

CASE STUDY N°2 GREECE

(Em)Power up women farmers



Project acronym & number	FARMWELL
Project title	Improving farmers' wellbeing through social innovation
Project coordinator	E40 Group
Grant Agreement No	101000797

Deliverable / Work package number	
Date	30.09.2023.
Document Type	R: Report
Lead beneficiary Primary author(s)	E40 Maria Partalidou AUTH
Document version	V03
Distribution level	PU: Public





Table of Contents

1 THE SOCIAL INNOVATION	3
Summary of the social innovation	3
Key social challenges addressed & objective of the social innovation.	3
Activities	4
Key stakeholders involved	4
Main outcomes of the activity	5
Main recommendations	5
2 THE PILOT ACTION: POWER TO THE PEOPLE: ENERGY COMMUNITIES & WELLBEING FOR ALL	7
What was the pilot about?	7
Purpose	7
Running the pilot	7
Target group	8
The main lessons from the pilot	8
The main impact of the pilot	9
3 THE SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT (SROI)	13
4 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND FARMING SUPPORT	19
The Challenge & Needs – What is the situation?	19
Support framework – What is needed?	20
Recommendations – What needs to be done to realise the support needed?	20





1 The social innovation

Summary of the social innovation

WenCoop is the first women's energy community in Greece and Europe, consisting of 66 women entrepreneurs. In collaboration with the Chamber of Chalkidiki, actions were undertaken to encourage female entrepreneurship in the country and underpin the role of women in the economy and in the energy sector. Thanks to the efforts of the cooperative, the first photovoltaic park in Chalkidiki is expected to start operations soon. WEnCoop plans to develop another 3 MW of generating capacity. The next steps for the cooperative are to ensure that the energy produced is used in electro-mobility initiatives and to allocate free quantities of electricity to vulnerable groups of the population. WEnCoop is a great example of a collective energy action that involves citizens' participation in the energy system. Also, WEnCoop valorize its knowledge and cultural assets, from which farmers foregrounds the creative reconfiguration of social relations and social innovation.

Highlights: The most innovative aspects of the solution

WEnCoop is an initiative with limited risks and anxieties, that requires skills, easily achieved by women. Energy communities can contribute to energy transition by empowering women farmers, women in rural areas and women entrepreneurs in general to take ownership of energy project implementation, operation, and allocation of benefits. With this type of entrepreneurship, women farmers will face challenges through diversification and communication with other women and achieve mental, physical, and social wellbeing.

One of the most innovative aspects of this solution is the business model of co-production and consumption of energy. In addition, new linkages at local level towards a democratized energy sector. It seems- maybe rather ambitious, but this remains to be seen- that this social innovation of an energy community might tackle more than one social challenge. The latter especially holds true for women farmers as within the framework of women's energy communities they tackle both the challenge of energy poverty but also the challenge of their social integration and their empowerment.

Key social challenges addressed & objective of the social innovation.

Some of the **Key social challenges addressed** - apart from Energy Poverty- are: Low farm income (market vulnerability), Administrative burden to investments, Lack of attractiveness of farming profession, Lack of appreciation/support for female farmers, External risks posed by climate change, Pressure from society/negative perceptions.

The **objective of the WEnCoop** is mainly to empower women from diverse backgrounds, strengthen their role as citizens and gradually evolve them from consumers to active members and producers of energy. Through participation women farmers will gain a fair income and will tackle challenges faced due to physical and mental burn-out and social isolation. The overall





Case Study (Em)Power up Women Farmers

goal is to create an entirely new business model, which is not only focused on creating new products and services in the renewable energy sector but more importantly on raising awareness of women's involvement in the energy industry. The Energy Community, as a social innovation, is expected to have a range of social benefits to local community including increased autonomy, empowerment, and resilience by providing a long-term income and local control over finances, in areas where there are few options for generating wealth.

Special focus is placed on the gender balance on the membership and boards current energy cooperatives which was the observation that sparked the idea for the creation of this energy community.

Activities

WEnCoop is a case study where women own or participate in the production and/or use of sustainable energy and some of the activities till now are:

- # WEnCoop has completed the construction of the first PV plant- 1MW in Kassandra in Chalkidiki (Greece) and is on hold for the Public Energy Distributor – DEDDIE to proceed with the connection, to start operating and producing energy. The next goals are to develop three more MW Parks while the vision is to use the produced energy for electromobility.
- # WEnCoop empowers its 66 women members and their communities not only to generate and export their own energy but also to reinvest part of the profits into the community.
- # WEnCoop has a website, Facebook-Instagram- LinkedIn page and a YouTube channel and actively organizes workshops for empowering women members and others.

Key stakeholders involved





Main outcomes of the activity

Energy Communities have the potential to drive large parts of the population out of energy poverty risk (especially women) and to ensure sustainable growth for local communities without their physical burn-out since all tasks are shared. Main outcomes for the women refer to provision of opportunities for women to be part of the energy production, development of skills that relate to clean energy, awareness on gender balance in the energy sector, actual production of clean energy, increased energy autonomy, empowerment, and resilience by providing a long-term additional income and local control over finances, in areas where there are few options for generating wealth.

Main outcomes for the rural area/farming community apart from increasing family income, are the strengthening of relationships and social capital. The wider society benefits from this initiative, as a large percentage of the energy produced will be channelled to the needs of the community (percentage of the energy required in schools, in the electrification of public infrastructure, etc. will be covered by the energy cooperative). In addition, jobs will be created, there will be inter-local cooperation laying the foundations for future collaborations and there will be advertising of the place, contributing more to the economic development of the place.

Main recommendations

The findings of this section can also feed into policy recommendations (i.e. what is needed to realise such a social innovation)

Farm women and practitioners may use this social innovation as an example of how to participate in energy communities or even establish a new one.

What is needed to realize Women's Energy communities is building on the cooperative principles –communicate them and embrace them.

Farmer interview questions

What does FW mean?

Q (FW): How familiar are you with the concept of energy community? What do you see as the main innovation of this SI?

A (Farmer): *Energy Communities are quite widespread today and there is a lot of public debate about its evolution and development, so it's a concept I hear a lot lately and I'm very curious to explore it in depth. The main innovation and vanguard of a women's energy community, is the fact that it is founded, operated, and evolved exclusively and purely by women. It is something innovative, something that is necessary, it's time for women to act.*

A (Farmer): *The creation of a community that works in a democratic way is also an innovation nowadays. It's a pure political action, a joint social effort to change life in the rural.*

Q (FW): What is the main challenge that it tries to address?





A (Farmer): Nowadays, energy is a very important issue, everybody is struggling and seeks for a solution. But women especially are lacking opportunities and information. Women believe that the reason behind this low representation and exclusion of women in the Energy Communities is the lack of information and the male dominance of the energy sector. One of the biggest challenges that this SI tries to address is energy literacy and energy poverty, especially for women.

A (Farmer): The “hidden” dynamic of women in agriculture and in rural areas is both a challenge and an opportunity. Albeit their contribution to the family income, women have been treated as an invisible force, housekeepers and mothers and not as real farmers, not as real entrepreneurs. Their work is invisible, seasonal, and usually part time and/or unpaid. The patriarchal structures of the energy market, the lack of representation of women in collective bodies and lack of respect that a woman farmer seems to struggle with is also a major challenge that this SI tries to address. You know that in existing agricultural cooperatives there are no women candidates for the leadership. Women do not appreciate mixed cooperatives as the environment during meetings and events is not very friendly ..to put it lightly. Same holds true in the energy sector, a 42% of Energy Communities in Greece do not have a female member and only a handful have women on their boards. This is a major challenge addressed by the Women's Energy Community.

Q (FW): How effective it has been?

A (President of the energy community): With the Women's energy community, we already trained 300 women, apart from our core members! And almost 200 women are waiting to become members. I would say that this is rather effective.

Q (FW): How does it benefit farmers? Why is it special/ inspiring in your view?

A (Farmer): Energy communities benefit women farmers as it gives an opportunity to combine two professions-sectors. And is inspiring that there is a shared risk, a shared vision and co-production. Also, in every farm there is also waste that can be changed into energy for example biomass so energy production is very relevant to farming.

Q (FW): What do you think works well in the SI?

A (Farmer): The way decisions are made; I mean in the most democratic way this is amazing. We really work very well together and in a participatory way, without excluding any woman from the decision-making process.

Q (FW): What could be improved in the implementation?

A (Farmer): For the efficient implementation of such an innovation there must be an improved legal framework, clear steps from an administrative point and not change the legal articles every now and then according to political aspirations.





2 The pilot action: POWER to the PEOPLE: Energy Communities & wellbeing for ALL

What was the pilot about?

Purpose

The pilot was about bringing the SI “Energy Communities” closer to farmers (especially women farmers) and to inspire them to use this smart solution towards their wellbeing. Energy community ‘charges’ farmers emotionally and socially: (em)powering members by building a community based on solidarity. Especially women’s energy communities empower women farmers and provide them of a sense of achievement, self completion, and overall wellbeing. With the pilot we had aimed at providing them a tailor-made solution to their specific needs, give practical information- present clear steps of the transition to SI and allow co-learning (peer-to-peer). In addition the pilot served as a chance to communicate the whole database of SI and demonstrate the Social Return of the investment tool.

Running the pilot

A group of women farmers from WIOO (part of our PG) came to Thessaloniki and had a two full day event (see the timeline that follows):

Day 1 - On Tour training

Study Visit: Institute of Genetic Improvement & Plant Genetic Resources - IPGRB ELGO Dimitra in Thessaloniki to learn more about smart solutions for their farms in the field of aquaponics.

Visit to the **Agios Antonios Women's Agricultural Cooperative** of Traditional Products (**also included on our SI database**). The aim of the Cooperative is to employ rural women, strengthen their family income, develop the village, preserve, and spread the tradition through the production and distribution of a range of healthy, quality handmade products. Empowerment Speech by the President and women of the cooperative and discussions with the participants on networking and collaborations and smart solutions for farming and quality of life in rural areas.

Day 2 – Educational workshop

Training activity for energy communities and elaboration on the practical steps. Experts were invited:

- Dr. Maria Partalidou, Associate Professor at Aristotle University (AUTH) and Scientific Coordinator of the project FARMWELL, analyzed the logic of the choice of the EnrgCom as a pilot case in the framework of FARMWELL project,
- Mrs. Nasia Ioannidou, Member of Energy Cooperative WEnCoop presented the energy communities, energy democracy, energy poverty, the benefits for a woman to be part of such an energy community.
- Mr. Ioannis Kyanidis, President of Energy Community of PV Producers Prefecture of Thessaloniki, Halkidiki, Kilkis presented information about RES & Energy Communities and





Case Study (Em)Power up Women Farmers

gave several case studies from Greece. He also focused on obstacles and policy implications.

- Mrs. Katerina Gani, Member of WEnCoop presented the history of the Energy Cooperative WEnCoop and how can someone participate in. She highlighted the lack of women's representation on the boards and on the membership of energy communities.

A World Café methodology was used to stimulate discussions on possibilities of implementation of Energy Communities by rural women and what are the difficulties and the advantages to improve their wellbeing. The agenda also included a round table where women responded to the Forecasting SROI questionnaire and provided one poster Journey of Change. Follow up questionnaire was distributed on whether their aspirations were achieved as we aimed at measuring the impact of the pilot. At this point we must mention that an invitation was send to all women farmers from the WIOO & women farmers from WEnCoop & SEGE and upon selection of the small group the full programme was send with a link to an online Quest in order to collect perceptions on what they expect from their participation. Comparison between expectations and lived experiences were made.

Target group

The main target group that benefited from the piloting of this social innovation were 5

Women from the group Women in Olive oil Greece. In addition, other women that benefited were:

- 7 women Members of the 1st women's Energy Cooperative WEnCoop (2 farmers)
- 4 Members of the Greek Association of Women Entrepreneurs (SEGE)
- 2 women (farmers) from the Women's agricultural Cooperative Agios Antonios
- 1 member (male president) of the Energy Community of photovoltaic of Thessaloniki-Chalkidiki-Kilkis
- 1 expert working on green economy (woman researcher)

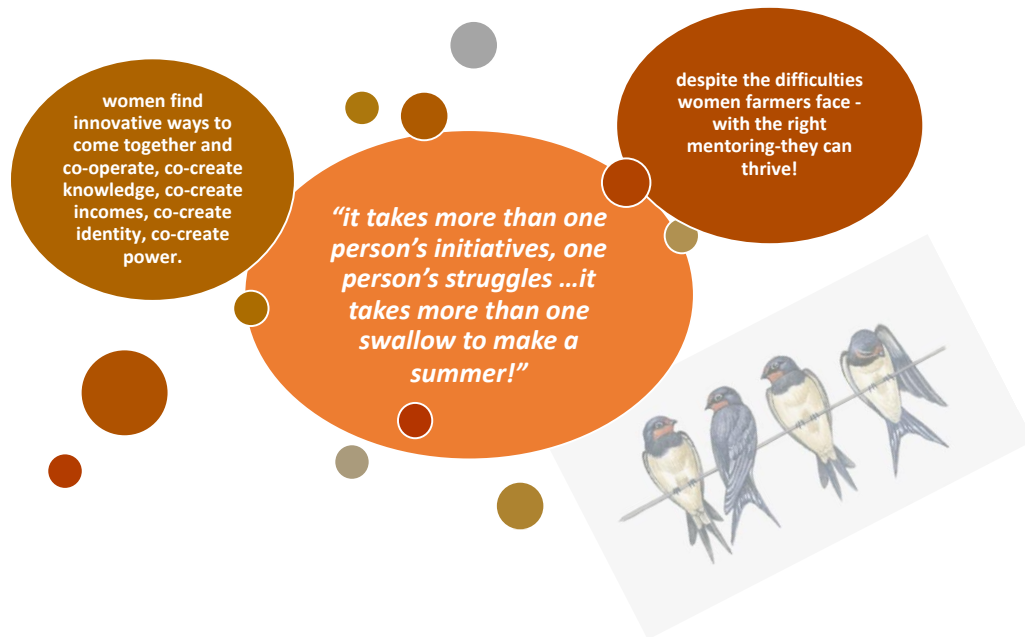
The main lessons from the pilot

The main lessons from the pilot are:

- # Women can participate in the energy sector equally.
- # Energy communities are not only about making profits.
- # Participation in an energy community builds on trust and cooperative values.
- # Developing skills makes the transition to clean energy easier.
- # Women are agents of change in the rural.
- # A reformation of the law related to Energy Communities and a simplification of the procedures will inspire more groups of women to create their own energy community and engage actively in the energy sector.

The pilot will continue with a field visit of the women from the WEnCoop to the farms and businesses of these women in south Greece. Already there is an invitation to organise a field visit in order to start searching for land and reaching more women than those that came to Thessaloniki. The women that came to our pilot will serve as antennas and will disseminate the knowledge to other women in their regions & networks.

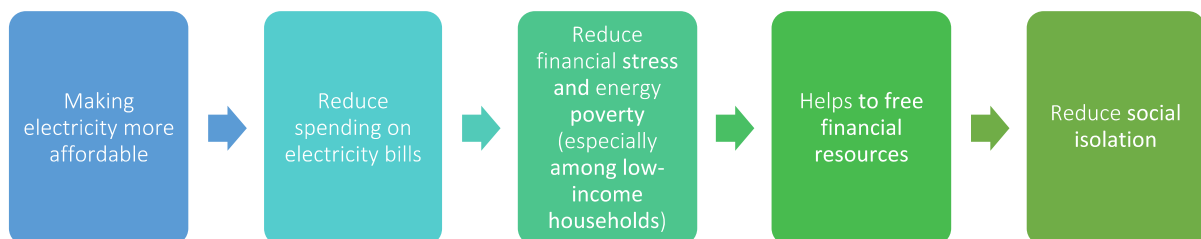




The main impact of the pilot

This section aims to explore the **impact of the pilot**. However, if the pilot was subject of SROI, the findings of this part could be integrated under Part 4.

Community energy encourages community engagement and control over renewable energy decision-making. It has the potential to be socially innovative because it can include women regardless of their financial situation or capital access, making sure that everyone benefits from decentralization. By participating in an energy community, women will be able to produce their own energy and increase their income locally and within their community. Improving the energy efficiency of their homes and businesses has been shown to be able to lead to improvements in health.



Through their participation in the pilot, women farmers were able to:

- Understand the main features of the renewable energy source.
- Determine the impact energy communities have in community.
- Understand the opportunities and barriers of energy sector, especially for women in rural areas.
- Also see the challenges of cooperation





Case Study (Em)Power up Women Farmers

The knowledge they acquired will help them deal with renewable energy sources in their farms and local communities and be able to solve barriers related to the energy efficiency of their homes and businesses. Gaining more expertise and becoming more well-rounded on renewable energy sources and energy communities will increase women's understanding on climate and energy issues, improve their energy literacy and appropriate skills and create mutual respect towards the environment. Hence strengthen their professional identity and improve their social wellbeing in rural areas.

The direct impact of the pilot relates to the improved skills of the participants, since they had the opportunity to learn about energy communities and discuss about their problems and how they can achieve a better living.

The indirect impact of the Greek pilot relates to the overall wellbeing of the farmers and especially women farmers. Through their participation in energy communities, they can protect the environment, increase their income, and even generate some or all their own electricity, and use that electricity anytime.

Even though energy communities are indeed more women-friendly than the rest of the energy sector, yet we are still far from parity. Energy communities struggle to entice female members, particularly vulnerably positioned women, even while they seem to employ enough of them. Although they are the most likely to be aware of and to define their demands and concerns, women are still often excluded from energy cooperatives. Implicitly, women are excluded from empowerment and training due to time constraints and a lack of technical expertise.

BSOs, CSOs, farmers cooperatives and other relevant actors following the example of WEnCoop and the Greek pilot will take into consideration the participation of women and be able to understand the need and include gender issues more in their strategies and in their employment and training policies.

Farmer interview questions if she participated in the pilot?

Q (FW): What was your expectations from the pilot?

A (Farmer): I came with expectations to gain knowledge about the energy community as a concept and about the benefits of working together within a group. We were already looking to get in touch with people, who are more qualified, who have experience, that's how we found ourselves in all this, so that we can come here today to see about the energy cooperative because surely the one issue that concerns us is crops, products, etc., but the other issue is everything that will come in the future..and energy is very important if we want to become self-sufficient.

A (Farmer): I am also involved in environmental activism and when I got this invitation, I really liked that it talked about Democracy and let's see what we can do. I had very high expectations from the pilot that were met in the end!

A (Farmer): I was rather curious to see where research is headed. Where are the institutions oriented towards which solutions? Technical, social innovations? This was my expectation





to see how we can communicate with the University and researchers. Do we speak the same language? Can we find common grounds? My aspiration is that we do.

Q (FW): What impressed you the most from the pilot?

A (Farmer): I really liked the experimental stage at ELGO DIMITRA because I live in an area where hydroponics is very widespread, Trifylia is one of the largest areas in Greece in hydroponics and I always think when I see these areas, what ecological footprint they have and how they can to become more sustainable and if in the end all this is sustainable to smaller producers, because by nature I am interested in small producers and not big companies that can implement things easily. From what I saw today, it might be of interest to small producers, because I think small producers must exist for there to be a balance in the ecosystem. The small producers, as I like to say, are the "custodians of the Greek land" and without us the system will collapse.

I will never forget the energy and inspiring talks from the President of the Women's Agricultural cooperative Agios Antonios. I live in the Peloponnese, where productively the Peloponnese can be very strong, but the villages are being deserted, I think that this cooperative is a SI that can be inspired by these women who live in the Peloponnese and have knowledge, because Greece, we talk about gastronomy, but no one ever mentions that Greek gastronomy is due to the fact that women in the villages have preserved these recipes, they have preserved these resources, this quality... And as FAO says, if more women get involved in the agri-food sector, we can contribute to the fight against hunger around the planet. So, imagine if these women of us get involved in energy, what a very important problem we will solve on this planet and that's why I'm here for the energy community.

A (Farmer): I really liked that it talked about Democracy

A (Farmer): *Researchers are doing their job and it is important that research is being done today, while for many years research funds had stopped, now they are coming back, and this is something encouraging. From this pilot I really enjoyed that it was about us! Not about the research, not about the Universities. Despite the negative situation (economic, environmental, energy and social combined) it is positive that there is research and that there are programmes that are inclusive towards us farmers and women.*

Q (FW): What will be the follow-up of the pilot for you? (Will you be involved in similar activities? Have you changed something in what you do?)

A (Farmer): *"We have been discussing similar activities for years about our village...to implement a similar social innovation...because there was biomass from the forest. But there was not know-how and technical support. Maybe now that we've burned out the forest is the time? To do something and rebuild it and make new things. Now, whether this will be an energy community remains to be seen. It was very good to be informed about all this".*





A (Farmer): *We will spread the word to our members, the Women in Olive Oil group and try to invite both the women from Agios Antonios and women from the energy community to our areas and maybe inspire more women.*





3 The Social Return on Investment (SROI)

The prospective SROI Impact Map for the Women in Olive Oil moving into Renewable Energy Social Innovation is given in Table below. A range of wellbeing impacts over a forward looking 5-year benefit period (2022-27) are generated for members of the Women in Olive Oil group (120) – 50% of whom are farmers – and an estimated 156 members of wider communities.

Almost three quarters (68%) of the value generated by the innovation can be categorised as 'social and community' benefits, including, for example, improved reputations of farmers and a sense of trust among community members, increased awareness of networking opportunities, greater involvement in community activities and increased prominence of female farmers in the agricultural community. In terms of value the largest contribution, almost one third is generated by a widespread 'improved sense of trust and belonging' experienced by cooperative members and local residents. A considerable level of value is also generated through increased participation in community events among cooperative members and local residents, and increased visibility and prominence of women experienced by members of the WIOO group.

Economic wellbeing forms the second largest category of outcome values (20% of the total) with values generated by outcomes related to improved knowledge and skills (among WIOO members) and improved leadership and entrepreneurial skills among female farmers and non-farmers. A wide range of future economic wellbeing outcomes were identified during the Journey of Change phase of the community energy SROI study which have the potential to increase the future benefit streams to cooperative members and thus also increase the overall return on investment of this wider application of the innovation by the WIOO group.

Personal Wellbeing generates 11% of the total outcome values of the project, with the largest proportion of value within this category coming from 'reduced stress and anxiety through taking action to improve energy security' experienced by WIOO members, and other members of the respective communities deemed material beneficiaries. This is not surprising given the level of concern expressed by individuals in relation to rising energy costs and the lack of control that both farmers and non-farmers have over those costs. Locally produced renewable energy offers a reliable and secure means of reducing future costs, providing optimism for their future as well as contributing to a more sustainable development. Generation of renewable energy will, in the future, enable the WIOO group and the wider community to contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions, (albeit in a small way) although this potential was not valued in the SROI model, which has focused on 'social' benefits rather than environmental impacts.



**Table : Greece Forecast SROI Impact Map** (SI: Women in Olive Oil moving into Renewable Energy)

Impact Pathway	Outcome	Stakeholders (No.)	Indicator/s of Change	Outcome Change (%)	Financial proxy (Value €/Unit)	Present Value (€)	Present Value (%)
Personal Wellbeing	Reduced stress and anxiety through taking action to improve energy security	Women in olive oil (120); local community (156)	I feel less anxious about my financial security; I feel more confident in the future viability of the farm business; I worry less about energy issues/costs; I can relax and enjoy life more than before	67%	(6) Cost of Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to build psychological resilience and self esteem (€ 823 per person)	€ 54,260	11%
	Improved agency and self confidence	Women in olive oil (120); local community (156)	Since becoming involved in the Cooperative I feel more confident in making changes to the way I manage my business	18%	(23) Cost of self-esteem course (€ 141 per person p.a)	€ 9,640	
	Empowerment of women - in the community and in their personal and professional lives (including improved self-efficacy and self-confidence)	Women in olive oil (120)	Other people in the community seek my opinion about important matters more frequently; I feel more confident in giving my opinion about important community matters	71%	(30) Cost of Empowerment for Women coaching programme (€ 288 per person p.a)	€ 22,944	
	Empowerment of cooperative members	Women in olive oil (120)	I feel more empowered to make changes in my life; I feel more confident in making changes that will help improve the lives of others in the community	71%	(32) ECost of personal development course on 'delivering beyond yourself' (€ 393 per person)	€ 11,929	
Environmental Wellbeing	Increased awareness of the level of energy use	Women in olive oil (120); local community (156)	Since becoming involved with the Myrmydones Energy Cooperative I have more knowledge about alternative forms of energy	79%	(24) Reduction in energy bills as a result of increased awareness of energy use (€ 158 per household/business)	€ 12,286	1%
Economic Wellbeing	Improved life and work skills and knowledge	Women in olive oil (120); local	I have a wider range of farming skills that help me in work; I have a wider range of personal skills that help me in daily life	76%	(9) Cost of employability skills training in regular	€ 72,359	20%





		community (156)			sessions with counsellor / coach (€ 967 per person p.a)		
	Improved leadership and entrepreneurial skills	Women in olive oil (120)	I have undertaken more leadership roles in group or organisational activities; People tend to turn to me for assistance more than before; I feel more confident in my ability to help others in the community	71%	(31) Earnings differential realised by completing a HND / HNC qualification (€ 1,320 per person p.a)	€ 105,342	
Social and Community Wellbeing	Increased retention of women in the local community	Women in olive oil (120); local community (156)	Other people in the community seek my opinion about important matters more frequently	71%	(25) Annual membership of The Future of Women online community for connection, learning and leadership. (€ 813 per person)	€ 56,860	68%
	Improved sense of trust and belonging (including trust in working with others)	Women in olive oil (120); local community (156)	I feel that if I needed support I could ask a neighbour for help; I feel close to the people in my local area; most people in the community can be trusted; I feel accepted by the people in my community; I feel the people in my community treat me with respect	67%	(4) Value to an individual (25-45) of feeling like they belong in their neighbourhood (€ 1,336 per person p.a)	€ 88,124	
	Increased participation in community and charity events	Women in olive oil (120); local community (156)	I participate in community and charity events more; I am a more active member of local clubs or organisations	70%	(28) Average annual household spend on recreation and culture (€ 100 per person p.a)	€ 26,567	
	Increased visibility and prominence of women in the agricultural and wider community	Women in olive oil (120)	I feel more confident in giving my opinion about important community matters; other people in the community seek my opinion about important matters more frequently	71%	(4) Value to an individual (25-45) of feeling like they belong in their neighbourhood (CCP)	€ 40,603	
	Improved reputation of farmers as custodians and protectors of the environment	Farmers (60); farming families (60)	The extent to which farmers are perceived as custodians and protectors of the	21%	(8) Valuation for improved emotional wellbeing arising through the	€ 14,920	





			environment by the society as a whole - before and after		Common Assessment Framework (€ 431 per household p.a)			
	Increased regional, national and international networking and collaboration	Women in olive oil (120)	The extent to which I share knowledge and ideas with others has increased; the extent to which I network with people in my business area has increased; I am involved in more interest groups, clubs or societies; I have joined a network that supports my business and related activities	69%	(15) Cost of a networking / training event and one hour of time devoted to networking at the average hourly earnings rate (€ 46 per person)	€ 1,365		
	Increased municipal, community and organisational support for other community projects and enterprises	Women in olive oil (120)	There is now a greater amount of: municipal support for other kinds of community projects and enterprises; organisational support for other kinds of social and community projects and enterprises; community support for other kinds of social and community projects and enterprises	69%	(21) Average size of a charitable donation in the UK (€ 244 per household p.a)	€ 27,747		
	Increased working relationships and public private partnerships	Women in olive oil (120)	I am now more willing to engage in partnership-type arrangements than before the project started; the extent to which I collaborate with others has increased	56%	(12) dfT estimation of business time savings (€ 2,515 per business p.a)	€ 232,400		
	Legitimisation of local ideas/projects to a wider community	Olive oil producing municipalities (15)*	The work of Energy Cooperative has led to additional community or development projects in the local area; the work of the Energy Cooperative has led to additional community or development projects in the wider community	75%	(14) Cost estimate for local authorities of implementing proposed duty to promote local democracy (€ 28,234 per district/community)	€ 113,305		
	*Based on 30% of an estimated 50 municipalities					Total Benefits		€890,651
Total Investment						€244,500		
Benefit-Investment Ratio (BIR)						€3.64 : 1		





Questions to partner: The story of using data and results

- How partners can use the data & results?



Farmer interview questions

Note: Present the main outcomes of the SROI (key results) to the farmer and reflect on the outcomes with him/her.- Paul

Q (FW): What do you think about the method of quantifying social outcomes?

- # Through the interviews, you notice that most of the women who participated in the pilot and were informed about the specific social innovation, focused and gave particular weight to the social results of the specific innovation and this is, as they stated, the main factor for their participation in it or a possible creation of a similar innovation in their area. As they stated, they were impressed by the socially just organization of the energy community even during the first stages of its creation.

Q (FW): What do you think about the social return created?

- # Focusing in this way on another social performance and social result resulting from the specific social innovation.





Christina also referred to the support of farmers' sustainability, as until today the social support of farmers is limited and the sustainability of them and their agricultural businesses is very difficult.

"socially, because the truth is the way agriculture is structured, it makes a farmer's life difficult, a farmer has to deal with a lot of different things to be sustainable and within the overall context of the sustainability of a farm, maybe that can included"

Q (FW): Does it reflect your own feeling(s) about the value of the SI?

" first social impact, because I believe that by bringing technology or new media we put the human aside, but in this case we focus on the human, the human factor is the driving force. That's why we call it social innovation."





4 Implications for policy and farming support

The Challenge & Needs – What is the situation?

Throughout its operations, WEnCoop has identified and addressed multiple challenges always keeping in mind the empowerment of women and especially women farmers, their equal access and engagement in all aspects of life (professional, social and wellbeing) and their involvement in innovative and pioneering activities.

The primary challenge identified in recent years is the following:

- The absence of women in the energy sector resulting in holding back the fight against climate change. Women's full participation in renewable energy is essential for a fair and green future.

The situation of the establishment of a Female Energy Cooperative was considered ideal for the investment of 66 women, as through the autonomy provided by the energy community, women, women farmers, and women's agrofood companies will cover the cost of their electricity, which is one of the most important operating costs.

As many Nos WEnCoop was hearing, the community wanted to turn them into Yes. It was extremely important to showcase that WEnCoop could make it real. Less than 2% of the energy economy is related to women, so there had to be an innovation to empower farmers, women, women farmers into the green transition and sustainability.

WEnCoop is a model that combines everything, social innovation, social collaboration, transition to Green Energy and equal opportunities and this changed the way Greek society sees women in the energy sector.

The problems the energy communities face in Greece should not be overlooked. The creation of an enabling framework that will support their development should consider their special qualities, the advantages they offer over conventional RES projects, and their future potential.

- social and cultural issues, such as low awareness of renewables and resistance to co-operative business models.
- regulatory and administrative issues for new projects can be extremely difficult to navigate. Everything from acquiring planning permission and permits, requires a great deal of paper work, cost, and expertise, to say nothing of the need to develop robust business and financial plans.

You can use quotes from farmers highlighting their specific needs

- # Farmers' lives depend precariously on a changing environment that they are unable to fully comprehend since they lack access to modern farming equipment or methods, let alone science-based climate and weather data.
- # A transition to clean energy is about making an investment in our future.





Support framework – What is needed?

- # help decentralize the energy systems.
- # provide flexibility services.
- # facilitating the development of energy communities in Europe and share best practice examples.
- # provide a cost-efficient and secure electricity supply.
- # guarantee a stable grid.
- # empower women farmers, women.
- # the project is an inspiring case of implementing an action in collaboration with the local population, local farmers, women that improves the livelihood of vulnerable communities.
- # empowering citizens in the energy transition, turning them into active prosumers.
- # relieving energy poverty and increasing the penetration of renewable energy sources through energy communities

- # Both our economy and the environment benefit from a strong renewable energy industry!
- # Women belong in all places where decisions are made ... It shouldn't be that women are the exception.
- # Never underestimate the power of women, not only in the energy sector!

Recommendations – What needs to be done to realise the support needed?

Energy communities struggle to entice female members, particularly vulnerably positioned women, even while they seem to employ enough of them. Although they are the most likely to be aware of and to define their demands and concerns, women are still often excluded from energy cooperatives. Implicitly, women are excluded from empowerment and training due to time constraints and a lack of technical expertise.

We need everyone's help to tackle energy poverty and improve the wellbeing, not only of farmers, but all population. Within energy communities, people organize themselves and implement energy projects. Since they can bring prosperity to the whole community, by improving the wellbeing of citizens and creating local employment opportunities.

A reformation of the law related to Energy Communities and a simplification of the procedures will inspire more groups of women to create their own energy community and engage actively in the energy sector.

Empowering citizens to play a role in the energy transition.

- # More energy communities should be established.
- # More women farmers should participate.
- # Engaging citizens through collective energy activities
- # Understand the main features of the renewable energy sources.





Case Study (Em)Power up Women Farmers

- # Understand the opportunities and barriers of energy sector, especially for women in rural areas.

WEnCoop, as actually the first women energy cooperative in Europe and globally and can serve as a best practice example on how an Energy Community has positively impacted the local community. Is an award-winning project. One of the most influencing projects in 2022 according to The Women & Gender Constituency from United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

REScoop.eu, the European federation of energy cooperatives, believes that we need to transition to a 100% renewables energy system with democratic control - by everyone for everyone. In order to promote this just energy transition with meaningful participation of people of all genders on equal terms, we take measures to help tackle gender injustice in our sector. We raise awareness of existing injustices and increase visibility of women and their work in energy cooperatives. The Gender Power working group gathers REScoop.eu members to discuss challenges and exchange good practices, tools and instruments that help energy communities diversify their boards and membership base. The working group meets on a bi-monthly basis to discuss and organise actions to concretise its ambition to diversify the community energy movement in order to reflect the principle of gender justice.

The working group has launched its Ambition statement to encourage REScoop.eu members to contribute to a just energy transition, promoting the meaningful participation of people of all genders on equal terms. The statement, available in 8 languages, is open for signature by all REScoop.eu members.

We need a Democratic -Fair energy transition

Farmer interview questions

- What are the main needs of farmers – in the context of the SI – that should be addressed through support?
 - # “Not all of us have the strength to voice ourselves where the stakeholders or the politics take place.”
 - # "Nowadays, energy is a very important issue. We all (the farmers) see that they are struggling and need a solution... Of course the stress is permanent"
 - # Christina focused on the sustainability of small farmers and emphasized that this is difficult to achieve today. “....I always think when I see these areas what ecological footprint they have and how. it can become more sustainable and if all this is finally sustainable for the smaller producers, because by nature I'm interested in the small producers and not the big companies that can implement things easily."





- # In fact, she then mentioned her concern, focusing and highlighting an additional problem of the availability and access to natural resources in sustainable terms: "We (small farmers) will continue to exist, but will there be sustainable terms for us?"
- # She even emphasized the big problem plaguing Greece, that of the abandonment and desolation of rural areas, "villages are being deserted," she said characteristically.

- What do you think should happen to make similar support actions available to farmers/ SIs a reality?

All the female farmers who participated in the program stated that the main and determining factor for the existence of such actions is information and research.

- # Mrs. Dionysia characteristically answered the above question and emphasized: "Researchers are doing their job and it is important that research is being done today, while for many years research funds were stopped, now they are coming back and this is something encouraging."
- # We need to enhance gender equality in all levels of the economy the society then we will have progress then wellbeing will be achieved.
- # It is useful a means of support because we are going through a period of energy crisis, whenever it is good in terms of information, proper training, so that to be able to move into the future because it is an immediate need".
- # , due to the mistrust that exists regarding the effectiveness of an energy cooperative and the fear of possible degradation of the natural environment, they state that it is an important element that all this social innovation is developed with the main aim of protecting the environment *"when you talk about energy in Greece it's a very misunderstood term and we think that energy only means big solar farms or wind turbines that destroy the rural landscape and I think there will be an intermediate solution that we don't know about"*.
- #

- Who should be the organisation / funding or supporting it?

.....

Extra:

- **What is social innovation for you** (innovative/ new practices that can help improve the wellbeing of farmers)?
[Note FARMWELL defined social innovation as "innovative practices with the purpose of improving the social, physical and mental wellbeing of farmers and farming families resulting in particular in (1) improved capacity of farmers and their family members to recognise and act upon social challenges and/or (2) improved social environment and



services for farmers & farming families and/or (3) improved linkages between farmers and other (local) societal actors.”]











Description of the project:

WEnCoop is a women-led energy cooperative initiated by the Greek Association of Women Entrepreneurs and founded by 60 business-women in June 2021. It aims to promote clean, sustainable energy innovation, address energy poverty and transform consumers into prosumers while achieving the EU climate goals. WEnCoop's members and direct beneficiaries are women from diverse backgrounds living in vulnerable Greek communities. The cooperative has already installed a 1 MW photovoltaic park in Kassandra, Chalkidiki. It is boosting women's participation in the Greek energy sector, raising awareness, mobilizing citizens and tracking the European Green Deal's progress on energy transition.



TRANSFORMATIVE OUTCOMES

Climate impact	
	PV plant of 1 MW is estimated to save 919 tonnes of CO ₂ /year.
	Contributing to renewable energy production, and citizen-led energy transition.
	Addressing energy poverty, promoting social solidarity and end-user energy efficiency.
Gender impact	
	Strengthening women structured groups in the energy democracy.
	Enhancing women's education on clean and sustainable energy innovation.
	Empowers women to enter the energy sector, and start their own enterprise.
Scalability / replicability	
	The cooperative model is easily replicable and can be adapted to other regions and countries.
	Boosting the local economy and energy security via decentralized renewable energy production and use.
	Plans to develop 3 more photovoltaic parks using the produced energy for electromobility.

CONTACT



www.wencoop.gr

Country: Greece
Organisation: Energy Cooperative WEnCoop
Representative: Apostolina Tsaltampasi
E-mail: info@wencoop.gr

Address: Olympiou Diamanti 14,
P.C. 54626 Thessaloniki

Financially supported by:
Individual stakeholders,
members of WEnCoop, Bank loan
from the National Bank of Greece.

