

Gendered work and working gender

Convenors (alphabetic order)

Main contact

Maya RASTOUIL (UMR LISST Dynamiques Rurales, DYNAFOR -
mayarastouil99@gmail.com)

Eva-Marie Meemken (ETH Zurich, emeemken@ethz.ch)

Anna Kröplin (BFH-HAFL, anna.kroeplin@bfh.ch)

Celestina Heepen (ETH Zurich, celestinafatima.heepen@usys.ethz.ch)

Emma Frison (UMR LISST Dynamiques Rurales - frison.emma@gmail.com)

James Hogge (UMR LISST Dynamiques Rurales, Institut de l'Élevage.
James.Hogge@idele.fr)

Johanna Jacobi (ETH Zurich, johanna.jacobi@usys.ethz.ch)

Katharina Krumbiegel (JRC, Katharina.KRUMBIEGEL@ec.europa.eu)

Manon Caudton-Fournier (ENSFEA – UMR LISST Dynamiques Rurales, VetAgro Sup –
UMR Territoires – manon.caudron_fournier@vetagro-sup.fr)

Marie Kammer (ETH Zurich, mariehelene.kammer@usys.ethz.ch)

Marine Jouvin (ETH Zurich, marine.jouvin@usys.ethz.ch)

Martina Bozzola (FiBL Switzerland, martina.bozzola@fibl.org)

Martina Occelli (Cornell/ETH Zurich, mo386@cornell.edu)

Nora Komposch (University of Zurich, nora.komposch@geo.uzh.ch)

Patrick Illien (ETH Zurich, pillien@ethz.ch)

Prisca Pfammatter (University of Bern, prisca.pfammatter@unibe.ch)

Regula Züger (FiBL)

Sandra Contzen (BFH-HAFL, sandra.contzen@bfh.ch)

Sophie Henrotte (UC Louvain, sophie.henrotte@uclouvain.be)

Zazie von Davier (Thünen Institute, zazie.davier@thuenen.de)

Topic

Identified as a blind spot by Benoît Dedieu at the 2nd International Symposium on Work in Agriculture (Dedieu, 2022), the role of women can no longer be neglected in the analysis of work within agricultural worlds. Thus, this working group explores the gendered dimensions of global agricultural labour, focusing on the specific challenges women face, including low wages, limited access to land and resources, precarious employment, and heightened health risks.

Although acknowledging women's work is a necessary first step in challenging their invisibilisation, this working group proposes to use the concept of gender to move beyond the approach of focusing solely on the “specificity of women's work”. Using the concept of gender makes it possible to analyse the set of mechanisms that divide and hierarchize humanity into two categories (Bereni et al., 2008). Thus, in the words of sociologist Isabelle Clair, gender is not simply a “sex” variable, but rather a concept that allows us to analyse power relations (Clair, 2016). From this emerge gendered socialization (Darmon, 2018) and gender performance (Butler, Fassin and Kraus, 2005), which shape gendered ways of thinking, acting, and embodying oneself, contradicting any essentialist approaches to gender.

In agricultural worlds, this means focusing on the sexual division of labour by shedding light on woman’s work (Annes and Wright, 2017; Comer, 2021; Prévost, 2015) but also examining rural and agricultural masculinities (Annes and Handfield, 2019; Brandth, 1995; Martin, 2023, 2025; Saugeres, 2002). The articulation of social temporalities that constitute masculinity (Pochic, 2000) plays a structuring role, while remaining limiting for women who are often in charge of domesticity (Hogge, 2025). Although modern agriculture has been built around a two-AWU¹ model, itself based on the heterosexual couple’s structure (Comer, 2011), it could be useful to highlight other queer work collectives/couples (Comer, 2024; Muller and Rimlinger, 2024; Purseigle and Le Corre, 2024).

Agricultural worlds are not limited to farms; gender relations around agricultural work also unfold in other professional spaces (CUMAs², agricultural contractors, dealerships, Chambers of Agriculture, etc.), but also in the classroom. In agricultural high schools, the mechanisms of the gendered division of labour reproduce the assignment of girls to subordinate and care-related tasks, perceived as the least physically and technically demanding (i.e. maintenance and cleaning), in contrast to boys, who are assigned to more valued tasks (insemination, woodcutting and machinery) (Dahache, 2014). Schools thus contribute to the delineation of “feminine” and “masculine” spaces, while

¹ Annual Work Unit.

² Coopérative d’Utilisation du Matériel Agricole (farm machinery cooperative). They are local cooperatives where farmers pool resources (machinery, labour, sheds, workshops...). See: [Do you know the Cuma? | FNCuma](#)

simultaneously serving as arenas for the social construction of agricultural masculinities (Caudron Fournier, 2024) and rural femininities (Depoilly, 2021; Orange and Renard, 2022). Moreover, schools - and more broadly the learning spaces punctuating professional paths - play a decisive role in enabling non-heir profiles to establish themselves in agriculture (Frison, 2025).

An important area for further investigation is the study of gender relations considering the agroecological transition. Recent work (Annes and Wright, 2017; Lebrun, 2022) shows that women contribute to the reshaping of agricultural professions, particularly through practices tied to the agroecological transition. While gender asymmetry persists (Guerillot, 2024), spaces for reconfiguration nonetheless emerge, especially in women-only settings (Lebrun, 2022). This working group's ambition is therefore to shed light on these gendered mechanisms and socializations in the context of the agroecological transition, while deepening the understanding of agricultural work as redefined through these relations.

If gender analysis allows hierarchies and power relations to be more visible within agricultural work, it proves especially fruitful to think of gender, class, and race together, as consubstantial and coextensive social relations (Kergoat, 2012; Dorlin, 2009). These relations decisively structure access to land, recognition of knowledge, and the division of agricultural labour. Within agricultural worlds, heirs from farming families do not occupy the same position as first-generation farmers or racialised agricultural workers, who are often relegated to informality or invisibility (Lescaux, 2022). Yet, the latter have historically played a central role in agricultural labour (White, 2018), a role that remains rarely acknowledged in dominant narratives of ecological transition and agricultural issues (Paddeu, 2021). In this vein, several studies have shown that the agroecological transition selectively revalorizes certain forms of "legitimate" knowledge, often carried by actors from urban middle classes, while marginalizing popular or migrant practices, perceived as deviant or archaic (Jégat, 2023). Rereading these dynamics through an intersectional lens (Lépinard and Mazouz, 2021) highlights logics of symbolic dispossession, whiteness (White, 2018; Ferdinand, 2019), and green gentrification (Paddeu, 2021), which cut across both agricultural spaces and the imaginaries of ecological transition.

This group also engages with the data, methods, and theoretical frameworks needed to study gendered agricultural labour, highlighting the importance of intersectional, feminist, and transnational approaches.

Core topics addressed

#1 – Attractiveness of agricultural work

#2 – Decent work in the agri-food sector

#3 – Knowledge, skills, and education in agriculture

#6 – Agricultural workforce development systems

Sub-themes - sessions

Session 1: *Invisibility and (Re)Recognition of Women's Work* – Specific challenges faced by women in agricultural work; reflections on the ambivalence of making this work visible (recognition but also new constraints).

Session 2: *Rural and Agricultural Masculinities* – How evolving professions and the growing attention to issues of gender, ecology, and sexuality challenge masculine practices and representations.

Session 3: *Gender, Knowledge, and Agroecology* – Analysis of gendered mechanisms and socializations in agricultural labour within the context of agroecological transition.

Session 4: *Gender, Learning, and Institutions: The Multiple Spaces of Agricultural Work* – Gender relations around agricultural labour also unfold in other professional spaces (CUMA, contractors, cooperatives, chambers of agriculture, etc.) as well as in educational settings (agricultural schools, vocational training, apprenticeships).

Session 5: *Intersectional and Queer Approaches (Gender, Class, Race, Sexuality, Migration)* – Highlighting the intersecting logics of domination and differentiation in agricultural work, from the local to the transnational level.

Session 6: *Data, Methods, and Theoretical Frameworks* – A multidisciplinary reflection on feminist, intersectional, and transnational methodologies and approaches for analysing gendered agricultural labour.

Aims

The aim of this session is to bring together gender and labour researchers from Europe and beyond to share ongoing research on women's roles, but also on gendered work and conditions in global agricultural labour. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, the session seeks to identify key research gaps, advance gender-sensitive methodologies, and explore theoretical approaches to better understand and address gendered inequalities in agri-food systems.

Format

Presentations will last 15 minutes, followed by 5/10 minutes for discussion. Each session will include 4/5 speakers. Depending on the number of abstracts received, each

session can be divided in 2, especially for session 1 and 6, where there are already a set of presentations. As this thematic group is the result of a merger of several groups, it is advisable to contact the subgroup in charge of this session in order to send a proposal in a specific session.