

The experience of women in a traditionally male industry in the case of female firm representatives in the Austrian agricultural sector.

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Abstract:

The presentation will focus on one part of my thesis, which aimed to undertake a participative inquiry into the challenges faced by an Austrian-based agricultural Born-global manufacturer in its fast development in a global market. The objective of the presentation is to share explorative and tentative findings of the analysis of the characteristics of the agricultural sector expressed by its stakeholders, in this case focusing on females, over a period of 18 months. The method chosen was a case study of an Austrian manufacturer of agricultural machinery and data was collected through semi-structured interviews of the varying stakeholders in their headquarter and its subsidiaries, internal communication, and researcher observations over 3 separate times from June 2018 to December 2019.

The tentative results suggest that the professional role of women in the traditionally male industry is still underrepresented and precarious. Their decorative contribution is widely recognised and appreciated, yet their professional role requires evidence of knowledge before being taken seriously in contrast to male counterparts. Yet, once their value is recognised, they are slowly considered as role models to emulate. Additionally, varying status of females in different roles was also described and will be shared.

Even though the company is located in Austria this experience resonates with other

national accounts at international fairs. Although these findings are limited to the experiences of two females on the international field, it expands our understanding of females in the industry and raises questions as to how to enhance the role of women in this industry.

These results will be interesting to any other internationalising business within agriculture as well as researchers in the field. Since this research was exploratory on this topic the results are meant to encourage discussion and are not seen as definitive. Further research is required. Considering the current changes due to the pandemic agriculture has been affected, yet is still one of the essential, secure and viable sectors to operate in.