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Gender, Power and Property: “In my own right”

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### Abstract:

Women on farms in Ireland are a subject of feminist analysis for five decades. Salient themes are the constraints of patriarchal agriculture (O'Hara 1997; Shortall, 2004), the invisibility of women's farm work (Viney 1968; O'Hara 1998), gender inequalities in ownership of farm assets (Watson et al. 2009) and increasing professionalisation of farmwomen outside of agriculture (Kelly and Shortall 2002; Hanrahan 2007). Most women enter farming through marriage and family ties. Land ownership is identified by Shortall (2004) as the critical factor underpinning male domination of the occupational category 'farmer' and considerable power differentials between men and women in family farming. This is an area that requires further investigation. Our analysis, framed by theoretical models of feminisation and empowerment, explores cases where male farm property ownership in Ireland is disrupted in conventional and non-conventional agricultural settings. Do these cases provide evidence of new opportunities for women to become farm property owners, and in what contexts? What consequences do these opportunities have for farmwomen's empowerment and agency? How does women's farm property ownership disturb rural gender relations in the context of the family farm?

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### **Introduction**

Women on farms in Ireland are a subject of feminist analysis for five decades. Salient themes are the constraints of patriarchal agriculture (O'Hara 1997; Shortall, 2004), the invisibility of women's farm work (Viney 1968; O'Hara 1998), gender inequalities in ownership of farm assets (Watson et al. 2009) and increasing professionalisation of farmwomen outside of agriculture (Kelly and Shortall 2002; Hanrahan 2007). Most women enter farming through marriage and family ties. Land ownership is identified by Shortall (2004) as the critical factor underpinning male domination of the occupational category 'farmer' and considerable power differentials between men and women in family farming. This is an area that requires further investigation. Our analysis, framed by theoretical models of feminisation and empowerment, explores cases where male farm property ownership in Ireland is disrupted in conventional and non-conventional agricultural settings. Do these cases provide evidence of new opportunities for women to become farm property owners, and in what contexts? What consequences do these opportunities have for farmwomen's empowerment and agency? How does women's farm property ownership disturb rural gender relations in the context of the family farm?

Our starting point is that women traditionally enter into farming through marriage and familial relations; that a gendered division of labour characterises family farms and households; that gendered identities are unambiguous; that unequal power relations persist between men and women; and, agriculture in Ireland is best described as 'family farming', that privileges men, preoccupied as it is with patrilineal continuity, succession and land ownership. The 1991 and 2010 Irish Censuses of Agriculture indicated that just ten and twelve percent respectively of farms are owned by women. The 1991 Census indicates that more than half (56 percent) inherited farms on the death of spouses (NDP GEU 2003, 22). The economic significance of farm property ownership is partially demonstrated in the distribution of public monies, where just eight percent of the €1.2 billion of

Ireland's EU Common Agricultural Policy Single Farm Payments went to women farmers in 2012 (Derwin 2013). Data on farmland transactions demonstrate that two-thirds of farms remain in family ownership for a century or more (NDP GEU 2004 20), with less than one percent of farmland exchanged on the market annually (Hennessy 2006).

In Europe, one in four agricultural holders is a woman (24 percent), which rises to one in three in Baltic countries (Eurostat 2009, 23). Women's share of farmland overall is smaller, as women farmers across Europe generally own smaller holdings than men, both in physical size and economic capacity (European Commission 2012). Globally, women have a low level of farm property ownership. For example, in Viet Nam eight per cent of titles to farm and forest land are held by women compared to 87 per cent by men, with five percent of titles held jointly (Viet Nam MOCST 2008). In Latin America, despite egalitarian land distribution programs, women continue to have less direct ownership (Deere and Leon 2003). In Peru, 13 percent of landowners are women with another 13 per cent holding the farm jointly (Deere and Leon 2003). Throughout the African continent, women's rights to own or acquire land is constricted, with customary laws providing women with access to land but no ownership rights (Tripp 2004). Exceptions to this dominant pattern of women's low property ownership are specific cultural contexts that either have matrilineal inheritance practices or norms of equal division of property to son and daughter. In these contexts property ownership rates are significantly higher. For example a study of West Bengal, Kerala and Sri Lanka, all of which practice matrilineal or equal inheritance, found on average property ownership rates of between 30 and 35 per cent among women (Bhatla, Duvvury and Chakraborty 2010).

Despite restricted access and limited opportunities for women to acquire farms and farmland in Ireland and Europe, we argue that there is merit in scrutinising instances where farmwomen do own property, supported by evidence arising in the Global South of the transformative power of property ownership. We reflect on the crucial determinants arising from and for family dynamics on gendered power relations within the peculiar context of the family farm in which economy and family, autonomy and dependency, identity and relationality intertwine. Research findings from northern Europe reflect little or no disturbance of the prevalent pattern of male ownership of land and male predominance in the occupational category of farmer (Brandth 2002), even in contexts of farmwomen's increased ownership of various forms of property and assets (Evans and Ilbery 1996). Cognizant of O'Hara's (1998, 40) claim that there is always 'room' to manoeuvre' within the frame of family farming and understanding women as active participants

in consciously, often subversively, shaping their own lives and identities 'in their own right', our present concern is with the experiences of farmwomen property owners in contemporary rural Ireland.

Feminist sociological analyses identify the need to investigate and theorise rural gender relations and property ownership. We take our direction from and acknowledge the importance of the prior work by Shortall (1999, 2004) and O'Hara (1998) in this area. O'Hara (1998, 162) urges that we deploy feminist theory to interrogate " issues of power and influence within the family, and find ways of theorising women's influence as well as their subordination". This is an approach that chimes well with developing research awareness of the positive transformations in gender power relations and in family life. Collective action inspired by the women's movement, legislative and political change has achieved substantial transformations in women's lives in modern Irish society (O'Connor 1998; Connolly 2003; Barry 2008). Grounded in a feminist praxis approach that is committed to the production of knowledge for social change (Stanley 1990), our analytical focus is drawn to gender, empowerment theory and processes of feminisation in agriculture. We understand gender as a sociological and social identity category that can be analysed, disturbed and disrupted, is performed, relational and interactive and is constituted and reconstituted within power relations (Pini 2008). We emphasise signs of negotiation and transformation in women's narratives concerning their experiences of farm property ownership. This is complemented by our analysis of men's narratives of farm partnerships, which feature the relational dynamics leading to and coming from changed ownership patterns. Aware of the highly symbolic construction of farm ownership and its relation to personal, gender, family and professional identities, we accent signs of change within the microcosm of personal narratives. Aware that Irish research on women's farm property ownership is just beginning, this is one contribution to a pressing area of inquiry.

Empowerment in feminist research can focus on the level of the personal and/or the political but as Carr observes in her distinction between psychological and political power, individuals need to find the means 'to free themselves of the inner and outer hindrances' (Carr 2003, 14). This dual aspect of power cannot be ignored analytically as it is relevant to how we are formed as subjects, how consciousness is formed around the possibilities for agency and resistance and how they are negotiated and acted upon, while linking crucially to the importance of solidary relations and collective action movements that provide individuals with resources to mobilise and change (Allen 2010). Agency or the ability to make choices can be effective

(that which improves the quality of life within defined parameters) or transformatory (that which resists or struggles with the defined parameters initiating a longer term process of change in family/social values, roles and responsibilities) (Kabeer 2005). For Kabeer agency includes not only bargaining and negotiation but "deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance as well as more intangible, cognitive processes of reflection and analysis." (Kabeer 2005, 438). Transformatory agency is a form of agency which, rooted in processes of conscientisation (Petterson and Solbakken 1998), arises from confronting sets of habitualised values in pursuit of a set of objectives that bring about desired change. We include in our analysis, the presence of patriarchy in farmwomen's lives as a structure of power, vulnerable to agency and subject to transformation. In querying whether and how property ownership disrupts gender power relations, we focus on resistance to and rejection of patriarchal power while exercising agency within the frame of the family farm in the narratives of Irish farmwomen and men.

### **Feminisation and Property Ownership**

While Marxist theories have shed light on the nature of complementary labour contributions in family farming, the study of power relations between members of farm families has been largely defined by feminist studies concentrating in the main on women's productive and reproductive roles (Berlan Durqué and Gasson 1991; Brandth 2002). Strong demarcations between male and female productive roles in the context of family farming are observed in the literature (Little 2002; Prügl 2011), noted to be mutually complementary for enhancing the resilience and reproduction of family farming (Evans and Ilbery 1996; Brandth 2002) while reinforcing a subordinate position of women on farms (Shortall 1999). Recent research in the Global South highlights the importance of property ownership for women's agency and power in family farm settings, drawing attention to the supportive rather than subordinating role of relationships between farmwomen and their natal families specifically (Bhatla, Duvvury, Chakraborty 2010, 231). Identified as representing a key 'pathway' to women's property ownership, supportive natal family relationships and father-daughter relationships in particular, were noted to be instrumental for women's leveraging of enhanced benefits from property ownership, culminating ultimately in increased agency and empowerment.

In exploring farmwomen's roles, and the factors implicated in transforming their roles, across a spectrum of agricultures in a global context, the "feminisation of agriculture" concept, originally defined by Barberis (1972) (Inhetveen and Schmitt 2004, 84), is complementary to theories of power.

Barberis (1972, 10 cited in Inhetveen & Schmitt 2004, 84) elaborated how the feminisation of agriculture can take three main forms:

"substitution (women taking over activities because economic development allows men to disdain them); integration (where women do work ostensibly considered traditional for their sex), and, competition (where women vie with men for equal employment opportunities and in all aspects of social and political life)".

These types of feminisation of agriculture, together with Ventura's (1994) nuanced concept of 'progressive feminisation' and Ålmas and Haugen's (1991) 'masculinisation of agriculture' are useful for identifying empirical cases in which the implications of women's property ownership in both conventional and non-conventional agricultural settings can be explored. The various ways in which women's ownership of property can represent a trigger for the disturbance of rural relations are complex, mediated by women's entrenched roles in family farming and by the political economy of agriculture. Women's exclusion from commercial farming is explicit in Shortall's (1999) analysis of their gradual disenfranchisement from dairy farming and the critical factors that ultimately led to the loss of "one area of work where women did receive recognition, status, income and a certain degree of power" (Shortall 1999, 72). While contributing factors were identified as a "classically patriarchal" approach on the part of the state to dairy sector transformation and a scenario where women were organisationally "outflanked" (Shortall 1999, 85-86), Shortall identified women's lack of ownership of dairy farms as the invasive underpinning determinant. Gidarkou, Kazakopoulos and Koutsouris's (2003, 409) study of Greek farmwomen's uptake of policy measures that targeted young heads of farms and conditional on ownership of farmland, found that women who entered farming on the basis of personal choice, were provided with opportunities to "establish – and subsequently strengthen – their social and economic autonomy in the farming household". This echoes with research undertaken by Bhatla, Duvvury and Chakraborty (2010) indicating that the protective function of property ownership against domestic violence was contingent on women's active involvement in their property, "...the woman's access to it and her ability to control and make decisions about it" (Bhatla, Duvvury, Chakraborty 2010, 231). As a counterpoint, however, one of the less optimistic conclusions reached by Gidarkou et al (2003, 40), echoing Inhetveen and Schmitt's (2004) emphasis of the paradoxical nature of feminisation processes that can lead to disempowerment as well as empowerment, is that at least a quarter of the women's entry to farming and their ownership of farms represented a strategy for farm men within

their households to access policy benefits with the women heads never becoming involved in farming in "any real way". This finding, representing cases where men continued to operate and control farms despite farmwomen's ownership, is consistent with the finding of Bhatla, Duvvury and Chakraborty (2010) that women's lack of access to and active involvement in their property mitigates against the potential benefits for women arising from their ownership.

There is a considerable body of literature focusing on the roles of farmwomen in activities alternative to conventional agriculture, such as diversification and farm based tourism specifically, as areas in which feminisation is taking shape in a particular way. It is within the locus of farm diversification that Ventura (1994) observed the phenomenon of 'progressive feminisation' where farmwomen "went beyond imitating the male pattern or traditional pattern in which women either depended on men or replaced them" (Ventura 1994, 27 cited in Inhetveen and Schmitt, 2004, 86). Studies such as Girauld's (1999) and Nilsson's (2002) (cited in Haugen and Vik 2008) found that women's initiation of on-farm enterprises can represent a tactic in women's struggle for 'professional status' on farms (Haugen and Vik 2008, 324), resonant with Barberis' (1972) 'competitive feminisation'. Farmwomen's undertaking of food production and service oriented activities (Evans and Ilbery 1996; Haugen and Vik 2008), in ways that are consistent with Pateman's (1988) 'sexual contract' and their roles as homemakers, indicates that the type of feminisation being played out is arguably to some extent that of integration to the patriarchal culture rather than of competition with little disturbance of power relations on-farm. Other complexities impinging on women's empowerment through off farm and on farm income generating pursuits are identified as the 'disappearance' of women's earnings into the family farm (Evans and Ilbery 1996) and the further subordination of women as 'assistants', 'uninvolved' in farm decision-making in matters relating to the farm (Haugen and Blekessaune 1996, 14). However, such arguments do not deflect from the importance of 'progressive feminisation' as a distinctive movement pioneered by and leading to benefits for women working in the off farm sphere. O'Hara identified four categories of women's working roles, "farm helper, farm homemaker, working for the family farm, farm women in paid work" (O'Hara 1998, 158-9). The latter category she argues is expressive of women who are conscious of their own strength and influence, who have fashioned their own form of equality, whose ownership of personal income is appreciated by themselves and others and who have found a way to work in 'partnership and solidarity' to achieve shared goals with their spouses and families.



### **Farmwomen and Property**

We analyse empirical cases of property ownership that are illustrative of disturbances in power relations and, examine how those disturbances leverage farmwomen's agency and empowerment. We draw from two qualitative datasets, generated by the Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) (2009-2011). BNIM is both a method for eliciting narrative expression and is concerned with the analysis of 'inner' and 'outer' worlds of historically and culturally situated individuals (Wengraf 2004). The first dataset represents 12 BNIM cases of women property owners in rural Ireland, operating both within and outside of conventional agriculture. The second dataset represents 10 BNIM cases of diverse farm partnerships between men, and men and women, including those related and unrelated by kin. The breadth and diversity of the combined datasets accommodates the identification of cases that signal key processes at play that have crucial consequences for how feminist questions of agency and power are evolving. Across all 24 cases, a high-level thematic analysis suggests that feminisation processes are resonant with the experiences of Irish women and men. The narrative data reflect various modes and dynamics of feminisation – substitutive, integrative, competitive, and progressive. Informed by feminist theories of power (cf. Allen 1998, 2010; Carr 2003), our analysis led to the selection of three paradigmatic cases that provide evidence of transformatory experiences disruptive to the male hegemonic order and indicative of the repositioning of women in family farming. The cases include two farmer women, one a full-time farm property owner, the other a full-time farm lease holder and the third is a full time off farm main income earner. All three women are located in family farming situations. These cases are focused on women's narratives but include men's narratives to represent the familial and relational nature of transformatory experiences in the context of the family farm.

Our first case concerns a married woman, a professional farmer, who continued to operate her farm independently from the farm of her husband after marriage. The farm woman is the more prominent farmer with formal education in agricultural production. The spouses entered into a joint farming enterprise under a Milk Production Partnership (MPP), a consensual decision motivated by the financial benefit attainable through stock relief and pension entitlements. The gains from operating a consolidated farm enterprise and the associated scale-related and operational efficiencies were also motivating factors. The narratives of both spouses consistently illustrate a keen awareness of production efficiencies, demonstrating strong motivations to operate a productive, economically viable farm. In the context of a requirement that farm partnerships operate under a single herd

number, the couple decided that the joint farm enterprise would operate under the farm woman's herd number. This is unique to the 10 farm partnership cases studied and an outlier in the context of MPP statistics which show that only .3 percent operate women's established herd numbers (Roche, 2013). The discontinuation of the farm man's herd number – a number transferred from generation to generation - was highly symbolic and premised on his recognition of the superior assets and farming skill of the farm woman, her clear ownership of her own farm and his perception of changing societal attitudes towards the roles of women. The farm woman is adamant that her number be preserved, while her spouse agreed "to surrender" his herd number. "(T)hat was probably the big one...the hardest thing at the time...I had to surrender my herd number " (Male Spouse). The symbolic importance of the farm woman retaining her herd number, identifying herself as not 'just married in' to the farm but a farmer and landowner in her own right, is significant in both spouses' narratives. The farm woman had retained her farm as an independent entity in her own name after marriage and wished to continue to retain her herd number despite entry to a farm partnership. Her wish to do so is couched in her sense of solidarity with the historical and contemporary contexts of women's subordinate roles in agriculture.

"Well what I felt myself is, I felt my mother worked hard for years and I felt a lot of women worked hard for years and they weren't seen in their own right and they had no title to nothing after all the work they did over the years in the farms they married into. So I didn't want that to happen to me really because I said I was farmer in my own right, I worked hard all my life on the farm, I was entitled to keep my own name, that's why I kept my own name and I thought this was a better way of trying to keep all that together kind of thing really..." (Female Spouse).

The perceived impotency of women's past lives and unappreciated labour transforms the significance of the herd number for this farm woman. The herd number becomes a potent symbol that protects her from the legacy of the past and catalyses the farm woman's sense of her own agency and capabilities. In her refusal to reproduce or recapitulate to normative conventions, the farm woman constitutes a different future for herself. The prioritisation of business efficiency over hegemonic traditions of ownership and management of farmland was evident in the spouses' narratives. Post partnership, the amalgamated farm was referred to as the farm woman's farm rather than 'my' or 'our' farm. "I always call it 'tis (spouse's) farm... " (Male Spouse). Despite initial concerns about the farm partnership by the farm man's natal family, the farm woman's bond with and care for his

parents mediated the disruption to traditional ownership patterns and his father continued his involvement in what ostensibly became the farm woman's farm.

Our second case relates to a farm woman born into a family farm, seeking to become a professional farmer in her own right, having attended formal agricultural education. The farm woman, similar to farm men awaiting inheritance of family farms, felt inhibited and undermined by the farm owner, her father, to the extent that she could not apply her knowledge and skills on the family farm. In the absence of support from her father and constrained in her ambitions for the family farm, she left farming. "I was after going to ag college so he wasn't taking me seriously ...You know I'd say "we should be at this now" and he'd say "ya right" and then it never happened. Ehm...he's just not a farmer." She had capacity and competency to provide valuable input into the farming process, but her father, the landowner, did not recognise or utilise her knowledge and skills. In turn she interrogates what it means to be a farmer and challenges her father's performance of the profession She worked as a contractor for Farm Relief Services , followed by a retail business partnership with a friend that facilitated a better work and family balance, having subsequently married and had children. Her tacit and acquired knowledge of farming, the complex relational skills developed while working in a male-dominated profession, the development of a strong business acumen as an entrepreneur and aware of the complexities of joining family and work lives, eventually enable her to negotiate a return to the family farm. She leased farmland from her father to establish a long desired on-farm tourist enterprise, namely a 'pet farm'. Though constrained from making decisions or implementing changes on the main or 'host' farm, to her surprise her father agreed to lease land to her for her tourism enterprise: "...he had no hesitation at all. He just said 'ya go for it'...He didn't say anything really...And let me belt on" (Farm woman). Looking back, the farm woman recognised that her father was not ready to include her in his farming enterprise, despite being the only heir. This may have been due to his own experience of a delayed transfer of the farm from father to son (he was 45), his receipt of EU payments for farming and the importance of his occupational identity of farmer for himself and others. But his advancing age, her mother's support for her eventual inheritance of the family farm and her own desire to work outdoors provided the opportunity she needed. The farm woman had visited similar enterprises and was aware of the diversification movement. "Diversification was coming in and just thought like, well if they can do it I can do it ... (Farm woman). Despite her father's intransigence concerning the transfer of the farm, re-entry onto the family farm through the establishment of her diversified business has made

her more confident that she will inherit the whole farm as her father approaches retirement. As the business becomes more profitable, she foresees the possibility of providing her father with an annual payment in return for full ownership of the family farm. Despite its tensions, working within the frame of the familial bond provides the pathway into full ownership for this farm woman.

Our third case represents the influence of farmwomen on decisions concerning a change in the ownership and management of the family farm. The impetus to establish a farm partnership between two neighboring dairy farmers was strongly driven by one of the spouses of the two male farmers. This case is a contrast to the previous two cases as the farm woman neither owns or leases farm property. The farm woman is involved in occasional work on the farm while working full-time off the farm involving a long daily commute. The couple has young children of school-going age. The farm man is the main farm operator with little help, as modeled by Ålmas' 'one man farm' (Ålmas 2010). The spouses' narratives concern their persistent difficulties managing work time and family time; unsuccessfully negotiating competing time demands for labour intensive farm work, full-time off farm employment, travel time, while caring for young children. These difficulties provided the impetus to seek an alternative solution. Entry into a farm partnership was strongly driven by the farm woman as the couple sought to find a solution to their time-related problems, a source of stress and distress. "It's the issue of time. We had no time. It was a major problem I can't tell you" (Male Spouse). The farm woman reached a point where she could no longer sustain working full-time outside the home, caring for children and undertaking the majority of household and domestic work. As the main income earner, and appraising the economic rationale of child-care costs that surpassed farm income, she felt that she could influence the decision to enter the farm into a farm partnership. " So I, we couldn't go on as I was mm and... he was...not there. It was madness because we were losing like... with everything all the time" (Female Spouse). An ultimatum arose in their relationship and the farm partnership model was identified as a potentially promising venture, echoing Kirbak and Egil-Flo's (2005) study of Norwegian farm partnerships. Our narrative data illustrate evidence of women working off farm as economically powerful actors negotiating the settlement of the competing claims of farm work, paid employment, household and caring responsibilities. In reference to O'Hara's (1998) categories, this case can be more accurately described as 'working for the family'.

### **Conclusion: Women, Power and Agency**

We deployed feminist analyses of rural gender relations in the context of agency and power, specifically utilizing the feminisation thesis to examine and make visible women's experiences of farm family property ownership. Gender power relations in farming in Ireland have been previously described as fitting family farm discourse with unambiguous subject positions. Our evidence suggests that both men's and women's subject positions are undergoing alteration showing more ambiguity than previously anticipated. While this may be indicative of change, a closer concern with empowerment and agency is advised. The selection of data here concerns women negotiating with spouses and fathers about the management and ownership of the family farm. The narrative data point to the significance of agricultural education, prior property ownership, evidence of success at farming and/or main breadwinner status as contributing to women's agency. This may or may not be sufficient to disturb gender power relations. Natal family support, awareness of the lack of recognition given to women's contribution to family farming historically, combined with women's collective rights to equal treatment is needed for change to occur. Allen (2010, 145) argues that power, a condition for the possibility of subjectivity and agency, be analysed in the context of the constraints imposed by "dangerous, strategic power relations" (e.g. patriarchy) and in the context of the resources and opportunities available from "normatively positive communicative power" (e.g. feminism). Our data provide evidence of both effective and transformatory agency in women's narratives. There are examples in the narratives of women's (and men's) resistance to patriarchal power, subverting domination by developing skills and experiences off farm, enabling a return to farming that supports the future sustainability of the family farm and opening up succession opportunities for future generations of women. Farm partnerships with spouses emerge as important legal and opportunity structures to enable women to express their own occupational identity as farmer, a position requires ideological adjustment from spouses and family members.

The three cases presented are illustrative of 'reconstitutive feminisation', an elaboration on substitutive, integrative, competitive and progressive feminisation and masculinisation of agriculture. Reconstitutive feminisation combines change at the level of the self and the social. The narrative data suggest that women's agency serves to protect personal and economic welfare while remaining linked to family farm sustainability. This is resonant with research on women's property ownership in the Global South – women's power is leveraged for personal and family benefits - in which both men and women's power relations and identities are undergoing change. In

all of the three cases there is evidence of effective agency as women position themselves as powerful actors who initiate change on behalf of themselves and their families while securing the sustainability of the farm enterprise. In each case women's access to economic resources (land and income earned) expanded the possibility for participation in making real choices, leading to the disruption of traditional gender and generational relations. This is transformatory agency at work. The reconstitutive feminisation thesis is compelling as it shows how women empower themselves in the context of the family farm to become credible candidates for the occupational category of farmer. This is contingent on a number of factors; the farm woman's agricultural skills and knowledge, entrepreneurship, property ownership, income generated on or off farm with a recognition in these instances that family relations and farm sustainability issues cannot not be treated as separate spheres. Being able to draw on ideological resources such as women's equality and rights discourses seems to be an important factor. Reconstitutive feminisation captures the process whereby women return to the family farm and initiate a series of purposive and meaningful actions in concert with men that enable them to be active participants in shaping and re-shaping their own lives as farmers, daughters and wives. Women's enduring presence, fortitude, determination and resolve for themselves and their families are impressive. Reconstitutive feminisation engages with disturbances to identity and gender relations as women participate in joint decision making with fathers and spouses concerning productive initiatives in the farm economy and adjustments in family relations, demonstrating effective and transformatory agency. As women position themselves in farm and family decision making, they are clearly no longer subject or subordinate but articulate and determined to utilise 'capitalism and patriarchy' (O'Hara 1998), to be farmers and active participants in the family farm, as expressed by the repetition of the phrase, 'in my own right'. Women come to the fore with a sense of agency, or with 'awareness of meaning, motivation and purpose' of their actions (Kabeer 2005, 14). Thus in reconstitutive feminisation both agency and a sense of agency weave together producing transformatory agency. We advise that continuing research attention be paid to the persistence of substitutive, integrative, competitive, progressive feminisation as well as women's identities, decision making processes, sense of self-worth and subjectivities. In the context of new empirical evidence of women's ownership and of outcomes of policy measures, such as Ireland's incentivising of joint farming ventures, how changing rural gender relations and the empowerment of farmwomen is analysed, will continue to be of pressing research and policy interest.

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