



# Gender, culture, and sustainability in the Mediterranean

Cultural landscapes and biodiversity in the Mediterranean Basin

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CULTURAL LANDSCAPES AND BIODIVERSITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN

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# 1. Introduction

Women in rural areas play a central role in the socio-economic development of a region, especially for the sustainable use and conservation of resources. Gender equality and women's empowerment are a prerequisite for sustainable development, as recognized by the Sustainable Development Goals. However, despite the growing number of female entrepreneurs in rural areas, their role is underestimated and often invisible. Discrimination in the access to, use of and control over land and natural resources is still latent in many countries. Gender-based discrimination is also present in the labour market, even when national legislation guarantees equal rights for women and men (Union for the Mediterranean and CIHEAM, 2018).

Traditionally, women in rural areas are charged with the well-being of the family and community. They are responsible for collecting water, firewood, food and medicinal plants for household consumption, passing down cultural knowledge to each generation (Seghirate, 2017). Their role is particularly important for the conservation of cultural landscapes with ecological value. However, the invisibility of women's roles and conservation knowledge – perpetuated through a lack of research and sex-disaggregated data on women's and men's specific contributions – impedes sustainable development and effective conservation of cultural landscapes. Countries continue to miss out on the potential of women and their specific knowledge and capacities to enhance sustainable use and management of natural resources.

## 1.1 Contextual framework

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The MAVA foundation is implementing a project to support the socio-economic sustainability of cultural practices of ecological and human value in the Mediterranean Basin. The project focuses on:

- Dehesas and Montados, lowland agro-silvo-pastoral landscapes characteristic of the Extremadura region in Spain and the Alentejo region in Portugal;
- Mountainous landscapes of the High Atlas in Morocco and the Al Shouf mountain in Lebanon;
- Island landscapes of Lemnos in Greece and Menorca in Spain.

These landscapes have been conserved by traditional land-use practices, largely related to the primary sector (all activities with an end purpose of using natural resources, such as agriculture, fishing, or mining), that have maintained and preserved highly biodiverse, unique ecosystems. However, women's and men's roles, knowledge and experience associated with these cultural practices can differ greatly due to the traditional and social gender norms around labour division and socio-economic opportunities.

## 1.2 Objectives

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In order for the project to be successful, the identification and analysis of women's and men's differentiated roles, knowledge and experiences of cultural practices is key. The following document provides an overview of existing literature and highlights important data gaps where further research is needed. The objectives of the project are to:

- Identify and provide economic solutions for maintaining and/or reviving the cultural practices associated with these landscapes; and
- Enhance knowledge of economic opportunities to increase the value of preserved landscapes.

This literature review aims to inform MAVA partners about women's and men's differentiated roles, knowledge and experiences relating to the cultural practices that contribute to the conservation and well-being of the selected cultural landscapes in the Mediterranean Basin. Additionally, this literature review

provides initial resources for conducting gender analyses in each of the project sites and knowledge gaps that need to be filled.

### 1.3 Methodology

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This paper was informed by a literature review conducted through online desk research in English, Spanish and French. Given the different languages used in the various geographical locations where the MAVA projects take place, each content search for a specific area was conducted in the most appropriate language. Key terms included the following, as well as synonyms and related words:

Gender	Farming	Terrace agriculture
Women	Livestock	Water management
Sustainable land-use practices	Transhumance	Forestry
Cultural landscapes	Pastoral practices	Fishing
Rural areas	Grazing	Biodiversity conservation

Given the diverse land-use practices in each region, only those terms related to the activities of a determined location were used in each search. Resources included international and national policies, government reports, non-profit organizations' reports, civil society reports and articles, academic publications, grey literature and news articles. Data availability varies per country, and over 80 resources were compiled for this literature review.

## 2. Gender roles in sustainable cultural practices in the Mediterranean Basin

There are many differences in the socio-economic and political status of each country where the project landscapes are located, especially between the Northern (Portugal, Spain and Greece) and Southern (Morocco and Lebanon) countries. However, they all share persistent gender inequalities, especially in the south Mediterranean and in rural and agricultural areas. Rural women often do the lowest-quality jobs and receive less income or none at all, as their roles are often seen as reproductive work and part of their household chores. Additionally, in some southern Mediterranean countries, women suffer legal discrimination and violence around inheritance issues and access to property (Seghirate, 2017).

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, where Morocco and Lebanon are located, nearly 80 percent of agricultural production comes from small-scale farming. However, women's roles in small-scale farming are often underestimated and invisible, as women are generally unpaid, despite working on some of the most time-consuming activities. The burden of domestic work, which often falls on women, reduces the time women have available to invest in economic activities or education, depriving them of the social benefits and protection rights that formally recognized employees enjoy (Seghirate, 2017). In Morocco and Lebanon, while both women and men have the same rights

to own land and other property, discriminatory inheritance laws and customary norms reduce women's access to land. In Morocco, daughters inherit half of what sons do and often renounce their share in favour of their brothers or sons, as is customary. In Lebanon, civil inheritance law provides non-Muslim women and men with equal inheritance rights, yet Islamic law gives a larger share of inheritance to Muslim men (FAO, n.d.a; UN Women 2015).

### Geneva Declaration for Rural Women

The Geneva Declaration for Rural Women recognizes the importance and key role of rural women in democracy, socio-economic development, and the agricultural sector. Acknowledging that rural women are disproportionately poorer than rural men despite their contributions, the Declaration proposes a series of strategies and actions to improve the well-being of rural women, especially the poorest. Strategies include increasing rural women's access to natural resources and participation in decision-making, the revision of discriminatory legislative frameworks, and ensuring that their economic needs and well-being are taken into account by sectoral policies and programmes, among others (United Nations, 1992).

Spain, Portugal and Greece, as members of the European Union, must comply with the EU's legislation and directives on women's equality – a core principle of the union since its creation in 1957 – and women's empowerment. Over the past decades, many directives and resolutions have been adopted which aim to achieve zero discrimination and equal treatment and pay at work for women and men, including in rural areas. The 2005 Council Regulation on Support for Rural Development, updated in 2013, stresses the importance of promoting rural women in the agricultural sector. The need to empower rural women has been seconded by the European Parliament, which had published three reports on the situation of women in rural areas as of 2019 (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, n.d.a; Llobregat, 2018).

Evidence from the latest report on agricultural statistics, published in 2018, shows that European women managed 28.4 percent of farm holdings (Eurostat, 2018). However, the invaluable work carried out by spouses and other female family members on farms is often invisible and is not included in official statistics, preventing women from accessing social security services and benefiting from agricultural aid schemes and development programmes. To increase the visibility of women in the agricultural sector, the European



Union encourages member countries to promote women's land ownership and develop databases on the role of women in rural areas (European Parliament, 2017).

The scarcity of information on women's roles and contributions in rural areas, including activities related to the sustainable cultural practices that maintain the well-being of Mediterranean landscapes, hinders efforts to improve women's lives in rural areas. The following sections provide an overview of available literature and information regarding women's and men's roles, knowledge and experiences in the selected Mediterranean landscapes.

## 2.1 Low-land agro-silvo-pastoral landscape: Dehesas

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The Dehesas, in Spanish, and Montados, in Portuguese, are an agro-silvo-pastoral ecosystem situated between Spain and Portugal, mainly located in the southwest of the Iberian Peninsula. Covering three million hectares of territory, mainly in Spain, people employ a combination of traditional farming, forestry and pastoral practices – including transhumance<sup>i</sup> – that have supported the management and conservation of the region's biodiversity for thousands of years (Dehesas Ibericas, n.d.; MAVA, 2019). The main trees in the region, holm and cork oaks, are used extensively in farming to feed livestock and wildlife during the winter season, as well as for producing cork, firewood and charcoal (Dehesas Ibericas, n.d.). The practice of transhumance, mainly of merino sheep, enables soil regeneration and promotes the overall sustainability of the Dehesas ecosystem (Terés Landeta et al. n.d.). Given the proximity between the regions of Spain and Portugal where transhumance is practiced, findings on the socio-economic changes and the role of women in agriculture are similar.

### Dehesas, Spain

Rural areas in Spain and Portugal are experiencing depopulation and abandonment of agricultural and forestry lands, contributing to the desertion of those areas and the deterioration and dismantlement of infrastructures and basic services essential for rural populations (Carvalho, 2018; Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, 2009). In Spain, for example, there has been a masculinization and ageing of rural populations, as young people, particularly educated women, move to the cities in search of economic opportunities. This phenomenon results from the modernization of agriculture that has reduced women's traditional involvement in farming, relegating them to domestic and care work and reduced economic opportunities in rural areas (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, n.d. b; Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, 2009; Escuriol Martinez et al., 2014). Those women who remain play a key role in the sustainability and cohesion of rural communities in Spain and Portugal. However, the work of many of them as unpaid productive workers is often seen as part of their reproductive work and, as such, is unreported in the economic sector and national statistics (Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, 2009).

A 2009 study on the living conditions and social position of women in rural areas in Spain identified several obstacles for accessing better information on gender roles, experiences and knowledge. Obstacles include scarcity of data disaggregation, especially by sex; limited research with a gender perspective; and invisibility of women's productive contribution in rural areas (Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, 2009). Building upon that study, the Spanish Government conducted a 2011 analysis on gender equality in rural areas that confirmed the results from the 2009 study.

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<sup>i</sup> Transhumance is an agricultural practice where livestock graze in different fields in different seasons, in order to preserve the environmental productivity of each field.

While there has been an increase in women's incorporation in the labour market, unemployment rates in rural areas remain higher than average. The 2011 gender study indicated that rural women in Spain continued facing wage discrimination and insecurity, as they were often employed in temporal non-qualified or administrative positions, mainly in the services sector, while men were in directive and decision-making positions as entrepreneurs and employers (Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, 2009, 2011). This analysis is still relevant today, as illustrated by the results of the 2018 Economically Active Population Survey. In Spain, women's participation in the agricultural sector is scarce, accounting for 24 percent of employees. They also face greater insecurities: Forty-one percent of women working in the agriculture sector are unpaid, in comparison to 36 percent of men. Furthermore, there are comparatively more women than men working part-time (13 percent of women compared to 6 percent of men), and fewer women have permanent contracts, 60 percent versus 64 percent of men (INE, 2018).

Domestic and care work is still women's main responsibility, and men are rarely involved. According to the Economically Active Population Survey, 22 percent of women working part-time list taking care of family members and other family issues as the reason, compared to 4 percent of men (INE, 2018). The gender analysis found that greater gender inequalities exist in the most isolated rural areas, where a patriarchal system is present, and gender-differentiated roles are often reinforced by both women and men (Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, 2011).

Specific gender studies for each autonomous region in Spain do not currently exist, but some statistical information can be found from the National Statistical Institute (INE in Spanish). According to the Agricultural Census of 2009, 28 percent of agricultural holdings in Extremadura are owned by women but only 22 percent are managed by them (INE; 2009a). The 2018 Economically Active Population Survey shows that 49 percent of women in Extremadura of 16 years and older are economically active in Extremadura, four points below the national average, mainly working in the services sector, and only 5 percent of them work in the agriculture sector, compared to 19 percent of men. In Extremadura, there is also a greater difference in full-time and part-time employment for women and men. There are more women working part-time than the national average, 31 percent; however, the share of men with part-time jobs is the same as the national average at six percent (INE, 2018).

### *Spain – actions taken*

In order to increase women's economic empowerment in rural areas and bridge the gender gap, the Spanish government adopted a series of laws, policies and initiatives to support women's incorporation in the agricultural sector. In 2011, Spain adopted a law on shared ownership of agricultural exploitations in order to recognize women's rights as agricultural workers, as well as to secure their access to agricultural aid schemes, social security services and retirement benefits (Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, n.d. b). The government also adopted a Plan for the Promotion of Women in Rural Areas (2015-2018) to support women's economic empowerment, entrepreneurship and participation in decision-making spheres (Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, 2015). Under this Plan, the Government has implemented several programmes to promote women entrepreneurs and support gender equality in the rural sector, such as the Challenge Rural Women Programme and the Programme for Gender Equality, as compiled in the XXXVIII Equality Enterprise Bulletin (Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, 2016).

### *Spain – historical context*

One of the gaps identified in the Plan for the Promotion of Women in Rural Areas is the lack of information on gender-differentiated roles. Sex-disaggregated data and information on women's and



men's roles and responsibilities in the agricultural sector in Spain, and specifically in the Dehesa of Extremadura, is scant. One source of information is a resource book written by Acosta Naranjo (2002), titled "The framework of diversity: Social anthropology of Dehesa." Acosta presents an anthropological study of the cultural practices and traditions in the Dehesa of Extremadura in the 1950s under the dictatorship.

At the time, the Dehesa was characterized by large plantations where entire families worked for a landlord under poor conditions. When landlords needed additional help, they often used the wives of their male employees. Women dedicated most of their time to reproductive work, including household chores and taking care of children, elderly and ill people. In some cases, women were also responsible for the breeding of small animals, such as hens. Some women also had paid jobs in their landlord's plantations or in neighbouring ones as household servants, collecting charcoal, or in the reaping of hay in large plantations. Additionally, women sometimes participated in the collection of acorns, olives and legumes, because they often worked faster but were paid less than men. In poor households, women were responsible for collecting wild plants for self-consumption and to sell to other households. Women were also in charge of selling the bush meat hunted by men. On top of all this, women often helped their husbands when needed, without receiving any income. For example, in households where the husband was a shepherd, women were responsible for the production of cheese (Acosta, 2002).

Acosta's book provides insightful information on women's and men's roles in rural areas in Extremadura in the 1950s. However, more up-to-date information on the evolution of their roles is needed to better understand women's and men's needs and to effectively bridge the gender gap in rural areas in Spain. The article "the situation of rural women in Spain: the case of small-scale artisan food producers" (Escuriol Martinez et al., 2014) provides some information on the role of women as food producers and the opportunities in the small-scale artisan food production sector through case studies from five regions, yet Extremadura is not one of them.

### **Montados, Portugal**

Available sex-disaggregated data from the National Institute of Statistics of Portugal shows that Portuguese women experience similar trends: higher unemployment rates, lower participation rates in the agriculture sector and less ownership of lands. For example, in June 2019, 7.3 percent of economically active women were unemployed in comparison to 6.1 percent of men (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2019).

Women's participation in the agriculture sector in Portugal is higher than in Spain, yet gender differences persist. In 2018, agriculture provided employment to six percent of the Portuguese population. However, the majority of agricultural employees – which comprises agriculture, farming of animals, hunting and forestry activities – were men, accounting for 68 percent of employees. The unbalanced participation of women in formal employment in agriculture was caused by traditional gender-differentiated roles, where women were responsible for domestic work and supported their husbands' agricultural activities. The work completed by women is often not reflected in national statistics. According to a 2001 community household panel, in addition to being retired, the main activity that prevents women from working or working more hours is domestic work and child and elderly care (33 percent of cases). Conversely, men never identified domestic work as the reason for not working or working fewer hours, instead citing retirement (62 percent) and education (22 percent) (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2019).

Women in Portugal also face discrimination when it comes to land ownership. According to data from the 2016 Agricultural Census, 39 percent of agricultural managers had an owner farming type of tenure, the majority of whom (27 percent) were men. This inequality is even greater in the Alentejo region, where

transhumance is used. In this region, 43 percent of managers were landowners, yet women only accounted for 10 percent, or one in four managers (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2019).

### *Portugal – Actions Taken*

Information and data on the role of Portuguese rural women in agriculture is scarce, and there are no known gender analyses or specific programmes or projects.

## **2.2 Mountainous landscape: High Atlas (Morocco) and El Shouf Mountain (Lebanon)**

The landscapes in the High Atlas Mountains in Morocco and the El Shouf Mountain in Lebanon are characterized by a habitat mosaic in altitude gradients produced by the interventions of traditional farming, grazing, forestry and water management (MAVA, 2019). These landscapes currently face demographic and/or economic decline.

Rural areas in the south of the Mediterranean are going through a process of economic transformation and feminization, as men migrate to cities and abroad to obtain better economic opportunities, while women stay behind. Climate change, migration and population growth have contributed to a decline in agricultural incomes and an increase in rural poverty. Despite women's increasing role in agriculture, they hold less land than men, often smaller plots of lower quality. The scarcity of data on women's contribution to the agriculture sector, which is often unpaid and seen as a part of their household work, limits policymakers' and practitioners' ability to adopt effective measures to address sustainability in rural areas (Lehel, 2018).

MAVA partners in Morocco are conducting targeted activities with local communities, including youth, on traditional practices and governance systems that can halt the loss of biodiversity. Such practices include the traditional use and harvesting of plants, water management and permaculture practices (Rooted Everyday, 2018). Meanwhile, MAVA partners in Lebanon are monitoring biodiversity and have supported the establishment of a botanic butterfly garden trail. They have also conducted training in the West Bekaa region with youth – including women – on the cultural values of the Shouf Mountain landscape in relation to biodiversity, sustainable use of agriculture, water resources, bird-hunting practices and legislation, aquatic plants and animals, and the sustainable land management system known as hima (Rooted Everyday, 2018).

### Hima system

Traditionally, local communities in the region follow a sustainable land management system known as Hima, “protected area” in Arabic, that uses sustainable land patterns to ensure long-term survival of ecosystems in harsh environments. Hima is a community-based approach, originating over 1,500 years ago, that is used for conservation. One of the MAVA partners in the region, the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL), is implementing a project supported by the UN Women Fund for Gender Equality to empower women in the Hima system by encouraging their participation in decision-making and developing marketing plans to promote traditional products. The perception that women are closer to nature, in part due to their role as the main users of natural resources – including water, firewood, plants and medicine – makes them essential in the conservation of Hima sites and the broader environment (Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon, 2016).

## **High Atlas, Morocco**

The High Atlas is a mountain range in western Morocco characterized by a general aridity, with a rainy season in winter and droughts in summer, and high biodiversity. Local communities, including the Amazigh people, have lived in the High Atlas for centuries, using an agro-silvo-pastoral subsistence system that has sustainably conserved the landscape and its ecosystems. Traditional practices include collectively managed water harvesting, seasonal short-distance transhumance in communal lands (known in Amazigh as *agdal*), terrace agriculture for soil conservation, traditional management of trees and the collection of plants for medicine and other cultural practices (MAVA, n.d.). Women have specific roles, knowledge and experiences in these sustainable cultural practices, yet initial findings show that literature on the gender-differentiated traditional activities related to sustainable land uses in the High Atlas is limited.

### *Morocco – gender inequalities*

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Gender and Land Rights Database, as well as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) provide a country overview of Morocco, including details on property. Land in Morocco is fragmented, and 70 percent of agricultural holdings are no larger than 2.1 hectares. Despite this fragmentation, only 2.5 percent of arable land is owned by women, who account for only 4.4 percent of landowners (FAO, n.d. a; Seghirate, 2017).

Women's limited ownership of land is due, in part, to inheritance laws that discriminate against daughters, who inherit half of what sons do (OECD, 2019a; FAO, n.d.a). Customary norms lead women to renounce their share in favour of their brothers or sons in order to prevent land from leaving the family patrimony (FAO, n.d. a). Further, women often cede their right to farm in exchange for a percentage of their family's farming revenue due to social norms and because they face greater obstacles in transportation to and from agricultural sites (Seghirate, 2017). In some cases, this decision can be influenced by the risk of Gender Based-Violence (GBV), especially because there is little effective legislation in Morocco on GBV, domestic violence, or sexual harassment (Adnane, 2018; OECD, 2019a).

In communal land, which represents 42 percent of Morocco's land, only tribal men could inherit the right to farm until 2012, when the practice was reversed due to the advocacy efforts of a Moroccan women's land rights movement called *Soulaleyate*. Yet, in practice, there are many challenges that prevent women from accessing land, including few women knowing and exercising their rights, the opposition of communal delegates to those who claim their rights and the lack of legislation that determines the share of land that can be given to women (Adnane, 2018).

Women's formal involvement in the economic sector in Morocco is limited. As of 2004, women are no longer legally obliged to obey their husbands, yet it is customary for husbands or fathers to make decisions on whether women work outside of the home, especially in rural areas (OECD, 2019a). In 2018, less than half of the total population aged 15 years and over (46.2 percent) was economically active in Morocco. The percentage of economically active people is especially low among women, with only two out of ten women of working age being economically active, in comparison to seven out of ten men. While unemployment rates are relatively low (10 percent), women again tend to have higher rates of unemployment: 14 percent of women of working age are unemployed in comparison to eight percent of men. In rural areas, the main employment sector is agriculture – including forestry and fisheries – which provides work for 72 percent of the employed population (Haut-Commissariat au Plan, 2019). According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development, women's role in the agriculture sector in rural Morocco is key and they participate in up to 93 percent of activities in the agricultural supply chain (AgriMaroc, 2017). While they only represent a quarter of the formally employed

population in rural areas, women are concentrated in the agriculture and industry sectors, accounting for 42.5 percent of workers in agriculture (Taqeem Initiative, 2018)

Despite women's contribution to agriculture, their work is often not remunerated, or they work for lower wages. According to 2018 employment data, 70.5 percent of employed rural women in Morocco were unpaid (Haut-Commissariat au Plan, 2019). Women mainly participate in informal family farming and subsistence agriculture, which is seen as part of their household work and, in turn, remains unreported (Agence Française Développement, 2015; Taqeem Initiative, 2018). The time burden of household chores limits women's capacity to participate in the formal economy, yet their contributions to rural livelihoods are essential for rural development and the prosperity and well-being of their households. According to Morocco's Time Use Survey, 95 percent of women spend on average five hours daily on domestic work, mainly inside the household, while men only dedicate an average of 43 minutes. Conversely, women only spend one hour and 20 minutes in productive work outside the home, while men dedicate five hours and 25 minutes (Haut-Commissariat au Plan, 2014).

Barriers to women's economic empowerment include dependency on family work, which is largely unpaid; limited access to education, information, financial services and market and entrepreneurial opportunities; limited recognition of their local knowledge and resources; and strong gender-based division of roles and patriarchal norms that discriminate against women (Taqeem Initiative, 2018). In rural areas, 72 percent of women are illiterate in comparison to 40 percent in urban areas (Haut-Commissariat au Plan, 2013).

### *Morocco – women's roles*

Women in rural areas are custodians of traditional knowledge around environmental use and conservation, as they are responsible for securing food for the household. In some regions, women breed livestock, cultivate commercial kitchen gardens, irrigate, fertilize soil, gather, harvest and sow. Additionally, many women have specific skills related to farming, weaving, embroidery, tapestry making and other crafts (Nafaa, 2010). In rural areas, only 39 percent of households have water on the premises, which means that women spend time collecting water (WHO and UNICEF, 2015) and thus have traditional knowledge on water use and management – key to maintaining the traditional use of landscapes in the face of climate change.

A peer-reviewed paper on women's roles in food security in Amazigh communities provides useful information around women's and men's contribution to the sustainable use of High Atlas landscapes. Traditionally, Amazigh communities are self-sufficient, and their contemporary diet is still characterized by seasonal foods and regional variations. In the High Atlas, the Amazigh diet includes millet, corn, goat meat and dairy products. Belahsen, Naciri and El Ibrahim (2017) explain how women play a key role in the preservation of local, biodiverse seeds, which are essential to their Berber diet. While most food products are consumed fresh, women play a key role in the conservation of dried fruits and vegetables, butter, honey and jerky, using traditional techniques. Additionally, women are responsible for sowing and harvesting agricultural products, rearing poultry and cattle, and collecting water and firewood. Likewise, they are

#### Amazigh peoples

In the High Atlas, Amazigh peoples, also known as Berbers, depend on herding of goats, sheep and cows as well as crops, horticulture and fruits to secure their livelihoods. These activities are framed by the agdal system, a communal agro-silvo-pastoral resource management system that consists of prohibiting access to a given resource for a given period of time to guarantee its regrowth. Areas managed under the agdal system have greater floral biodiversity and vegetation cover than surrounding areas not managed by Amazigh people (Med-O-Med, n.d.).

the bearers of knowledge about medicinal plants, seed selections and conservation. The transmission of these cultural practices and dietary knowledge is essential for the conservation of both biodiversity and the Amazigh language (Belahsen et al., 2017).

Social changes, including shifts from self-sufficiency agriculture to market-driven production, have led to the introduction and increased production of a select few crops for export and a reduction and homogenization of the Amazigh diet. This has resulted in a loss in food diversity and has affected both local biodiversity and the traditional use of plants for food and medicine (Belahsen et al., 2017). Belahsen et al. (2017) provide insights into women's traditional knowledge around resource management, yet more information is needed to understand women's contributions to other traditional land-use practices in the High Atlas.

### **Shouf Mountains, Lebanon**

The Shouf Mountains, a hotspot of biodiversity, are located in the southern district of Mount Lebanon. They contain the Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve, which includes one quarter of Lebanon's cedar forest. Lebanese cedars are not only the oldest forests documented in history, but they also occupy an important place in the cultural and religious heritage of Druze and Maronite Christians in the region. They are also a symbol for Lebanon, as reflected in its flag (Shouf Biosphere Reserve, n.d.b).

Located at an altitude ranging from 1000 to 1980 meters, this reserve was created in 1996 to prevent further deforestation of cedar forest and occupies five percent of the country's territory (MAVA, n.d.; Shouf Biosphere Reserve, n.d.a). The reserve is classified as an Important Birds Area (IBA) and Key Biodiversity Area (KBA), and in 2005 was declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve (UNESCO, 2011). Around 100,000 people live in the surrounding region and in the 24 villages located inside the reserve, many of whom play an important role in conserving biodiversity through traditional practices of pastoralism and farming (MAVA, n.d.; Shouf Biosphere Reserve, n.d.a).

### ***Lebanon – gender inequalities***

Women in Lebanon face discrimination at multiple levels due to patriarchal practices that are reinforced by the socio-political system. While Article 7 of Lebanon's Constitution clearly states that women and men have equal rights, religious practices, including marriage, divorce and inheritance rights, are regulated by the Personal Status Code of religious communities. Thus, women's rights in Lebanon can vary greatly region to region. There are fifteen religious-based Personal Status Codes, one for each sect in Lebanon (OECD, 2019b). A report on gender equality and women's empowerment in Lebanon (Avis, 2017) found that the confessional system<sup>ii</sup> of governance has impeded progress in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment, since women's discrimination is "rooted in laws and regulations, sectarian dynamics, socio-cultural values, decision-making structures, public policies and development strategies" (Avis, 2017).

While the Civil Law of Inheritance gives equal rights to women and men to inherit, most of the fifteen religious-based Personal Status Codes override this law for Muslim women. For example, Muslim women generally inherit half of what their male relatives do, while non-Muslim widows can inherit from their late husbands. Additionally, interfaith marriages prevent a woman of one religion from transferring

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<sup>ii</sup> The United States Institute of Peace defines confessionalism as "a system of government that proportionally allocates political power among a country's communities—whether religious or ethnic—according to their percentage of the population." (USIP, [usip.org/publications/2006/03/lebanons-confessionalism-problems-and-prospects](https://www.usip.org/publications/2006/03/lebanons-confessionalism-problems-and-prospects))

property to her children if her husband is from a different religion (except in the case of Muslim Druze). Similarly, while Article 215 of the Law on Contracts and Obligations guarantees equal rights for women and men to administer property and contracts, customary norms result in men making most of the decisions (OECD, 2019b). Sectarian law and cultural norms further prevent women from accessing land and other resources. Data from the 1994 agricultural census shows that only 7.1 percent of women were landholders in Lebanon (FAO, n.d.b), and sex-disaggregated data on land ownership had not been collected until 2019 (OECD, 2019b).

Women play a key role in the development of rural economies, as they are responsible for the traditional production of up to 70 different products (UNESCO, 2011). However, women's participation in the labour market is limited, and cultural norms often relegate women to the household (Avis, 2017). National statistical data from 2009 shows that more than half of women were economically inactive (55 percent), and only 20 percent of the female population was working (Central Administration of Statistics, 2009). Data from the 2016 Global Gender Gap Report shows an increase in women's participation to 26 percent, yet the gender gap remains, with 75 percent of men participating in the labour market. Despite high literacy rates among women and men, and more women than men enrolled in tertiary education, women's participation in the economy is limited (World Economic Forum, 2016). Many Lebanese people work in the service (60.2 percent of all employed women and 29.9 percent of all men) and trade sectors. In the Mount Lebanon region, where the Shouf Mountains are located, women account for 25 percent of employed people.

#### *Lebanon – agriculture sector*

Agriculture in Lebanon is limited and only employs 6.3 percent of the population, including 5.7 percent of working females and 6.5 percent of working males. This share is even smaller in the Mount Lebanon governorate (excluding Beirut and suburbs), where agriculture only employs 4.2 percent of workers. In addition to formal employment, women often contribute to family agricultural exploitations; however, data on the contribution of family members is not collected and it is therefore difficult to quantify women's contribution (Central Administration of Statistics, 2009).

Given the socio-political system in Lebanon, statistics are rarely collected, particularly censuses, to avoid instability and disputes among the country's different sects. Nevertheless, it is known that rural women are major contributors to the agricultural sector, and it is estimated that they comprise 40 percent of agricultural workers, many working part-time and for lower wages. Estimates from FAO and UNDP indicate that women represent the majority of workers in certain labour-intensive agricultural sectors such as tobacco plantations and household-based food processing (Latif, n.d.)

#### *Lebanon – actions taken*

In order to empower women and increase their participation in the labour market, the National Commission for Lebanese Women (NCLW) created a small-loan program for women to start their own businesses. Additionally, many organizations are working to economically empower women through vocational trainings, income-generating activities and loans for small- and medium-sized enterprises. In 2008, Lebanon established the National Observatory for Women in Agriculture and Rural Areas (NOWARA) to promote women's role in agriculture, rural products and agro-food (Latif, n.d.)

#### *Lebanon – women's roles*

Information on the role of women in the Mount Lebanon region is limited and outdated. According to a report focused on the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women were in charge of feeding farm animals such as sheep, hens

and cocks and, in some cases, they cultivated silkworms, a major source of income. Women were also responsible for collecting water and preparing and processing food, such as burghul (boiled, sundried and crushed wheat), dried fruits and cheese. Women gathered food for their animals and helped their husbands to collect vegetables and fruits and to irrigate and harvest wheat. However, industrial development in the region and the mechanisation of tools and technology have transformed women's roles, releasing them from the most tedious work (Awar, 1991).

## **2.3 Island landscape: Lemnos Island, Greece and Menorca, Spain**

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Lemnos Island in Greece and Menorca Island in Spain are characterized by mosaics of traditional farming, stockbreeding and water management systems. These islands have limited spaces and face tourism pressures and/or climate change-related challenges (MAVA, 2019).

MAVA partners in Lemnos are working with farmers to support traditional sustainable land management practices. The madras system is of particular interest, and MAVA is working with the community to build up collective knowledge on the positive impact of madras on the environment. MAVA partners also provide support to increase the market value of local products developed within this sustainable management system (Rooted Everyday, n.d.).

Similarly, MAVA partners in Menorca are working to conserve ecological values, the economic viability of traditional practices and societal involvement in these efforts. GOB Menorca, the MAVA partner in the region, is already implementing the project "Agronatural Farms Network in Menorca," which aims to promote economically viable models that preserve traditionally sustainable practices and the environment. Through a voluntary agreement of land stewardship between farm owners and/or managers and GOB Menorca, farm managers and/or owners receive technical support for commercializing products, capacity building and other benefits in exchange for implementing sustainable agrarian practices that integrate the conservation of ecosystems and the community's interests (GOB Menorca, n.d.; 2019).

### **Lemnos Island, Greece**

Lemnos island is a highly diverse landscape located in the northern part of the Aegean Sea. It is rich in biodiversity, containing important insular Mediterranean wetlands and birds that rely on the islands' agro-ecosystems. Local communities traditionally managed the landscape through the Madras system, which consists of a land area delineated by a stone fence along with buildings to shelter livestock and house farmers and stock breeders. Animals graze in surrounding natural rangeland, which is also used as farmland to cultivate cereal and leguminous crops for household consumption and animal feeding. Madras were built near villages or in remote areas, and entire families used to move to Madras during the most labour-intensive season from May to September (Rooted Everyday, 2019). Sustainable agro-pastoral practices that have maintained the ecological value of these landscapes for millennia are being abandoned or replaced by intensive farming activities, resulting in severe land degradation and biodiversity loss (MAVA, n.d.).

Greece has one of the largest agricultural labour forces in the European Union. The agriculture, forestry and fishing sector employed 12.2 percent of the population in 2018, yet the percentage of employees in the sector is decreasing (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2018a). In the Northern Aegean region, the number of holdings, as well as the in-use agricultural area, have gradually decreased in the past decade (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2018b).



## *Greece – gender inequalities*

In accordance with European legislation and international commitments, women have the same rights as men to own and inherit land in Greece (OECD, 2019c). Despite legally established equal rights, gender inequality persists. While over two-thirds of holdings in Greece are owned by more than one person, those remaining under sole ownership mainly belong to men. Women only accounted for 23 percent of solely owned holdings in 2010. In the Northern Aegean region, there is a larger share of jointly-owned holdings (71 percent). Here, women account for 37 percent of single owners, above national average (Eurostat, 2012). The 1997 regulations of the European Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) had an unintended positive effect on women's ownership and role in farming. The requirement of working more than half-time in order to have access to full agriculture subventions, and the fact that Greek smallholders have multiple jobs, led to some men transferring management or titles of land to their wives (European Parliament, 2010).

Inequalities persist in economic opportunities and the time women and men dedicate to different activities during the day. Women continue to invest more time in reproductive work than men, and less time in productive work outside the home. According to a 2013-2014 time use survey, women work on average one hour and 21 minutes less than men in "economic" work, but in turn spend two hours and 11 minutes more than men in household chores and family care. This means that women have less free time to invest in economic or leisure activities (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2016).

A gender gap is also present in the labour market. According to 2018 national statistical data, unemployment rates are higher among women (23.7 percent) than men (14.7 percent), especially among young people 15-19 years old. In the Northern Aegean region, which includes the island of Lemnos, unemployment rates are higher than average (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2018b).

## *Greece – actions taken*

In order to improve women's conditions in rural areas, Greece's Ministry of Rural Development and Food has developed projects to foster women's entrepreneurship in rural areas, such as developing women's cooperatives and trainings. By 2000, over 100 cooperatives had been created (Yakoufaris et al. 2007). Since 2016, the Ministry of Rural Development and Food and the General Secretariat for Gender Equality have cooperated to improve women's livelihoods in rural areas, including passing a bill on agricultural cooperatives (OECD, 2019c). Most of the cooperatives in the Northern Aegean Sea focus on food products and handicrafts, including one in Lemnos that produces pastries (Yakoufaris et al. 2007). Yet little is known of women's specific contributions to the sustainable conservation of the land and natural resources in the region.

## **Menorca Island, Spain**

Menorca is one of the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean Sea and was declared a Biosphere Reserve in 2003. Menorca is characterised by the use of mosaic agriculture and livestock breeding as a way to traditionally manage land and natural resources. The traditional farming system involves rotative crops and a combination of intensive cereal farming and livestock breeding. In this system, farm holdings, known as *lloc*, were rented to farmers, known as *payés*, in exchange for a share of yields. Available land was often divided in three plots marked by a stone fence: one for growing cereals, another for livestock grazing and a third was fallow.

Women's traditional roles in Menorca included collecting firewood for cooking, spinning sheep wool, milking and producing cheese (Camps Extremera, 2005). Up until 40 years ago, the intensity of these

practices was compatible with the conservation of biodiversity and landscapes. However, changes in the economy, the expansion of extensive farming and tourism, and the abandonment of lands due to a lack of economic viability have drastically reduced traditional practices on the island and have led to the homogenization or degradation of the landscapes and a reduction in ecosystem diversity (GOB Menorca, n.d.).

### *Spain – gender inequalities*

As presented above in the section on Dehesas, women's contribution to the economy and sustainable development in rural Spain is often invisible, in part due to data scarcity on gender-differentiated roles (Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, 2009).

Available data from the National Institute of Statistics shows that women comprise 30 percent of land owners in the Balearic Islands, yet only 24 percent of land managers (INE, 2009b) – this implies that women may own land, but not manage it. According to the 2018 Economically Active Population Survey, the agriculture sector in Spain only employs 4.2 percent of economically active people, a percentage that is even smaller in the Balearic Islands (1.3 percent). In the islands, agriculture employs just 0.5 percent of women and 2 percent of men, as the majority of employment is provided by the services sector, chiefly tourism (INE, 2018).

Employment rates in the Balearic Islands are higher than the national average, with 51 percent of women employed in 2018, in comparison to 44 percent at the national level. Yet gender inequalities persist, and the percentage of men employed in the Balearic Islands is higher, at 61 percent. Additionally, women are more likely to have part-time jobs than men. For example, 21 percent of women in 2018 were employed part-time in comparison to six percent of men (INE, 2018).

### *Spain – women's roles*

Women farm managers in Menorca typically employ sustainable agricultural practices. In order to give more visibility to their work, female farmers gather once a year with other farm managers across Spain for a one-day workshop to exchange knowledge, good practices and experiences (Custòdia Agrària Menorca, 2015). Additionally, 48 percent of participants in the MAVA project in Menorca are women. However, a systematic analysis of the role of women for sustainable land use and ecosystem conservation in Menorca does not exist at present.

### 3. Concluding remarks

This literature review demonstrates the similarities and differences across countries regarding legislation, customary norms and traditional practices around women's involvement in the agricultural sector. The main differences exist between the European countries – Spain, Portugal and Greece – and the Southern Mediterranean countries – Morocco and Lebanon. These differences are marked by gender inequalities in legislation, economic participation and traditional gender roles. In Spain, Portugal and Greece, laws on property ownership and inheritance do not discriminate against women, while in Lebanon and Morocco, laws continue to favour men and sons, to the detriment of women and daughters. This limits women's ability to own and manage land in these countries.

Traditional gender roles that discriminate against women and relegate them to domestic work also determine women's ability to participate in the labour market. For example, women's participation in the labour market in Lebanon and Morocco is lower than in European countries, and those that do work are mainly employed in the agriculture sector. Conversely, in Spain, Portugal and Greece, the majority of women are employed in the services sector, and their contribution to the agriculture sector is lower than in Lebanon and Morocco. These differences are partly explained by the development pace of each country. In Lebanon and Morocco, many men migrate to urban areas to work in industry and construction, leaving the women behind to oversee agricultural activities; this migration trend took place in Spain, Portugal and Greece during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In recent years, this migration pattern has reverted in the northern regions of the Mediterranean, particularly in Spain, where more young women than men are currently moving to urban areas to seek education or employment, as they have fewer opportunities to work in agriculture. However, it is not possible to know if migration trends in Lebanon and Morocco will follow a similar pattern, as traditional gender norms are strongly rooted in these countries, including those that prevent many rural women from moving to urban areas without a male companion.

Despite general similarities among the countries, more information is needed to properly identify and document both similarities and differences. The lack of information available, particularly pertaining to gender-differentiated roles in sustainable land management and conservation, limits the understanding of women's and men's roles in rural areas.

As described above, some information and sex-disaggregated data is available, particularly relating to women's contribution to the economic sector and their traditional role in reproductive work as household managers and caretakers. Studies of women's roles in rural areas conclude that women's contributions tend to be undervalued, notably their role as caretakers, family helpers and transmitters of knowledge and traditional practices. However, information on women's contributions to the environment and conservation sectors is more limited. Traditionally, it is women who pass on knowledge of sustainable natural resource management to younger generations, but little is known about the specific roles of women and men in each of the study's landscapes.

Only Spain conducted a gender analysis of women's role in rural areas that, while not specific to the Dehesas in Extremadura and the Menorca region, provides useful information. Most importantly, the study identifies the lack of sex-disaggregated data as an obstacle to better understanding women's and men's contributions, as well as a barrier to implementing effective gender-responsive policies and programs (Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs, 2009). Within a single country, the amount of available data can vary greatly. For example, while women in the Dehesas have been studied, little is known about women's contributions in Menorca.

This paper documents available sex-disaggregated data on women's economic status, land ownership and use of their time. Not all countries collect the same information, and different methodologies impede direct comparison between countries. Due to socio-political conflicts, Lebanon is the country with the least information available, which further contributes to the lack of data around gender inequalities in the region.

Given the limited information available for review, both at the national and local levels, MAVA partners would greatly benefit from conducting a gender analysis in the project sites. Such an analysis would improve understanding of women's and men's differentiated roles and knowledge, and how each can contribute to the sustainable land management practices in the region as a way to conserve biological diversity.

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