

Labour strategie of farm women

Marit S. Haugen

9.1 Introduction

Women's participation in employment in rural areas is not only bound up with the availability of, and access to, jobs. The operation of gender relations and gender ideologies within the household and the community is equally important. How the farm couple negotiate or take for granted their division of labour on farm, off-farm and in the household, and the women's bargaining power, will influence women's labour situation and their economic and social integration into rural societies. Women's labour orientation is constructed within a context of constraints and opportunities. Gender expectations of their role as mothers and farm family workers, might cause them to defer their personal job preferences. It is necessary to examine women's situation in its gendered and contextual frameworks, in order to understand the logic behind their labour situation. The notion 'strategy' in our context should not be understood as if we are intending to identify a woman's straightforward plan to reach a certain goal (here: a labour situation), or that a woman's present labour situation is necessarily a result of a certain 'strategy'. Rather, the present situation is to be understood as a result of many previous choices and incidents, preferences and opportunities.

The life course interviews are a follow-up study based on the results of the survey among farm women (see chapter 8). These interviews were conducted to reveal farm women's experiences and ideas and to bring their voices into the study. In order to capture the diversity of the farm women population, our samples of twenty farm women were chosen from among younger and older women in different labour situations; women who worked mainly on farm, women who worked mainly off-farm, women combining work off-farm and on farm

(pluriactives) and women who were classified as mainly housewives.

9.2 Theoretical framework

A central characteristic of modern social life is increasing differentiation, increasing mobility and more options for individuals to plan their own lives. Tradition and taken-for-granted habits play a less important role in organising social life (Giddens 1991). According to Giddens the more tradition loses its hold, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyles among a diversity of options. Ziehe (1989) calls the reduced emphasis on norms and traditions 'cultural liberation'. However, agriculture is characterised by a patriarchal tradition and a 'family-and-farm-thinking' that might put severe constraints on individuals' opportunities to pursue their own interests.

Tradition and habits perceive women and men as being in different positions within the family, agriculture, labour markets etc. Women as actors can create their own biography, but not the conditions within which they have to create it. Their actions can however help both to reproduce and to transform gender structures. In explaining social change such as women's increased participation in the labour market, we need to understand the development of new ideas regarding women's role.

Most farm women are part of a family business, the farm family, and as such belong to a system that depends on a high degree of co-operation. Several studies of women in farming have, however, revealed that women's position in this co-operative enterprise is subordinated to men's position (Haney and Knowles (eds.) 1988, Whatmore et al. 1994, Burg and Endevelde (eds.) 1994). Whatmore (1994)

argues that it is necessary to understand the ideological processes which legitimise the power relations that structure farm women's lives, as these processes are essential to understanding the dynamics of observable gender inequalities as a product of both coercion and consent.

In the analysis of life stories we will look to see how the dilemmas of modern family and farm life are expressed. What are women's experiences and responses (practices and attitudes) to the changing ideologies and structures within family, agriculture and society in general? We will examine how gender ideology influences women's work aspirations, the importance they place on their opportunities to choose their own labour situation, and satisfaction with their present labour situation.

Arlie Hochschild (1989) outlines three types of gender role ideologies within marriage; *traditional*, *transitional* and *egalitarian*. According to Hochschild the 'pure traditional' wants to identify with her activities at home, and wants her husband to base his ideology on earning a living. The 'pure egalitarian' wants to identify with the same spheres that her husband does, and to have an equal amount of power in marriage. This implies an equal sharing of work at home and sharing the breadwinner status. Between the *traditional* and the *egalitarian* is the *transitional*, any one of a variety of types of blending the two. In contrast to the traditional, a transitional wants to identify with her role at work as well as at home. She wants to identify both with caring for the home and with helping her husband earn money, but wants her husband to focus on earning a living (Hochschild 1989:15). Hochschild's types cannot easily be used on family businesses like farming where the natural boundaries between 'breadwinner' and 'home activities' are not sharp. The majority of farm women have never fitted into the more urban 'housewife' model, as their activities have been a mixture of farm and domestic work. Nevertheless the traditional ideology seeing men on farms as farmers (breadwinners) and women as farm wives (housewives and farm assistants), has been predominant in all west-

ern societies. Women's contribution to farming has been poorly recognised in terms of income, status and visibility in agricultural statistics.

The life course of women will be analysed by main cycles; childhood and youth (upbringing and education), adult life (first regular job, marriage, children), and present situation. In our study we applied a broad dynamic perspective and considered how farm women perceived, experienced and acted within the gendered social system, by analysing their aspirations, perceived alternatives (or lack of alternatives), room for manoeuvre, choices and experiences in different stages of life. Applying gender theory we will see how their roles are negotiated or taken for granted within the farm family context, affecting their work on and off the farm.

Comparative analysis of the qualitative life stories (Haugen 1997a) has been based on the four reports produced by the participants; Fthiotis (GR); (Efstrotoglou and Mavridou 1996d), Udine (I); (Saraceno 1996), the Netherlands (NL) (Overbeek 1996) and Nord-Trøndelag (N) (Haugen 1996c).

9.3 Childhood and youth

9.3.1 Childhood

'I was born on a farm, I didn't have any other solution, so I became a farmer' (Drossia 1952, Fthiotis)

Starting with women's experiences in childhood and youth is recognition of a simple but vitally important point; the past is a crucial factor in understanding the present. However, the significance of childhood experiences for women's adult life might vary and does not necessarily determine their current status. In this section we will explore women's upbringing, and the importance of their background. Further we will analyse the period between childhood and adulthood. Youth is a period of life when people make many choices that in important ways have consequences for their life course. In several life arenas they have to change from a dependent to a more

independent status. It is a time when they are leaving their parental home, leaving school and starting work, getting married or cohabiting and having children. In some areas education has replaced work as the most common preparation for adulthood, and as education plays an increasingly important role, we will look at women's preferences, opportunities and choices regarding education as well as work when they were young.

Nine out of ten farm women in the survey samples grew up in a rural area, and in all study areas but one (Nord-Trøndelag) the majority have a farm background. This indicates that most farm women are familiar with farm and rural life from childhood. Few women express a preference for farm life after childhood. Being a farm daughter does not seem to arouse an interest in being a farmer (or marrying a farmer) when growing up, rather the opposite. Women with farm backgrounds recall their mothers' rather tough life on the farm, and they had no wish to copy that experience themselves.

Even though many women would like to distance themselves from their childhood experience as farm daughters they find themselves in the position of farmers themselves or farmers' wives. A positive aspect, as the women see it, is that their background has made them familiar with the farm role, and they had a good idea what to expect when marrying a farmer. Their cultural habitus (22) was in line with the situation they experienced after marriage. Although they distanced themselves from agriculture when young, some point to the fact that farming today is better paid and involves less physical hard work. Using their mothers as a reference point, they see their own position as different and better. When farm women compare their own situation with friends of the same age they are less satisfied with the labour situation within farming.

In all the study areas it was found that farm women had an upbringing with gender specific opportunities and constraints. This is reflected partly by their parents' role in the family, and by different expectations of daughters and sons. However the degree of constraints varies a lot both within and between the study areas.

9.3.2 Youth and education

'But my mother said to me: When you're 22 you're going to get married anyway' (Maria 1962, the Netherlands)

Since education was found to be the most significant individual factor influencing farm women's labour situation, it is important to understand farm women's aspirations with regard to their education and opportunities/constraints on their fulfilment.

In general it has been noted that educational attainment is influenced more by class status than by gender. Alienation from higher theoretical education, and a high valuation of practical work were common among farmers and workers. A rural background could be a barrier to taking further education, both in a cultural perspective but also on economic grounds and due to distance from educational facilities. Being farm daughters, many experienced both a class and a gender barrier. Expectations about what kind of education and jobs were appropriate for women were more or less implicit in attitudes and experience. It was not considered necessary for girls to pursue education for an extended period since their main role in future was considered to be the 'domestic' family role. Boys were on the other hand more likely to be encouraged by their parents to continue their education or choose a vocational training, as they were regarded as future breadwinners. However, some parents encouraged their daughters to learn an occupation. It is interesting to note that in some cases mothers were more

(22) Bourdieu's concept of habitus invokes a process of socialisation whereby the dominant modes of thought and experience to which they are exposed are internalised by individuals, especially in their early years, but also through continuing experiences and social interactions (Bourdieu 1977).

supportive to their daughters' education than the fathers:

'My mother always encouraged her three daughters to learn an occupation. Suppose that something happened, then you could save yourself. She was far ahead of her time. My father always cried: 'why must those girls learn? They are going to get married anyway.' (Jeanette 1950, the Netherlands)

Education and vocational training was seen as a form of 'security capital' for women in the case of emergency (no marriage, divorce, incapacity or death of the main breadwinner), rather than a means to a lifelong strategy of economic independence. This was clearly demonstrated in Jeanette's case. When she married she continued to work full-time until she had her first child, something her parents found strange: 'You are married now, it's no longer necessary'.

In Fthiotis the daughters met constraints when they wanted to leave home in order to pursue any education after compulsory school. It was not only an economic, but also a gendered issue; it was not considered 'appropriate' for a young single girl to move away from her parents. After high-school the Greek Maria wanted to go to a designers' school, but her father didn't approve of her moving to Athens for her studies:

'My father's persistence to keep me at home was the factor affecting all my decisions with regards to my future life. I will leave my daughters decide by themselves what they want to do in life.' (Maria 1960, Fthiotis)

Maria's statement shows important changes in attitudes and values from one generation to another; while she met an insuperable obstacle, her daughters will be given more options to choose their own future. In both Fthiotis and Udine, girls left school at a very young age and had few opportunities to pursue secondary education.

While the Greek, Italian and Dutch women commonly lived with their parents until marriage, the Norwegian women were more likely to move from

the parental home after compulsory education. This was seen as a matter of course, because in order to take further education or find a job they commonly had to go to an urban centre. Due to long distances it was hardly possible to commute every day, and many experienced 'moving from home' as a natural and desirable part of adolescence.

'My best years were when I lived in the city, being on my own without any duties other than my studies. I had many friends and we had a lot of fun. Never later in life do you experience the same freedom.' (Lisa 1956, Nord-Trøndelag)

The gender segregation of work is visible in the education aspirations of farm women in all the study areas: as far as they had specific preferences for vocational education it was usually within traditional 'female' areas like care, health, teaching, hair-dressing, dressmaking, and clerical work.

Although the survey samples have demonstrated that the level of education differs between areas, there is a common trend of changing attitudes towards the importance of education for women as well as men. Younger women in all the study areas were faced with fewer constraints than older women, and there is an increase in the educational level among younger women. The differences are strengthened when we look at women's aspirations for their own children; women tend to place major importance on their children's education, and they seem to support their daughters as much as their sons. Many of the previous constraints are disappearing: better communications, better access to secondary schools, more mobility among young people (both geographically and socially) and changing attitudes toward the importance of education. Accordingly, many of the young women with low education tend to explain this as a result of personal choice; tired of school, wanted to earn own money or lack of academic capabilities, rather than pointing to constraints like lack of access.

9.4 Adult life

'Nobody pushed me to go further [after primary school]. My parents were building their house, there were three children, we could not pretend to go on studying. Going to work [in a shoe factory] was useful for the family and didn't cost me anything'. (Giovanna 1948, Udine)

In this section, women's adult life will be analysed. Three main turning points will be considered; first regular job, marriage and having children. Since there is not a common definition of when youth as a stage of life stops and adult life starts, we consider that getting one's first regular job, after completing education, signals the entry to adult life (independence).

One major difference between the countries is the transition period towards adulthood, what we might call the 'length of youth', the span between leaving compulsory school and starting in the first regular job. In Fthiotis and Udine women commonly started to work at a much younger age than was the case for the four sub-areas in the Netherlands and Nord-Trøndelag, and consequently their opportunities to choose jobs were more limited. They started to work on their parents' farm or in unskilled jobs in industry, services or on other farms. Giovannas' statement above illustrates that many of the girls starting to work very young did so in order to help their parents by contributing to the family economy. In Nord-Trøndelag most women did not start in their first job before finishing secondary school (18 -19 years old) or a vocational training.

9.4.1 First regular job

Ideology and attitudes might affect women's labour force participation in different ways; namely the type of work considered 'appropriate' for women, and whether women (and their surroundings) consider work as a 'lifelong' strategy or only temporary in the 'waiting-for-marriage' period of life. Women's experiences with their first regular job might be important for their work aspirations later in life.

Those who have negative experiences (monotonous, hard work and low pay) might see marriage as a legitimate opportunity to 'escape' from an unsatisfactory situation. Farm work might also be considered in light of their previous experience on the labour market. Those who have invested in education and training and have positive experiences might be less willing to give it up for farming.

In Fthiotis, there were not many jobs outside agriculture available for young women in rural areas during the fifties or sixties. They had either to work on the family farm or get some vocational training in their commune if they wanted to do something different from farming. Drossia, 1952, started working in the fields with her mother when she was 12. She also worked on other farms to supplement the family income. As she didn't have any alternatives she remained in farming, where she started during her childhood. The few younger Greek women with higher education managed to obtain a first job in accordance with their aspirations. Generally, younger farm women had more job opportunities because of the expansion of services in rural areas (tourism, trade, public sector) in the seventies and eighties. Those with no clear work orientation and with a farm background, started to work regularly on their family farm before they married and moved to their husband's farm.

In Udine, most women interviewed had a period of work before marriage. Low levels of education put many of them on the labour market very young. The predominant aspiration was to get a job as soon as possible and as near home as possible. All types of job were considered, temporary jobs or irregular jobs were readily accepted, as the opportunities were limited. The main point was getting an extra income, not choosing a job that one liked.

In the four sub-areas in the Netherlands most of the farm women interviewed left school when they were between 14 and 16 years old. Older women used to help on the family farm, because their labour was needed at home. Another option was to find paid

work, because their income was needed to support the family. For (older) women without a professional education, their first jobs were often an informal arrangement between the employer and their parents. Only women with a professional education had a wider choice of jobs. Younger women were more often educated for a profession and better prepared to find a job. Compared with the sixties in which higher education, vocational training and choice of profession was only an option for women, in the seventies lack of vocational training became a constraint.

In Nord-Trøndelag, none of the women with a farm background started to work regularly on their parents' farm after leaving school. While in the late sixties and seventies there were no problems finding jobs for unskilled workers, in the eighties and nineties the situation has changed. There is an increasing demand for skilled labour, even in formerly unskilled positions. Women who completed vocational training, applied for and started in skilled jobs. Even though few women expressed any occupational career orientation, many have actually taken further education in order to improve their position and achieve promotion and higher status. The few young women who started in their first job after leaving compulsory school, got unskilled jobs like domestic help, child minder or factory work. They looked upon their first job as something temporary; to earn their own money and to have a break from school before starting some kind of vocational training. Women were quite geographically mobile before marriage, and this holds both for older and younger women interviewed. If they had to move in order to get a job or to continue their training, they did.

9.4.2 Marriage

Marriage is a turning point in most women's lives. In our context we are focusing on how marriage affects farm women's lives and labour situations. To establish one's own family was seen to be a central

part of most women's future expectations and not really questioned. Marrying a farmer, the most common entrance for women into farming, has consequences for place of living (a farm in a rural area), and labour situation. The patrilocal tradition implies that it is mostly women who move to their husbands' (family) farm. As we shall see, the impact of marriage on women's lives might however differ in different cultures, according to family structure, dominant gender ideologies and what is seen as the 'appropriate' role for married women.

In Fthiotis and Udine it is observed from the women's life stories that marriage is considered to be the most important turning point in women's lives and a very significant factor influencing their labour situation. Older women had to live in the same household with their in-laws, while younger ones tend to have a separate household, close to their parents' family. Eleni's story is typical for many Greek women. She had to give up her work as a dressmaker when she married, in order to manage all her work and care obligations as a daughter-in-law and farm wife. Her statement illustrates a traditional gender ideology, which for farm women included an extended 'housewife' role. In addition to taking on domestic and care responsibilities she should also assist her husband in the family business:

'When I got married, my parents-in-law expected me to take initiative, to look after them, to help my husband in the tavern and on farm despite the fact that I had not learned farming'. (Eleni 1956, Fthiotis)

Younger Greek women with higher education seem to be able to negotiate better their position and integrate professional interests into family needs and priorities.

My husband and I thought it was a good idea to improve our income and it would be good to start another activity, so that I also have some employment (Eugenia 1966, Fthiotis)

It is however important to note that part-time jobs in Fthiotis hardly exists, therefore the opportunity to combine farm work with a part-time off-farm job is very restricted. In this way the labour market sup-

Table 9.1 Women who agree with the following statements (in %)

	Greece (Fthiotis) (155)	Italy (Udine) (150)	The Netherlands (N, E, W, S) (496)	Norway (Nord-Trøndelag) (424)
A woman with pre-school children should not have a job	68	75	53	59
It is better for pre-school children to stay at home than attend a day care centre	40	66	74	48

Source: Phase 2a National reports of the Demetra research for Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, 1996.

ports a traditional gender ideology, where married women are not expected to have a job. In Udine it is noted that there is not much open and explicit negotiation of working decisions with the husband. Silence and indirect pressure seemed to be the rule in drawing wives to farm work and domestic duties.

In the four sub-areas in the Netherlands marriage seems to have had less effect on women's labour situation. Women tend to continue in the job they had before marriage, at least until having their first child. For older women from lower social class families, marriage was associated with material advantages, with freedom and an adult identity. Compared with the busyness and the lack of freedom in their parental family, and the kind of work they had, it is not surprising that women desired to marry (Komter 1990:31, cited in Overbeek 1996). Women who did not have any clear work aspirations were most likely to adapt to the farm role. Some of the younger women preferred farm work and found the combination of farm work and child care fine.

In Nord-Trøndelag many farm women who have invested in higher education look upon their occupation as a 'lifelong' strategy and accordingly they are more likely to continue in their jobs after marriage (23). 'I married the man not the farm' said Nora, 1948. There are however differences between younger and older women, as older women were more likely to enter the traditional farm women's role and quit their off-farm job when marrying in

order to fulfil the expectations of being a 'proper' farm wife and mother, combining on-farm work with care of children. While the majority of women experienced certain expectations of their role as farm wives, their bargaining power and opportunity to influence their own labour situation seem to vary according to their level of education, previous work experience and the labour demand on the farm.

'I told him right from the beginning, that he could not expect me to become a traditional farm wife. But I promised to help him'. (Kari 1961, Nord-Trøndelag)

9.4.3 First child

Having a child is an important change and a turning point in most women's life. Child care responsibilities and attitudes towards motherhood might influence women's labour situation (changes in type of work, intensity of work or even exit from the labour market). We start by looking at farm women's expressed agreement with statements regarding child care and mothering to get an overall picture of the dominant ideas existing among the farm women in the four countries (table 9.1).

The first statement says something about how women should be 'mothering'. A majority of farm women in all study areas agree with the statement that women with pre-school children should not have a job. However, farm women in the four sub-areas in the Netherlands and Nord-Trøndelag seem

(23) As many as 11% of the farm women in Nord-Trøndelag were not married but cohabiting, showing that the new way of living together without marriage is also taken up and accepted in the traditional farm society.

to be more positive towards working mothers. The second statement takes the children's perspective and indicates what is best for children. It is interesting to note that the Dutch women are most positive towards working mothers, while at the same time they are most critical of day care centres. Women in Fthiotis and Udine are less in favour of working mothers, but at the same time Greek women are in fact most positive towards day care centres.

When controlled for age and education, younger women and women with more than compulsory school are generally more positive towards working mothers and day care centres. Udine, however, makes an interesting exception; even though younger and better educated women are more positive to working mothers, they are more negative towards day care centres than older and less educated women. Our study does not compare the 'quality' of day care centres in each country, but opinions about what is best for children are probably also influenced by the knowledge and experience women have with day care centres. The actual use of child care facilities differs between the areas, in respect of access to and types of child care facilities.

In Udine the majority of farm women with pre-school children had child care provided by family members. The same was found in Fthiotis. In the four sub-areas in the Netherlands paid child care is used only by a minority of the farm women, most common being use of private 'guest mothers'. In Nord-Trøndelag as many as eight out of ten farm women with pre-school children use some kind of child care facilities, and kindergartens are the most common form of child care. Due to the long distances to playmates in many rural areas, kindergartens are considered to be a reasonable compensation and a nice place to socialise the child to company of other children of the same age.

With this 'quantitative' background we are going back to our qualitative data in order to look more closely at women's life stories and how having children affected their labour situation. We saw previ-

ously that marriage was the most influential factor on Greek and Italian women's labour situation. Accordingly having children seem to have less effect on their labour situation. Family solidarity contributes to the provision of child care by other family members and women have to make only minor adjustments to their work pattern.

Younger Italian farm women tend however to have transformed the significance attributed to marriage and childbearing. They put more emphasis and energy into following their children's upbringing in every respect. The close relationship between the two adult generations is not always unproblematic. One of the farm women in Udine, Angela, born in 1961, said that she didn't like to leave her children either with her mother-in-law or with her mother as '*they spoil them*'. This indicates generation differences in attitudes, but probably it reflects more profound changes, as this young woman expresses her dissatisfaction by choosing to take care of her own children.

Most of the Dutch women stopped working off-farm, when they had their first child. Even though the presence of children remains an important turning point in women's working life, younger women use more strategies to combine child care with a small off-farm job in order to keep in touch with the labour market.

In Nord-Trøndelag, as in the four sub-areas in the Netherlands, having children seems to have more effect on the labour situation than marriage itself. While marriage and having children was the most common reason among older women for quitting their off-farm job, at least for a few years, among the younger women we find more variations in mothering. Women with a high level of education and a skilled occupation are less likely to choose to stay home with their children. The farm women clearly illustrate the 'dual strategy'; they want to have children and they want to have a job (either off-farm or on farm). The majority of farm women work only

part-time off the farm and one of the reasons is to have more time for the family and farm obligations.

In all our study areas we found that care of children is mainly the women's responsibility. Either the mothers themselves or other females in the family look after the children during the day, while the use of child care facilities (kindergartens) is more common in Nord-Trøndelag. However, even with assistance, *the greater part of the care is still provided by the mothers themselves in all the countries*. Having children affects all women's labour situation in one way or another. Our study revealed women struggling to find ways of combining care (work) with other commitments and labour aspirations. While in the southern countries many women opt to find ways to reduce their overall labour input, in the northern countries the struggle was more related to how to combine an off-farm job with care for children.

9.5 Present situation

The understanding of women's participation in work (on farm and off-farm) includes an understanding of the variety of tasks that constitute women's routines in everyday life. As our study focuses on farm women's labour situation, we have looked more closely at four main domains of work; farm work, off-farm work, other gainful activities on farm and domestic work and care, in the previous phase of the project. Our in-depth interviews have revealed that most of the work decisions are taken within a farm and family context where not only women's individual preferences and opportunities but also the need for her labour input in all areas are taken into consideration. Gender ideologies regarding 'women's role' are imbedded in the decisions. Only in Nord-Trøndelag did we find examples of active negotiations between the couple about the division of labour, while in the other areas it seemed to be more 'taken for granted' and not a subject for discussion. A major part of women's work has traditionally been the unpaid and poorly recognised work

in the 'private sphere'; domestic and care work. In all our study areas we found examples of farm women having a heavy burden of combining work in two or more of the work domains.

Women's labour situation is dynamic rather than a static. All the four major labour situations we have identified might be temporary and vary according to stage in life and present opportunities, constraints and preferences. In general farm women have a higher activity rate than other rural women. While the most common labour situation among farm women in the four sub-areas in the Netherlands, Fthiotis and Udine was to be working mainly on farm, the most common labour situation among farm women in Nord-Trøndelag was working mainly off-farm. The 'housewife' position is found to be held by a minority of farm women in all the study areas, and quite often this is a temporary position while certain care obligations for young children or other family members claim their energy.

9.5.1 Farm work

As we have seen women's most common means of entry into farming is through marriage. That means that farming for most women is a result of marriage. Marrying a farmer commonly implies a certain set of gender expectations and obligations regarding family, farm and farm-related work.

*'You get married and the mother-in-law steps aside and the young bride has to do everything, the house, the elderly parents, other relatives, the farm and always be pleasant to guests. And when you are 19 you find it hard to cope'.
(Drossia 1952, Fthiotis)*

In the survey farm women were asked to respond to the statement that *'A woman who marries a farmer should be willing to work on the farm'*. The level of agreement varies between the countries (table 9.2).

Most farm women in Fthiotis and Nord-Trøndelag agreed with the statement, fewer in the four sub-areas in the Netherlands, and in Udine less than half

	Greece (Fthiotis) (155)	Italy (Udine) (150)	The Netherlands (N, E, W, S) (496)	Norway (Nord-Trøndelag) (424)
A woman who marries a farmer should be willing to work on the farm	78	43	65	77

Source: See table 9.1.

of the farm women agreed. The expressed view of farm women in Nord-Trøndelag and Udine seem to contradict the fact that Norwegian women tend to continue their off-farm career, while Italian women tend to leave their off-farm job when marrying a farmer. Greek women tend to agree with the normative statement, although the majority *prefer* an off-farm job. It might be that the general statement is understood differently from ‘being willing to work mainly/only on the farm’ to ‘willing to contribute when necessary’. The rate of agreement doesn’t however necessarily reflect the real situation, *as more than 90% of farm women in all the countries actually are involved in farm work*, although intensity and kind of involvement vary. In each country there is a tendency for younger and better educated women to agree less with the statement than older women and women with only compulsory education. As a main conclusion we can say that most farm women express obligations towards contributing to farm work if it is necessary.

The majority of farm women in Fthiotis work on farm, but aspire towards having an off-farm job. Compared with other jobs, farm work is considered physically hard and less acceptable, and nearly half of the farm women want to reduce their labour input on farm. The future outlook for farming is considered bad among the Greek women. An aspiration among women who work full-time on farm or are pluriactive, is to reduce their labour input on the farm. However, the lack of job opportunities, and the fact that many women also lack relevant vocational training, makes them less competitive on the labour market.

In Udine the majority of farm women (81%) report that they do not want any change in their labour input on the farm. The interviews reveal however that younger women seem to be more oriented towards a housewife role than working on the farm. Housework and child care are taking more of women’s time as accepted standards have risen. While some farm women are very dedicated to farm work and aim for social mobility through farming (accumulating land, improve the farm business through hard work), others try to limit their involvement in farming by choosing to stay home as housewives, or looking for an off-farm job.

In the four sub-areas in the Netherlands most farm women work mainly on farm and nearly half of these women have a legal status as registered co-heads on the farm. This indicates that women have a formal position within farming. Some of the Dutch women see the combination of working on farm and child care as the best opportunity because of the flexible nature of the work. In this sense they also pursue a gender strategy in line with the domestic role for women. Other women who wanted to see farming as their main profession were less satisfied with the combination of work and care, as they found it very difficult to combine the two.

‘I worked in nursing before, and in itself I’d enjoy working one or two days in the hospital. But I just can’t get round to it. I can’t say it’s because of the children; it’s because of all the work in and around the house. Keeping the house clean, clearing up in the store, there are always things waiting to be done.’ (Annie 1955, The Netherlands)

Although the majority of farm women in our study areas seem to be satisfied with their labour input on the farm, some women want to increase their on-

farm work (one quarter of the farm women in Nord-Trøndelag):

'My work is a combination of being a housewife and a farmer. I really enjoy farm work, and when my children [four] grow up I will participate more.' (Liv, 1956, Nord-Trøndelag)

Especially among younger Norwegian farm women we found a group expressing a strong professional interest in farming. They had agri-vocational training and have chosen farming as an occupation or farming in combination with an off-farm job.

9.5.2 Off-farm work

'I enjoy being a teacher. It is nice to have my own job and colleagues. And of course the income is important for my family. Since I had my children I have worked part-time. I help occasionally with farm work, but I do not go regularly to the barn'. (Mary 1964, Nord-Trøndelag)

Off-farm income is important for most farm families in our areas, with the exception of the four sub-areas in the Netherlands where the economy in agriculture seems to be more favourable. The decision to work off-farm might be a result of the farm economy (push factor), but it might also be seen as an individual preference for off-farm work (pull factor). That is to say that a farm woman might work off-farm either in order to contribute to the farm household economy, or because she simply prefers an off-farm job, or a combination of the two.

Many of the women with off-farm work experience difficulties combining paid and unpaid work; off-farm work, domestic work and work on the farm. One solution, chosen by the majority of farm women in the four sub-areas in the Netherlands and in Nord-Trøndelag, is working off-farm on a part-time basis in order to manage the variety of tasks. In Fthiotis and Udine, however, those who have an off-farm job, more often work full-time. In Fthiotis this is due to the fact that part-time jobs are hardly available.

In the four sub-areas in the Netherlands and Nord-Trøndelag, women want either to be active in farming or to have an off-farm job. In the Netherlands labour-intensive agriculture gives women a real opportunity to choose to work in farming, but it might also be considered as a constraint for women who want to work off-farm.

'It is not that my husband doesn't support me, but he would prefer me to stay home. Then you need to organise less. He would prefer to see me in the farm business. I will see how it goes. Now, I have one child, and perhaps there will be a second one and then I may not be able to manage any more with a job as well'. (Rinie 1967, The Netherlands)

The reason why some Dutch women prefer off-farm work is that it gives more social benefits, while the income is less important. However, women seem to be constrained by a traditional gender ideology; and partners prefer them to stay at home. Dutch women with pre-school children lack, for instance, public child care facilities (as found in Nord-Trøndelag) and they have less family child care support (as found in Udine and Fthiotis). In Nord-Trøndelag, farms are commonly not large enough to provide enough work (and income) for two persons, and as women do not consider the housewife position to be a permanent one, they tend to work off-farm.

9.5.3 Domestic work and childcare

Women's work on the farm is highly intertwined with domestic work. It seems that women's responsibility for domestic work and care is more or less taken for granted among farm women themselves too. However we do find that some women are starting to question the gender division of labour, even if the reality still shows that it is women who mainly do this work.

A statement about women's responsibility for domestic work was put forward and the respondents were asked to take a stand on the following statement: *'A married woman should be responsible for domestic work even with an off-farm job'* (table 9.3).

Table 9.3 Women who agree with the statement (in %)				
	Greece (Fthiotis) (155)	Italy (Udine) (150)	The Netherlands (N, E, W, S) (496)	Norway (Nord-Trøndelag) (424)
A married woman should be responsible for domestic work even with an off-farm job	89	77	36	20
Source: See table 9.1.				

This statement is reflecting a traditional gender ideology identifying women with domestic activities. A high rate of agreement could be understood as supporting a traditional gender ideology.

While the majority of farm women in Fthiotis and Udine agree, the majority of the Dutch and the Norwegian women disagree with the statement. If we compare women by age group and education level we find that younger and better-educated women tend to disagree most. However, we found an ideological gap between expressed egalitarian ideas and traditional practice, as the majority of women had responsibility for domestic work in the northern countries too.

About half of the women in Fthiotis and Udine spent 40 hours or more a week in household work, indicating a real (time) constraint on having an off-farm job in addition. In comparison only 18% of the Norwegian and 33% of the Dutch women spent as much as 40 hours or more with household work. Further we found more discussion and rejection of domestic work as the sole responsibility of women in the northern countries.

Norwegian women explain the gendered division of household work by the fact that their husbands are busy with farm work and that it is more difficult for them as farm wives to achieve equality than for women in couples where both have the same working hours. Farm women with an off-farm job say that when they are not present he has to make his own meals. However it is more a question of a practical solution to that particular problem (preparing food for themselves) than a radical change towards more

equal sharing. While in Udine the housewife role is seen as something positive, in Nord-Trøndelag and in the four sub-areas in the Netherlands women regard it more negatively. Young women commonly look upon their housewife position as a temporary one while they have pre-school children. This difference has to be understood within the gender ideology prevailing in each country. In Norway the norm for women is to have a job (this could also be within farming). In Udine improving living conditions for the first time have allowed some women to 'escape' into a modern housewife role, yet not more than 17% of the farm women are classified as housewives. In Fthiotis the housewife role was observed only for a small percentage of farm women (12%), and in many cases it was considered a temporary role due to care obligations.

9.6 Conclusions

1. A common observation in all the countries was that the main differences in life course experiences were between younger and older women. Better infrastructure and increasing access to education in rural areas, and changing gender ideologies are central in explaining changes in women's position in agriculture and differences among women within and between the study areas.
2. Traditional gender ideologies, considering men as the main breadwinners while women are primarily identified with their activities at home, have had and still have an important impact on farm women's lives. Women marrying into a farming family, which is the predominant means

- of entry into farming in all the countries, marry not only their husband, but also into a traditionally defined role where they are expected to take responsibility for the household and child care and be available to help on the farm. As the family business (the farm) is a joint project, we might assume that both spouses have an interest in its viability. However, looking at the farm as a unit, conceals the fact that the husband and wife commonly have different rewards (income, status), rights (to property and social security) and working conditions. Women's bargaining power and opportunity to influence their own labour situation seem to be dependent on their level of education, work opportunities, previous work experience and the labour demand and level of income on the farm.
3. The increasing trend for women to have or aspire to have an off-farm job is found in all the countries, but to a different extent. This trend might be seen as a result of both opportunities and/or constraints. One explanation is women's higher education and improved opportunities to choose their own labour situation. If an off-farm job is considered preferable to working on farm, women will choose to work off-farm. Another explanation might be a 'push factor' hypothesis; there is less need for women's labour input in farming (increased mechanisation), or decreasing incomes in farming 'force' women to work off-farm in order to contribute to the farm household's total income. According to our findings it seems that there is a relation between the two explanations; while agriculture can hardly offer women the same working conditions, women who have the opportunity choose to work off-farm (Nord-Trøndelag) and women who have fewer opportunities express a preference for off-farm work (Fthiotis and Udine). In the four sub-areas in the Netherlands women seem to have the best opportunity to choose farming as an occupation (sufficient labour demand and viable farm businesses). Accordingly, Dutch women's reasons for working off-farm are social rather than economic.
 4. In all the study areas we hear about male partners who prefer women to work on the farm. Women's roles tend to be flexible; in addition to doing domestic work and care work, women are helping out on the farm where their labour is needed. Also when we look at the results from the survey we find that men seldom share women's responsibility within the domestic area. As far as women succeed in working off-farm they always do it *in addition to* their obligations at home. Family solidarity is strong in the southern countries, and female relatives are more likely to share care and domestic duties in a mutual help and support system. In the northern countries there is not the same system of female support and women depend more on public institutions (public care) or private initiatives in order to realise their own career aspirations. While women in the southern study areas (Udine and Fthiotis) depend highly on their local (family) network for social security, women in the northern areas (the sub-areas in the Netherlands and Nord-Trøndelag) to a certain extent can rely on the welfare state.
 5. The differences found between younger and older women, indicate a process of changing gender ideologies which in turn affect farm women's aspirations and opportunities to choose their labour situation. This is not happening in parallel in all areas, and it might have different expressions. However, we find strong agreement on the importance of education, work and income for women as well as for men, indicating a more 'egalitarian' gender ideology. Younger women and women with education are starting to question and challenge the 'traditional' gender ideology defining women's role as primarily 'domestic'. As our study has nicely illustrated, farm women do not fit in with a 'housewife ideology' as their labour input is of crucial importance in the family farm business. Yet, as long as their work is connected to the family farm and intertwined with the domestic sphere it does not really challenge the traditional gender ideology of the 'domestic woman' and the male bread-

winner. The family farm is seen by the majority of women as a common project and they support the operation in different ways, either by labour inputs on the farm, or by income contributions from off-farm work, or both. In many cases women aspire towards an off-farm job in order to achieve the same rights as other working women (fixed working hours, a stable income, social security). Some women find farm life is a rather lonely and isolated occupation, and prefer off-farm work in order to have colleagues and a more sociable working environment.

6. While higher education and vocational training were not seen as a must for women, as they most likely would marry and become housewives, these attitudes are changing. We find a general increase in the level of education among younger farm women. And this is likely to continue as we found an increased emphasis and awareness of the importance of their children's education and freedom to make their own choices. As we know that the level of education is increasing in all the countries, and that education and vocational training influence opportunities in the labour market and women's bargaining power within marriage, it might indicate a process whereby women are about to leave agriculture. But we also find a counter-trend in the four sub-areas in the Netherlands and Nord-Trøndelag; that women *who want to enter farming as their main occupation* will increasingly do so with agri-vocational training and a clear position regarding income and social security rights.
7. The traditional life course for farm women is attached to a particular female life course, which somewhat roughly could be described by three phases: adolescence, when she still lives with her parents, a transitional period when she becomes self-supporting, and adult life starting with economic independence or marriage and continuing with farm work and responsibility for her household and family. This traditional life course is changing in all the countries but the degree of change might vary. Women's paid work is no longer exclusively attached to the premarital phase. Especially in Nord-Trøndelag, but also to an increasing degree in the four sub-areas in the Netherlands women invest more time and money in education, indicating that education is part of a longer life plan. In this 'new' female life course an independent professional career plays a key role. Also in Udine and Fthiotis we find more emphasis on women's education and right to an independent labour status. Since older women had limited opportunities for establishing a career outside the farm, they also adjusted their expectations differently from those of young farm women today.
8. The changes in farm women's lives might roughly be described in the following epigram borrowed from Almås (1996): *'From the society of duty to the market place of opportunity'*. We have uncovered a process by which women are starting to challenge traditional gender expectations, and redefine norms about women's work. The result is that farm women today constitute a heterogeneous group. The majority of farm women in all the areas, except Nord-Trøndelag, still work mainly on farm. In the four sub-areas in the Netherlands women's formal status within farming is improving. The same is found in Nord-Trøndelag and this might explain why more women express a wish to increase their labour input in farming. However farm structure in Nord-Trøndelag (relatively small farms) does not give women the same opportunities to choose farming as in the Netherlands. In Fthiotis and Udine farming represents a less attractive alternative for women. An increasing number of farm women are starting to look for an off-farm job, while others refuse to take part in farm work, legitimising their choice by assuming a 'housewife' role (Udine). Some women have started an activity of their own on the farm, but most commonly this is a joint family project. A common characteristic in all our study areas is that women want to increase their control over their own work situation.

9. From the interviews we can see that there is an ideological shift in expectations. While the older women refer to tradition, and a practical sharing of work, younger women expect more equal sharing or they present a picture of more equality. The changes are still mostly ideological. It is important to realise that even though we find increasing approval of farm women's working off-farm, the overall status of women might not be necessarily improved in terms of income and social security or sharing the burden of domestic work. Although women work off-farm and/or in farming both women and men might hold traditional attitudes toward gender roles in the family. Then an off-farm job often only adds to farm women's total workload. Any effort to improve farm women's labour situation needs to take into account the fact that changes affecting women's situation also require changes that affect men's situation, both ideologically and practically.
10. A general increase in education level calls attention to an increasing share of farm women with off-farm job preferences. Depending on the type of local labour market, opportunities for finding suitable jobs will vary. As numbers of low skilled jobs are decreasing in many areas it will be even more difficult for those who have no formal skills to find a job. On the other hand, areas which mainly offer low skilled, monotonous, physically demanding jobs might be considered less attractive for farm women, who perhaps already have enough 'hard work' on the farm.