



Raising Employability of Women
through entrepreneurial Activities
fostering Rural Development

CASE STUDY

MARIE SOPHIE PUJOL FORT


INTRODUCTION


Marie Sophie Pujol Fort became a farm manager in 2012 in a SARL society (in English - a limited liability company) with her father. Her 304ha farm is located close to Castelnaudary, in the department of Aude, in Occitania (between Carcassonne and Toulouse). She was fortunate to start with a financially healthy farm business. Her father had already innovated and she continued on the same path. On her farm, she focuses on the production of different raw materials. She does field cropping on 140 ha and has a vineyard on 10 ha. Thanks to her background in business, she decided to diversify her activities in order to be more competitive on the market. Overall, her activities are very diverse: she does field crops, permanent crops, vineyards, green services (photovoltaic panels), farm work company and organic fruit production.

1. PERSONAL DATA

 **Name:** Marie Sophie Pujol Fort

 **Age range:** 31-45

 **Education:** Marie-Sophie graduated university with a law degree. To complement her skills, she followed with a master in international luxury trade.

 **Occupation:** She does field cropping and part of her farm is organic. She grows sunflower, organic hard wheat on 26 ha, sorghum, maize seeds barley on 5ha, soft wheat and chickpeas. In 2019, she started cropping organic pomegranate on 2ha of her farm. She also has a vineyard.



2. FARM PROFILE


 **Address:**
Notre Ferme En Lauragais 809 Chemin De La Tour | 11400 Castelnaudary.

 **Farm Area in ha:** 304 ha.

 **Date since when the female entrepreneur owns/rents the farm:** 2012.

N° of workers on the farms:

	FULL TIME	PART-TIME/SEASONAL	WOMEN
Family members	1		1
Other than family members			

 **Farm description:** Marie Sophie Pujol Fort is in a SARL society (in English - a limited liability company) with her father. Her father is not a farmer, but he helps her in the everyday work. Marie-Sophie has developed many activities since she became farm manager: field crops, permanent crops, vineyards, green services (photovoltaic panels), farm work company and organic fruit. She started these various activities in 2012. She was fortunate to start with a financially healthy farm business. Her father had already innovated and she continued on the same path. Her main subject on her farm is the production of different raw materials. The search for added value is very important for this woman entrepreneur. She's following a logic of market differentiation: she does not wish to produce similar products than her farmer neighbors.

 **Website and social networks accounts:**

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/marie-sophie-pujol-fort-5320952b/?originalSubdomain=fr>

<https://twitter.com/Mariesophiep>

3. MULTIFUNCTIONALITY / RURAL CULTURAL HERITAGE

On the farm, she manages a wine business. She sells wine to her cooperative “Vignobles de Vendéol” which markets wine under a “Pays d’Oc” IGP (in English - protected geographical indication) quality label. The IGP gives better value for money and allows to sell the bottles of wine to a more competitive price. As her region is famous for maize seeds and vineyards, through that IGP she maintains the cultural heritage of her region “Pays d’Oc”. She has also developed the ISO 14001 certification. She is also committed to the production of organic fruit trees. The organic label allows for better prices of durum wheat. For pomegranates, trade will start next year as its first harvest will take place in 2021. She also owns an agricultural work company which is active in the fields of other farms. Also, she is building a greenhouse with photovoltaic panels on 4 hectares to produce fruits and vegetables. Finally, when it is possible for her to leave the farm, she gets involved in many women networks such as the Committee of Women Farmers of the FNSEA in Paris, and she joins the board of directors of the ARTERRIS cooperative. All these multifunctional activities are a clear asset for her farm: they allow her to increase the income, satisfy personal concerns regarding the maintenance of regional heritage and by getting involved in women farmers representation, get advantages over the competitors through market differentiation, create added value products and create jobs.



She had to make her way into a very male environment that considers women to be farmers only when they get on a tractor. Her main advice is to find the right ideas to start these original activities.

“We must always innovate and invest in new products”.





4. CONSIDERATIONS, TRAINING / COMPETENCES INVOLVED

☰ General considerations:

Marie-Sophie shows that preserving cultural heritage can be a way to be competitive on the market and differentiate yourself from others. By creating added value with high standard products which maintain her regional heritage (IGP “Pays d’Oc” wine, organic label, green services), she succeeds in having a thriving farm. Her success was importantly linked to her background experience in human resources. Before 2012, she worked in the human resources department of McDonald’s and managed a luxury hotel in the Alps. Human management is therefore easy for her and this is the reason why she started a business with another farmer. These management and human resources skills are essential to manage her farm effectively and develop new ideas.

📖 Training/Competences (Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes) especially relevant for the process:

During her professional career, she used hard and soft skills like initiative capacity and management knowledges. She needed to have an open mind, so she decided to commit to a trade union to be open to other opinions and ideas. It was important for her to have others relationships outside farm.

SWOT analysis:

STRENGTHS
S

She takes initiatives.
She has a human management training and background which allows her to run effectively her farm.
She is involved in a Union for women farmer's rights.

WEAKNESSES
W

Ideas that are innovative can be sometimes misunderstood and undervalued.

OPPORTUNITIES
O

She can always create value.
Differentiation to the other farmers.

THREATS
T

Jealousy from other farmers can arise because of the completion of successful multifunctional activities on her farm.
If do not develop copyright on ideas, she might have legal issues later.

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