensions of the reproduction of rural way of life (biological, social, economic). Rural gender regime is a result of the attributes of rurality which define gender relations.



❖ In contemporary Serbian society, all three types of rural gender regimes are evident, with greater presence of traditional and mixed type. Both types are quite rigid in terms of gender super/subordination, at the expense of rural/farm women. That imposes poorer social chances of rural/farm women.

❖ Traditional and mixed rural gender regimes imply “glass ceiling” phenomenon among rural/farm women, which causes scarce means to improve social chances. In such rural gender regimes, privatization of women and their capitals is at the high level.



Thank you for your attention!