



Challenges influencing the growth and development of women in the UK agricultural sector.

Background

Global findings demonstrate that women are constantly **underrepresented** within the UK agricultural sector. Yet, it could be argued that the challenge is not a lack of women, rather the **inability** of traditional perceptions to adjust and acknowledge the significant roles women play.

Research Aim

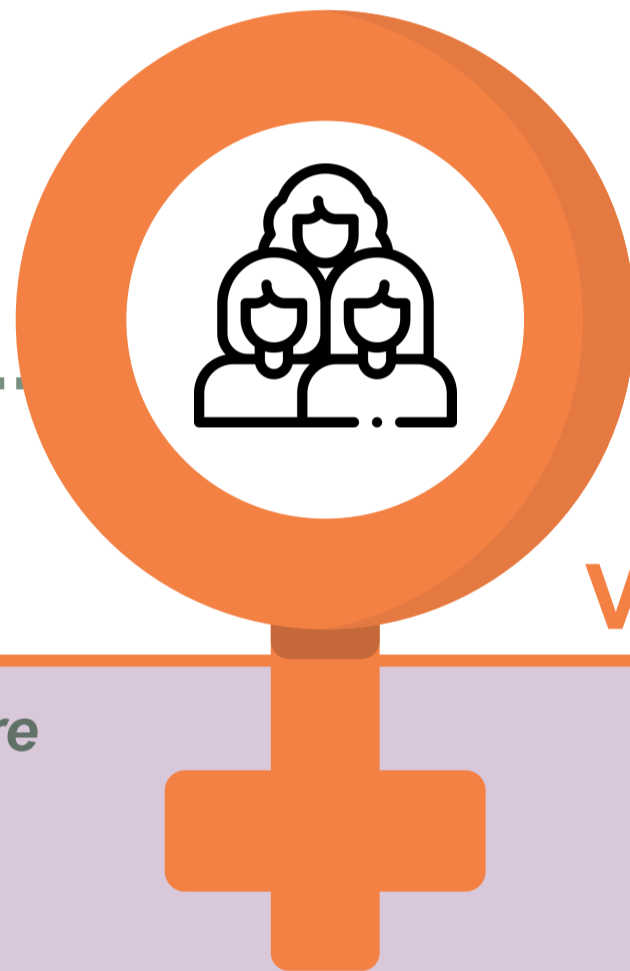
This paper sets out to address this research gap by determining the types of challenges women in the United Kingdom agricultural sector are experiencing and how this has influenced their participation within the industry.

Research Objectives

1. To determine the role of women within the UK agricultural sector
2. To establish the main challenges and barriers women are experiencing within the UK agricultural sector
3. To identify the influencing factors contributing to the challenges and barriers to women within the UK agricultural sector
4. To assess how these challenges are impacting the perception and development of women within the sector, both on and off farm.

Methodology

Utilising a qualitative approach, combined with the **gender perspective theory** and **self-perception theory** as guiding frameworks, this paper aims to identify the challenges women experience within the UK agricultural sector and how these influence their outlook and participation.



Survey & interviews



Inductive & deductive coding



Themes & analysis

79%

Answered **YES** to experiencing gender related challenges

Support **MENTAL HEALTH VISIBILITY** Tradition Bias

“The sector is improving, but is nowhere near equal yet”

Results & Discussion

Role of women:

Women's contribution within the sector span across a variety of roles, adding significant value for both personal and business developments. Yet, not one job title truly represents their total responsibilities. This diversification was a common theme throughout the study, with some respondents finding it **crucial** to seek additional means of financial income and career development as a result of financial pressures and uncertainty regarding the future security of the sector.

Challenges:

This paper indicates that there were **7** common themes grouping all challenges said to be experienced by women in the UK agricultural sector relating to their gender, these being: value, self-perception, visibility, personal development, succession, physical barriers, and tradition. It was evident that the most common barriers stemmed from difficulties within **value**, **self-perception**, and **visibility**. The struggles of being taken seriously and having to prove self-worth, were the most shared influencing factors to barriers faced within the sector.

Impact of challenges:

Consequences of such challenges caused individuals to question their knowledge and abilities, resulting in them having to work harder in order to prove themselves. Yet, a common argument associated with this response was that of knowing they were having to work harder, but feeling like their male colleagues wouldn't be doing the same, if roles were **reversed**.

Mental health:

42 respondents rated their current state of mental health to be **7 out of 10** (0: very poor - 10: very good).

Support:

Inclusive of **all platforms**, 56% of women within the study felt that there was not enough support within the sector.

56%

x1

one farmer commits suicide per **week** in the UK

Conclusion

Whilst **traditional perceptions** of the UK agricultural sector remain, women continue to experience challenges irrespective of their age, job title, or location. With the inability for the sector to provide beneficial support, female contribution continues to be **devalued**, thus limiting growth and development.

Recommendations

In order to improve such issues, strategies and policies should focus on eliminating **gender inequality** by further exploring the theory of perception to create **equal opportunities**, which in turn should alleviate the associated challenges experienced by women.

“What are we doing in farming that makes it that unthinkable that you can't continue in this job?”