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CIHEAM
International Center for Advanced
Mediterranean Agronomic Studies

SFS | MED
Platform

JUSTICE IN THE FIELDS AND IN OUR PLATES

Women's rights as a
driver of sustainable food
systems transitions

5 March 2026 | 14:00–16:00 (CET) Online



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE
WOMAN FARMER
2026

AGENDA



JUSTICE IN THE FIELDS AND IN OUR PLATES

Women's rights as a driver of sustainable food systems transitions

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Across the Mediterranean, women are essential to agrifood systems, as farmers, farm workers, processors, traders and entrepreneurs, while also shouldering a disproportionate share of unpaid care and household responsibilities that sustain food security at family level. Yet their roles remain structurally undervalued and often wconfined to informal, low-paid and low-protection segments of value chains. FAO's flagship report **The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems**¹ highlights that agrifood systems are a major source of employment and income for women globally, but that persistent gender inequalities continue to shape women's access to land and productive assets, extension services, technology and decent work opportunities, undermining both women's empowerment and the resilience and sustainability of agrifood systems as a whole.

¹ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/ad0741f-9de2-4d09-ae68-b19cc871601a>

This webinar builds on the policy momentum generated by the **Regional Stakeholder Dialogue and Training on Empowering**

The SFS-MED Platform

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA) have joined forces in a multi-stakeholder initiative for Sustainable Food Systems in the Mediterranean (SFS-MED Platform), as an affiliated project of the One Planet Network Sustainable Food Systems Programme. The SFS-MED initiative aims at promoting dialogue and collaboration among Mediterranean countries and stakeholders while they implement national and local efforts for a transformation to more sustainable food systems.

The SFS-MED Webinar series

This series of technical webinars is organized to leverage the knowledge and expertise of a network of researchers, development practitioners and decision-makers. The webinars aim at **strengthening knowledge sharing** and **stimulating debate** around themes relevant to food systems transformation in the Mediterranean, **peer exchange** about recent research and study findings, as well as showcasing **successful and inspiring actions** to promote the operationalization of food systems approaches. Building on the findings of a stocktaking exercise of the

UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) Dialogues held in the Mediterranean, the webinars will revolve around a set of shared priorities and trends that are common to most countries in the region, considered as entry points or main thematic areas regarding what to transform in the Mediterranean food systems. Many of these were reflected as well in the national pathways for food systems transformation that countries developed within the UNFSS process during 2021.

OBJECTIVES

KNOWLEDGE: Create a knowledge base about opportunities, innovative solutions and gaps or limitations for food systems transformation, specific to the Mediterranean context.

EVIDENCE SHARING: Facilitate replication and upscaling of concrete solutions for food systems transformation through the dissemination of evidence about successful approaches and lessons learned from across the Mediterranean.

AWARENESS: Promote and raise awareness on food systems thinking by facilitating multi-disciplinary and multi-sectorial exchanges.

Women Entrepreneurs in the MENA Agro-Food Sector held in Cairo in October 2025 (**outcome document** available [here](#)), where the approved **CIHEAM-UfM Joint Draft Declaration on a Regional Agenda for Innovation for Women Entrepreneurs in the Agro-Food Value Chain** reaffirmed shared commitments to strengthen women's access to enabling ecosystems, enhance participation in decision-making, expand access to finance and markets, and promote gender-responsive policies, technologies and institutional frameworks across the Mediterranean region. These elements provide an important foundation for advancing a justice-based approach to women's empowerment in agrifood systems, ensuring that legal barriers are addressed alongside technical and innovation priorities.

The year 2026 offers a unique opportunity to bring renewed political attention to these realities. The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 2026 as the **International Year of the Woman Farmer**, recognizing women farmers as key actors for food security, nutrition, rural livelihoods and climate resilience, and calling for stronger investments and enabling policy environments that address long-standing gender gaps in agriculture.

However, recent evidence and exchanges within the **SFS-MED Platform**² have shown that the transition towards greener and more resilient food systems cannot be reduced to technical innovation or ecological performance alone. If underlying inequalities remain unaddressed, food systems transitions may reproduce or even intensify exclusion, particularly in rural areas where women's access to resources, services, representation and income is frequently constrained. In this sense, gender equality is not a parallel agenda: it is a defining condition for transitions that are socially legitimate, economically viable and environmentally sustainable.

This webinar proposes to address one of the most decisive and often overlooked conditions of an equitable transition: **women's access to justice in rural areas and agrifood systems**. Access to justice is not limited to litigation or courts. It includes women's ability to know and claim their rights, to access remedies and legal aid, to navigate administrative procedures, to resolve disputes fairly, and to be protected from violence, harassment and retaliation. When these conditions are absent, women's exclusion is not accidental; it becomes embedded in everyday practices that govern land use, labour relations, market participation and local resource management.

² <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/knowledge-centre/resources/women-key-players-greening-mediterranean-food-systems-drivers-and>

In agrifood systems, justice concerns are often directly linked to livelihoods. Women may be excluded from land ownership and inheritance, unable to secure contracts or credit, or denied fair

returns in value chains. They may face exploitation in seasonal or informal work, or remain unable to report abuses due to stigma, economic dependency and fear of reprisals. From this perspective, strengthening justice pathways becomes inseparable from improving women's economic autonomy and the overall performance of rural economies. The ILO observer paper prepared for the CSW70 Expert Group Meeting³ stresses the importance of **labour justice mechanisms** including complaint and grievance procedures, labour inspection, dispute resolution and gender-responsive remedies, as key entry points to ensure that rights exist not only in law, but in practice⁴.

Finally, the **food environment**, understood as the set of physical, economic, social and political conditions that influence food choices, is profoundly shaped by rules, institutions and power relations. In this context, food justice is not limited to access to healthy and affordable food: it also refers to the ability of individuals and communities, particularly women, to participate in decision-making, challenge unfair practices and assert their rights in food policies, markets and governance systems. For women, particularly in rural areas and agri-food systems, access to justice determines their role in building sustainable, equitable and healthy food environments — as producers, workers, traders, consumers and public policy actors.

By bringing together these perspectives, this SFS-MED Platform webinar will explore how access to justice can be understood as a lever for transforming agrifood systems towards models that are more equitable, just, healthy and resilient (ecologically, socially, economically and politically) while contributing to the International Year of the Woman Farmer and connecting with the global momentum of CSW70.

Furthermore, this webinar discussion directly connects with the **United Nations International Women's Day 2026 theme – “Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls.”** By focusing on access to justice in rural areas and agrifood systems, the webinar situates women farmers' and workers' rights within broader efforts to move from formal recognition of rights to their effective implementation and enforcement. It emphasizes justice as a prerequisite for inclusivity and accountability, ensuring that food systems transitions contribute to gender equality, social inclusion and sustainable development for all women and girls across the Mediterranean.

³ <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-12/csw70-2026-expert-group-meeting-concept-note-en.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-12/csw-70-expert-group-meeting-observer-paper-ilo-en.pdf>

OBJECTIVES

This webinar aims to strengthen the SFS-MED Platform's contribution to Mediterranean food systems transformation by framing **women's access to justice in rural areas and agrifood systems as an enabling condition for fair, sustainable and resilient transitions**, aligned with the International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026 and the global agenda on gender equality.

First, it will clarify **how barriers to justice concretely affect women's participation**, income security and agency across agrifood value chains, including through discrimination in access to land and resources, unequal labour relations, constraints on mobility and decision-making, and exposure to violence and harassment factors that shape both women's rights and the capacity of food systems to adapt to climate and economic shocks.

Second, it will identify justice-related entry points that are highly relevant for food systems transitions, with particular attention to **labour justice and protection mechanisms**, gender-responsive dispute resolution, legal empowerment, and the role of institutions and services in making rights enforceable for women workers and women farmers.

Third, it will highlight **evidence and good practices** that translate women's rights into actionable change at local and national

EXPECTED OUTCOME

The webinar is expected to clarify why access to justice must be considered a structural enabler of food systems transformation, alongside climate action, finance, innovation and governance. It will highlight evidence-based and context-sensitive approaches that strengthen women's rights and remedies in rural areas, from land tenure reforms to labour justice mechanisms and legal empowerment initiatives. It will provide actionable insights and shared messages for Mediterranean stakeholders to support CSW70 priorities and to connect them to agrifood systems strategies, including through national pathways and regional cooperation frameworks.

This session will aim to address some key questions:

What do mechanisms for 'access to justice' mean in rural and agri-food contexts beyond the courts, and which avenues are most important in practice (legal empowerment, administrative remedies, labour dispute resolution mechanisms, law enforcement)?

What are the justice-related barriers (legal, institutional, economic and social) that most severely affect women farmers and workers in the Mediterranean, particularly with regard to land and resources, decent work, social protection and access to services and markets? How do power imbalances, informality and the risk of retaliation limit women's ability to claim labour rights in agrifood value chains, and what makes grievance and dispute-resolution mechanisms truly gender-responsive?

How can justice systems and institutions become more accessible and effective for rural women, taking into account procedural barriers, stigma, economic dependency and real-life constraints?

How can food environment policies contribute to food justice from a gender perspective, and how can we accelerate measurable commitments and accountability?

levels, including implementation-focused reforms, accessible services and accountability mechanisms, recognizing that justice outcomes depend not only on legal frameworks but also on procedures, institutional behaviours and real-life conditions faced by rural women.

In addition, the webinar will connect **justice considerations to food environment policies and food justice debates**, including emerging ‘food social security’ approaches that frame access to sustainable diets as a matter of equity and accountability. Food environment policies increasingly intersect with broader debates on food justice and the right to food. Emerging initiatives such as ‘food social security’ approaches illustrate how access to healthy and sustainable diets can be framed as a matter of structural equity, democratic governance and accountability, dimensions that are particularly relevant for women, both as food producers and as those most exposed to food insecurity and unpaid care burdens.

Beyond production and labour conditions, justice also shapes the rules and power relations that influence what food is available, affordable and desirable across territories. Finally, it will support **dialogue among Mediterranean stakeholders** on how to embed justice considerations into policies and partnerships for food systems transformation, ensuring that the International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026 serves as a catalyst for measurable commitments, targeted investment and long-term impact.



AGENDA

14:00-14:15 **SETTING THE SCENE
AND WELCOME**

Welcome remarks

TEODORO MIANO, Secretary General CIHEAM
PETRA KEZMAN, Deputy Secretary General
for Human Development, Union for the Medi-
terranean

14:15-14:30 **KEYNOTE REMARKS**

**WHY JUSTICE MATTERS FOR FOOD SYS-
TEMS TRANSITIONS**

Key evidence on women's roles in agrifood sys-
tems and the implications of gender gaps for
food security, nutrition and resilience, including
the opportunity of the International Year of the
Woman Farmer 2026.

ELISENDA ESTRUCH, Rural Economy Special-
ist, International Labour Organization (ILO)

14:30-15:45 **PANEL DISCUSSION**

- Land and resources justice (tenure, inheritance, water and collective governance)
- Labour justice and decent work (in-formality, grievance mechanisms, inspection, remedies, protection from retaliation).
- Institutional and procedural jus-tice (accessibility of services, legal empowerment, procedures and real-life barriers faced by rural women)
- Food environments and food pol-icies (constraints, accountability, "food social security" approaches)

Moderator: **YASMINE SEGHIRATE**, Adminis-
trator, General Secretariat CIHEAM

**JUSTICE PATHWAYS IN RURAL AND AGRI-
FOOD CONTEXTS**

Panelists:

GLORIA ABOUZEID, Director General of Coop-
eratives, Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon

NISREEN LAHHAM, Climate Change Adapta-
tion and Greening Agriculture Specialist, FAO
RNE

ELLA FRANKEL, Senior Advisor Food, Farming
and Fisheries, Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)

DR. ZEINA JALLAD, Director Palestine Land
Studies Center, AUB

15:45-15:55

Q&A

15:55-16:00

CLOSING REMARKS

ANNA DORANGRICCHIA, Project Manager,
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