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## Consuming rural development policies: are there gender differences in Italian agriculture?

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### Abstract

*Recent rural development policies aim at stimulating a new paradigm of rural development, with a new role for agricultural activities. A completely renewed set of opportunities is available for farms that, if well exploited, could be a relevant tool to improve agricultural activity. The aim of our paper is to describe gender differences in the access to policies for agriculture and rural development. The analysis permits us to investigate the farms' strategies on a gender base and to qualify the new frontiers for agricultural activities, by discriminating women's and men's contribution.*

**Key words:** *rural development policies, gender differences, farm strategies.*

### Introduction

The gradual dismantling of the “traditional coupled support” model means moving towards a new European agriculture design and a new competitive arena where farms have to compete. To cope with this, the supply policy has become much more articulated and capable of satisfying all the possible strategies undertaken by farmers, from both a sector and a territorial perspective. The second pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union, which is becoming even more important for the distribution of total expenditure, foresees a set of measures aimed at sustaining both sustainable and multifunctional agriculture and rural development (OECD, 2003). New roles in the agricultural sector have taken shape (Marsden 2003; van der Ploeg et al. 2000; van der Ploeg and Long 1995), in an even more complex scenario, where the relation between local and global has a need for innovative resources on a territorial basis.

The routes for farm development can either orbit on homologated paths, linked to traditional core business, or they may follow processes of boundary shift (Banks et al. 2002). Processing and qualification of agricultural products, farm diversification and other multifunctional activities, if properly exploited, can allow the revival of farms. To this end, the policies for agricultural and rural development provide a wide range of instruments. The ability to exploit these opportunities is not always evenly distributed among farms but depends either on their traits or on their strategies (Caillavet, Facchini and Moreddu, 2005). Social, demographic and structural characteristics of the enterprise can condition their behaviour and limit the propensity to use this policy (Meert et al., 2005). Among the socio-demographical elements, possible differentiations in the use of rural development policies could be gender-based.

Literature on gender and agriculture in developed countries recognises the particularity of women's role in the agricultural sector, due to the overlapping between productive and reproductive activities (Errington and Gasson, 1993). Little (2006) points out

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three perspectives on women's role in agriculture, corresponding to three different periods: during the first phase (1970s) women are considered as domestic workers and as simple help for male farmers (Sachs, 1983; Berg, 2004). A second period (during 1980s) witnesses a more intensive and visible participation of women in farm activity, even if limited to activities of integration of family income, through economic diversification, for example rural tourism (Little and Panelli, 2003). In the most recent period (starting from 1990s), women's role in agriculture is analysed under different perspectives: as an off-farm worker who contributes to the farm family income (Oldrup, 1999); as an entrepreneur, responsible for the farm and involved in decision-making processes, but still linked to a patriarchal vision, where the "interference" of the senior members in decision-making is relevant (Little and Austin, 1996; Shortall, 2002); and finally, as an entrepreneur with a different strategic behaviour compared to men, for example in sustaining and promoting sustainable agriculture (Bock, 2004). In this perspective, women are free to decide and to adopt their strategic decisions. This contribution works in this perspective and adheres to a constituent perspective of women's role (Whatmore 1994), working in a context of "willing reproduction": as highlighted in the literature, the "not willing reproduction" refers to the women's role in sustaining family farms under a subordinate perspective. Her action is essential in reproducing family and farms, but her role is not evident (Ghorayshi, 2008; Heather et al., 2005) and could engender a woman's desire to search for an off-farm job (Walby 1997). The perspective adopted here is quite different, because the female farmer is considered an independent producer (Pearson, 1979), that is as an agent responsible for her farm and able to take strategic decisions (Brandth, 2002). As Bock (2004) points out, a relevant question that arises is if female farms behave differently to male farms. Our paper aims at supporting the hypothesis that gender differences in the use of rural development policies emerge. Then the analysis presents a demand-side perspective and focuses on the (eventual) different types of measures demanded on behalf of male/female farms.

To this end an investigation of rural development policies adopted in Italy will be made, by distinguishing male and female farms.

The work, after a short presentation of recent rural development policies and a brief methodological note, presents the results of the use of policies in Italy, where the interest in women's role in agriculture is increasing. The analysis will be conducted by separating payments and investments and by stratifying the use in different areas designed by the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for rural development. Then, a classification of farms is proposed, according to the profile of policy use. Some final consideration will end the paper.

## **Methodology**

The funding flows received by farms are here defined as "use of policy". To analyse gender-based differences a territorial classification was adopted, which follows the Italian National Strategic Plan. It defines 4 different areas:

- urban poles;
- areas with intensive agriculture;
- intermediate rural areas;
- rural areas with general problems of development.

Territorial discrepancies reflect differences that should give rise to different demands in policy.

The data processed refers to a sample of firms coming from INEA ( The National Institute of Agricultural Economics), more specifically, from the database RICA REA, for the year 2006. All the family farms which have had access to any category of policy and for which it was possible to identify the sex of the farmer were considered. Total farms are 472.009, 363.911 of which are male farms (77% of total), and the remaining 108.099 are female farms (23% of total); this sample is representative of the census of the Italian population. These farms have been stratified ex-ante according to their geographical location in the four homogeneous areas defined by the NSP, the results are as follows (table 1):

**Table 1- Distribution of farms**

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Surface (ha)</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Surface (ha)</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Surface (ha)</i>
Urban areas	22.233	21,4	6,199	13,0	28.432	19,7
Rural areas with intensive agriculture	111.408	19,0	22,468	10,6	133.876	17,6
Intermediate rural areas	139.358	17,1	44,934	12,7	184.293	16,1
Rural areas with general problems of development	90.911	27,3	34,497	15,3	125.409	24,0
Total	363.911	20,0	108,099	13,1	472.000	18,8

*Source: Data processed from the from Inea's database*

The policy measures were classified as follows:

Payments	Investments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• environment;</li> <li>• risk;</li> <li>• income integration;</li> <li>• compensatory allowances;</li> <li>• services;</li> <li>• sectoral measures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• structural investments;</li> <li>• environment, forests and landscape;</li> <li>• diversification;</li> <li>• generational exchange;</li> <li>• added value and qualification of agricultural products;</li> <li>• human resources</li> </ul>

The payment measures need to be explained: they contain measures from the first pillar of the CAP, some national measures aimed at sustaining specific sectors (national envelope) and some interventions from the second pillar. For example agro-environmental measures, which provide annual payments (co-funded by regions) based on farm surfaces (for example, organic farming). Measures for income integration include direct payments (decoupled and partially decoupled payments).

To standardise the values, payments were compared with gross marketable production, while investments were compared with land capital. The data was processed to get information about total and average expenditure of payments and investments.

Then a multivariate analysis (through multiple correspondence and cluster analysis) was carried out separately for male and female farms, to create homogeneous groups in

relation to use of policy.

In the multiple correspondence analysis applied both to female and male farm four explicative factors were extracted: the choice of four factors was due to their clear interpretation: the other factors were more difficult to decipher. Also any further factor did not add any information for the subsequent cluster analysis. To process the cluster analysis, some further illustrative variables were considered i.e. the composition of the family and the structural and economic performance of the farms. The following table summarises the active variables and the illustrative variables.

Variables for multivariate analysis:

<i>A) Active variables</i>
• number of grants
• farm investment
• investment for the environment, forest and landscape
• investment for farm diversification
• investment for generational change
• investment for valorisation and qualification of agricultural products
• compensatory allowances
• investment in human capital
• environmental payments
• payments for risk
• payments for income integration
• payments for services
• sectoral payments
• total payments
• total investments
<i>B) Illustrative variables</i>
• land capital
• gross marketable production
• net income
• farmer's age
• work units of conductor
• farm family size
• average age of the family

Due to the high number of observations, the clustering procedure has been completed through a mixed method of classification. The data has been processed using the SPAD-N program; to complete the description of factors and clusters, illustrative categories with a value test greater than +2 and less than -2 were considered.

The empirical test should explain possible gender-based differences in demand for rural development policies. It should also illustrate possible differences in the strategies adopted by female and male farms in different territorial contexts.

## Results

The average values of payments and investments are the result of the division of the absolute value of payments/investments by the total number of farms located in each territory. This value could represent the average propensity to use policies:

$C_{pi} / A_i \text{ tot} = \text{total allowances (payments + investments) area } i / \text{total farms in area } i$

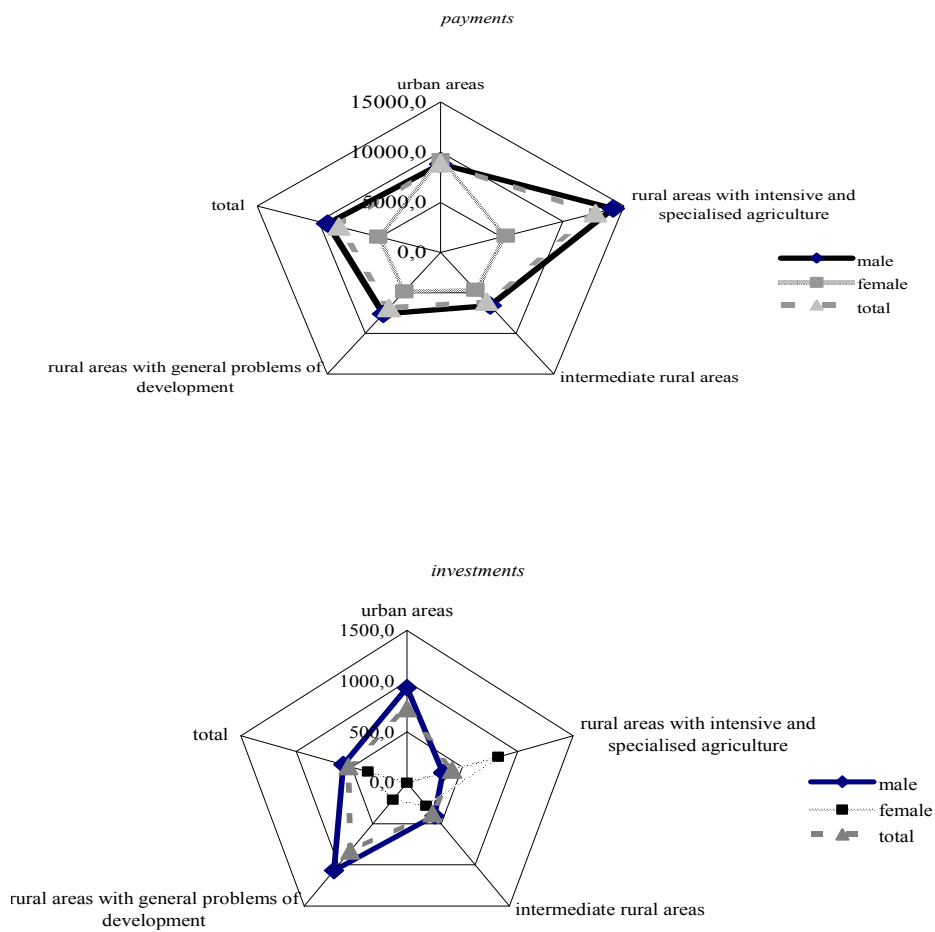
Table 2 shows the overall results for the use of policy per payments and investments.

**Table 2 – Total payments and investments (€)**

	TOTAL PAYMENTS			Average (payments/farm)		
	Sex			Sex		
	male	female	total	male	female	total
Urban areas	195.770.100	57.023.801	252.793.901	8.805,4	9.198,5	8.891,1
Rural areas with intensive agriculture	1.573.749.078	120.115.547	1.693.864.625	14.126,0	5.346,2	12.652,5
Intermediate rural areas	914.067.446	206.884.138	1.120.951.583	6.559,1	4.604,1	6.082,5
Rural areas with general problems of development	690.419.125	166.253.158	856.672.283	7.594,4	4.819,3	6.831,0
Total	3.374.005.749	550.276.643	3.924.282.392	9.271,5	5.090,5	8.314,0
	TOTAL INVESTMENTS			Average (payments/farm)		
	Sex			Sex		
	male	female	total	male	female	total
Urban areas	20.783.667	0	20.783.667	934,8	0,0	731,0
Rural areas with intensive agriculture	36.347.184	18.495.457	54.842.641	326,3	823,2	409,7
Intermediate rural areas	56.013.323	12.664.525	68.677.848	401,9	281,8	372,7
Rural areas with general problems of development	96.887.862	7.070.011	103.957.872	1.065,7	204,9	829,0
Total	210.032.036	38.229.992	248.262.028	577,2	353,7	526,0

*Source: Data processed from the from Inea's database*

A general difference concerns the size of the two types of grants: the amounts for payments are systematically higher than for investments. A territorial-based difference emerges too: first in terms of payments drawn. Rural areas with intensive specialised agriculture show lower average values for investments, compared to urban areas and to intermediate rural areas. The latter, however, show the lowest average levels both for payments and investments. Rural areas with problems of development exhibit the greatest capability for attracting investments, while in terms of payments, they are only just higher than intermediate rural areas. Some imbalances between female and male farms are shown in figure 1.

**Figure 1- Average payments and investments by area**

*Source: Data processed from the from Inea's database*

The average amounts received by male farms are systematically greater; in terms of payments. Significant gaps in all the territorial contexts appear, with the exception of urban areas. Relevant differences arise in terms of investments too, above all in marginal rural areas. On the other hand, in zones with intensive and specialised agriculture, the average amounts received by female farms are significantly bigger. To qualify these differences, a multivariate analysis (multiple correspondence and cluster) has been proposed in the following paragraph.

### **The multivariate analysis**

#### *Multiple correspondence analysis*

The application of multiple correspondence analysis has permitted to extract four factors which absorb a percentage of 46% (female farms) and 42% (male farms) of the total variance. The percentage incidence of each factor is represented in table 3.

**Table 3 – Explained variance of each factor**

	Female farms	Male farms
I factor	14.21	13.89
II factor	13.18	12.46
III factor	10.50	9.04
IV factor	8.29	7.50

**Female farms**

The four factors extracted were identified in the following way:

*I factor: type of intervention (payments vs. investments)*

This factor contrasts investments and payments. The majority of payments is registered in cereal and livestock farms, located in rural areas with problems of development. Farm investments instead are registered in either vineyards or with permanent combined crops farms located in areas with intensive specialised agriculture.

*II factor: farm investments vs. measures for income integration*

The second factor emphasizes the distinction between measures for income integration and investments aimed at modernising farms and promoting the diversification of farm activities. The first type of firms is mainly located in urban areas, with cereal and olive production, while those using a diversified set of measures, located in rural areas with development problems, primarily produce wine or breed livestock.

*III factor: payments for income integration against compensatory allowances*

The third factor includes only payments and compares payments for income integration against compensatory allowances. The first, benefits farms with cereal and olive cultivation, mainly conducted by a single farmer, located in rural intermediate areas or in rural areas with intensive and specialised agriculture. The compensatory payments benefit livestock farms (sheep and goats and milk and meat cattle); as is known these measures especially benefit farms in rural areas with general problems of development.

*IV factor: investments in human capital vs. payments for provision of services*

The last factor extracted involves measures for human capital and, on the other side, payments for services. The investments in human capital are targeted at rural marginal areas and benefit herds of sheep and goats, managed by the farmer and his spouse. The payments for services are aimed at sustaining milk breeding farms and vineyards located in intermediate rural areas, managed by the single farmer, occasionally with descendants.

**Cluster analysis**

The subsequent cluster analysis was carried out through the creation of homogeneous groups of farms obtained starting from the four factors of discrimination described above. The identified clusters for female farms are three and are defined as follows:

Cluster I - Farms with low use of policies (63.5%);

Cluster II - Farms with wide access to policies (36.0%);

Cluster III - Farms willing to invest (0.5%).



The farms in the first group show diversified crops, based mainly on tree crops (vineyards, olives, fruits). These farms are mainly located in intermediate rural areas, in areas with intensive and specialized agriculture and in urban areas. These are family farms in the mature phase of their life cycle, with the presence of the couple with descendants. The use is very limited, in relation both to payments and investments: the only measure used refers to sector payments, which describes a sort of path dependency in the use of the policy.

The second group includes around 36% of female farms. Farms of this group are located in rural areas with problems of development, are conducted mainly by a single conductor, with cereal crops and grazing livestock farms (sheep and goat breeding and cattle for meat), with the average age of the holder being approximately 55. Significant use of payments for the integration of income, environment and services are evident. On the investment side, the funds obtained sustain a strategic change toward a greater competitiveness: relevant investments in valorisation of agricultural products, in human resources and for generational exchange characterises the cluster.

The last cluster includes less than 1% of female farms. These farms are located in rural areas with intensive agriculture and in areas with problems of development and are conducted by single families. The main cultivations are vines and dairy herds. The volume of investments is relatively high: measures for farm diversification, for environment, forest and landscape are mainly used. The main payments obtained are for environment and for risk. These farms are “alert” and ready to invest and to exploit the opportunities that the new policy puts at their disposal.

### **Male farms**

Also in the case of male farms, four factors have been extracted from the multiple correspondence analysis. They are identified as follows:

#### *I factor: farm investments*

The first factor includes measures to sustain farm investments. The beneficiary farms are located in rural marginal areas, with herds of cattle, sheep and goats. Family size is small, with the presence of the conductor and, in some cases, of the descendants.

#### *II factor: types of intervention (payments vs. investments)*

The second factor compares investments and payments. The payments, with the prevalence of measures for income integration, benefit grain and livestock farms, located in marginal rural areas, with single families. Investments instead fall in areas with specialized and intensive agriculture and mainly benefit fruit farms and vineyards.

#### *III factor: payments for income integration against compensatory allowances*

The third factor contrasts compensatory payments and payments for the integration of income; the first qualify enterprises located in marginal areas with sheep and goat breeding and dairy herds; the family includes the presence of descendants. The payments for the integration of income concern cereal and olive farms, localised in intermediate rural areas, with the presence of conductor and descendants.

*IV factor: investments in human capital vs. payments for services provision*

The last factor shows a clear contrast between the development of human capital and the use of policies for services. Farms that have access to training are characterised by the breeding of sheep and goats, by olive trees and crops; they are located in areas with a general development problem and present a single farmer. On the other hand, farms that benefit of payments for services are mainly located in urban and intermediate rural areas; they are characterized by livestock and vine-growing crops, and are conducted by pairs and ascendants.

### **Cluster analysis**

Cluster analysis of male farms was conducted through the creation of homogeneous groups obtained by the four factors of discrimination described above. As for female farms, the identified clusters are three and are defined as follows:

Cluster I - Farms with wide access to the policies (32.0%);

Cluster II - Farms with low use of policies (67.0%);

Cluster III - Farms willing to invest (1.0%).

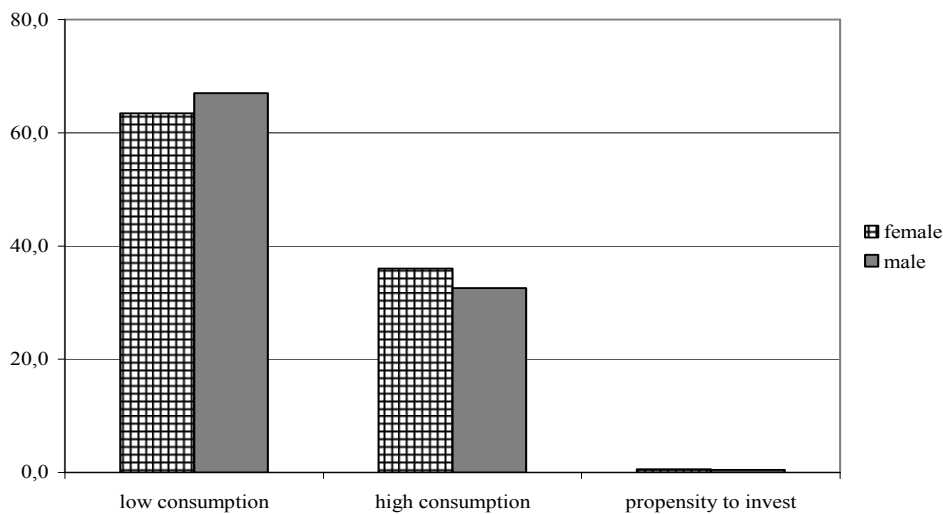
The first cluster accounts for 32% of the total. The farms in question are conducted singly, with the average age of the holder being 57. The main cultivation is the production of cereals, olive and the rearing of sheep and goats; farms are predominantly located in rural marginal areas and in the intermediate rural areas. The measures used refer to payments for services, for risk, for environment and for income support; the investment are used to a lesser extent, mainly in human resources and for generational exchange. Even if the measures of the first pillar (integration of income) prevail, a certain propensity to use policies for sustainability and investment in the next generation, for new services and for the valorisation of products is also significant. But, compared to female farms, male farms show a different behaviour by focusing on measures aimed at qualifying human capital and at sustaining generational change.

The second cluster is the most extensive (includes about 67% of the total number of farms run by male farmer) and is characterized by low use of policies. The main activity concerns the vine crop, fruits, combined permanent crops and dairy herds; the farms are located in rural areas with intensive agriculture and in the urban poles, managed by the conductor with the presence of the spouse and descendants. The sectoral payments are prevalent in the use of policies and the farm continues working within the traditional core business.

The third cluster groups only 1% of male farms located in rural areas with development problems and in urban areas, they present breeding of sheep and goats, herds of milk cattle and, to a lesser extent, vine-growing crops. In this cluster fall farms with a high propensity to invest: structural and diversification investments prevail. The farms in this group are predominantly conducted by a family with descendants, whose role is to encourage alternative strategies, by promoting more sustainable agricultural practices and by turning attention to the environment and to the landscape.

A short comparison between male and female farms

A comparison between female and male farms is represented in figure 2. Some differences are evident about the share of farms with low use of policies: male farms demonstrate a more reduced propensity to use policies with respect to female farms.

**Figure 2 - Synthetic comparison between female and male farms**

*Source: Data processed from the from Inea's database*

The share of firms characterized by low use of policies is very high and above 60% in both types of farms, it is greater for men (67.0% versus 63.5%). It is a use linked to traditional forms of support, which will be dismantled, as a result of the Health Check of November 2008. Conversely, the percentage of female farms with a high propensity to use different tools from the policy is higher and absorbs a higher percentage with respect to male farms (36% vs. 32%). These farms are willing to invest in farm development through strategies of valorisation and farm diversification. As regards to the third cluster, which describes a high propensity to invest, there is a substantial homogeneity in the two groups, although female farms show a greater propensity to invest in sustainable agriculture.

From a territorial point of view, it is interesting to underline that the third cluster is characterised by female activity in rural areas with intensive agriculture, where women adopt tools aimed at supporting sustainable agriculture. Enterprises characterized by low use of policies fall mainly in rural marginal areas, if managed by males; on the contrary, farms characterized by a higher propensity to use policy managed by women fall into rural areas with general problems of development. These farms are characterised by strategies of farm diversification and product valorisation; the adoption of policies for generational change is relevant too and ensures a long-life perspective for farm activity. Therefore, “hopes” for a farm's revival in marginal rural areas could be greater in the farms managed by women. Another element of difference based on gender, refers to the strategies adopted by women: they prefer to invest on farm diversification and sustainable agriculture, as confirmed in other reports (among others, Arkleton Trust 1990), this emphasizes how the models of intensive agriculture generally exclude women, whereas those related to diversification (rural tourism and hospitality, etc.), qualification and protection of the environment, allow a greater involvement of women.

### Final remarks

This work represents a first attempt to analyze the propensity to use policies on behalf of female and male farms. Results show that gender discrimination emerges in the analysis of use of agricultural and rural development policies. From the female farms perspective, the access to policy configures a sort of willing reproduction, the result of strategic processes aimed at sustaining a farm's development. From this point of view, women show different trajectories of use, confirming the belonging to a different social world (Barthez 2005). Moreover, as confirmed by the recent philosophy of mainstreaming (Pearson 1979), women show different patterns of behaviour even amongst themselves, depending on the territorial context and on the composition of families; therefore, they can not be regarded as a homogeneous aggregate, as opposed to the masculine universe. The analysis has revealed some additional elements of differentiation: the first one stems from the average propensity to use policy, divided up into investments and payments: for payments, the ability to attract policy is less evident for female farms, with the exception of urban areas where it is similar to male farms. An analogous situation is found for investments: in fact, the funds received are systematically lower for women, with the exception of rural areas with intensive agriculture. As it is apparent from the subsequent cluster analysis, investments are linked to alternative strategies, which are aimed primarily at farm diversification, environmental protection and landscape management. The cluster analysis confirms some of the differences between men and women, with particular reference:

- to the incidence of "low use area", which is higher for men than for women; that balance the difference in the average amounts of payments and investments perceived and confirms an increasing attention towards the supply of policy for rural development on behalf of female farms;
- to the typology of consumed measures, particularly oriented towards the support of sustainable agriculture. That confirms both the assertions by some institutional theories on women's behaviour towards the environment and is coherent with recent literature on the female farms' greater sensitivity towards environmentally friendly production models and toward organic agriculture (Elabdin-Zein 1996; Peter et al., 2000). Besides, in several cases, the sociological literature has demonstrated how attention to the nature and to the environment and bringing an image of sustainable agriculture are key elements that influence the pride of women operating in agriculture in higher measure with respect to males ones (Dessein and Neven 2007).

From previous considerations, it is possible to confirm that "gender relations are important driving forces of change" (Bock and Shortall, 2006) and that a gender perspective in rural studies is necessary. Some implications in terms of future researches emerge: the differences among farms on the basis of gender should be important topics in future researches on family farms and, more specifically, on the adoption of rural development policies. Besides, this gender-based discrimination is rarely provided in documents for rural development, even if gender-based differences may have a significant impact on agricultural practices (Coldwell, 2009). Another important point concerns the low rate of use and above all the reduced amounts of funds received by female farms: this encourages a series of reflections on the rules about the access to policy market. From this point of view, further study is needed to study the transaction costs

relating to the use of policies, the functioning of political markets that can discriminate on the basis of gender and the possible correlation between the amount of relational capital and market access policy. The sensation is that patriarchal formulas, as evidenced by Walby (1997), can reproduce even in relationships that female farms engage with the off-farm socio-institutional context, determining forms of marginalization and social exclusion especially in highly rural areas. It would be a pity, given the dynamism shown by companies run by women to take advantage of new policy proposals to reinvent the rural.

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