“It must be fun for you to help a bit on the farm”

A qualitative study of the social, institutional, and economic activities and roles of women and inclusion in livestock farming in southern Sweden

**Keywords:** Farming Women, Gender Equality, Patriarchy, Agriculture, Reproductive Labour.
Abstract
Farming women have between the year 1950 and the present time had to fight hard to participate in the farming sector in Sweden to the same extent as men. There are old, gendered biases towards women who labour on farms by people both on and outside the farms. Farm labour has been considered a “man’s work” and women were better suited to perform household labour. However, women have been recognised as proper farmers and official owners in recent years. The thesis examines the changes over time for Swedish farming women regarding their economic activities, institutional changes, and social changes that have had an impact on them. The thesis highlights factors that hinder gender equality and empowerment on farms. It also highlights elements that empower women to further establish themselves in farming. Both statistical data which brings concreteness to the research and interviews with farming women which brings a narrative has been included in the research. The findings have been analysed with the reproductive labour theory and the concept of patriarchy.
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1. Introduction

In a general assumption, Sweden which ranked 5th on The Global Gender Gap Index in 2021 (World Economic Forum, 2021:10), should be a place where men and women are provided with equal opportunities to farm. Yet, farming women in Sweden have not been recognised to the same extent as farming men. The role of women in farming has changed drastically since the 1950s. For many decades, women performed mostly reproductive labour, often referred to as unpaid household labour. Another task women on farms have generally been responsible for taking care of the animals. Tasks such as milking cows have been coded as feminine labour for decades before new technological innovations and the shift to modernisation in the 1950s. However, women have still been mostly the sole provider of unpaid household labour on farms (Nermo, 2000:36). This has not changed much over the years and even at present time, women are usually the ones who are responsible for most of the household labour. Furthermore, this labour has proven to be equally as important as typical agricultural work for a farm to be able to bring in revenue. What has been coded as masculine labour, such as ploughing, cultivating the land, forestry, and handiwork, and what has been coded as feminine labour, such as caring for the children and household labour are mostly viewed the same way in the present time. Even if women over the decades have been involved in some type of typical masculine coded farm work, they have continually not received proper recognition as actual farmers (Prugl, 2011:29).

For many decades after the 1950s, women continued to not be properly recognised as farmers and were instead seen as a subordinate to their husband, who was the “real” farmer (Godhe, 2018). It was also unusual for women to receive equal benefits when it comes to both pay and recognition, even if they contributed just as much as men did (Brannen & Moss, 1991:106). The role of women in farming has since changed drastically. Most farm work is still coded as either masculine or feminine, but women are to a larger extent performing the masculine coded labour on farms in present times than they did in the 1950s. There are increasing numbers of women that choose farming as their full-time occupation today (Godhe, 2018). However, women have struggled to claim their rights to participate in decision-making processes and hold positions of power because of the lack of recognition. As farming in Sweden has been a male-dominated field for many years, women who are registered as official farm owners have not been taken seriously. Women labouring on farms still face old, gendered biases today (Grändeby, 2009).
Furthermore, Godhe (2018) argues that women have for many years been invisible in both research and statistics on an individual level. There is a need for research that aims to bring forward farming women’s experiences. The knowledge about gender issues within the farming sector needs further research to oppose the old, gendered biases that women face. Today, two out of five farmers are women (Godhe, 2018) which further shows the importance to conduct research that includes personal experiences of farming women who have previously been overlooked. Much of the available research talks about farming women, but not with them. There is a need of involving personal experiences of the farming women to further research the economic, institutional, and social development of how the role of women labouring on Swedish farms has changed since the 1950s.

This thesis examines three different areas which research and brings forward the role of women on farms. The three areas that will be addressed are economic activities, institutional change, and social change. The economic activities examine the economic inequality between farmers and how this affects them. Institutional change shows how laws and policies regarding farming have changed over the years, and what effect this has had on farming women. Lastly, the area of social change focuses on how and if women receive the proper recognition for their labour, if they are treated equally and fairly by people both on and outside the farms e.g., bankers and salesmen, and if they have the same opportunities to succeed as farming entrepreneurs as men have.

1.1 Purpose and research questions
This thesis contributes knowledge of how gender inequality on farms in Sweden has changed over time from the year 1950 to the present. It examined what factors hinder women’s involvement on farms and what elements that could further empower women and create a gender-equal farming sector in Sweden. To achieve this and to be able to answer the research questions, both statistics and interviews will be included in the research. The statistics will bring concreteness to the research while the interviews with farming women will bring a narrative. The changes over time are emphasised in the thesis. The research questions are as follows:
• How did economic, institutional, and social changes affect farming women from the 1950’s up to the present?
• What factors hinder gender equality and empowerment on farms?
• What element could empower women to further establish themselves in farming?

1.2 Limitations and delimitations
This section explains three limitation areas which are the chosen timeframe, the geographical limitation and why livestock farmers have been chosen as participants for the interviews.

Because a lot of changes occurred after the second world war, this thesis focused on the period after WWII until the present time. A lot of women joined the workforce in the 1950s and many women choose to work on farms. Modernisation and new technologies were also being introduced to farmers which changed how we think of farming and how agriculture was performed (Magnusson, 2006:42). Women’s movements were also on the rise during the 1950s, which started to address several issues regarding gender equality. As a result, people started to raise questions about the old and outdated ways women were perceived by society (Eisenberg & Ruthsdotter, 1998). This decade brought a lot of changes for women, which is the reason for the chosen period. There is also a lot of statistical data and research on farmers after World War Two available, which has given the possibility to study the changes over time from the 1950s to the present time.

The research has been limited to include women from southern Sweden, which in this thesis refers to Götaland. This geographical limitation has been made to eliminate possible social, economic, and cultural differences between different locations in Sweden to focus on women from a specific area. Furthermore, the concept of gender is very sensitive to many different variables such as environmental surroundings, laws, and economic situations (Christou & Parmaxi, 2022: n.a). Because of this, the interviews have been conducted with participants that live and work within Götaland to exclude these variables as much as possible. Götaland is also considered the dairy centre of Sweden (Jordbruksverket, 2021c). Thus, there are many farmers operating withing this region who were considered suitable participants.

Many Swedish farms specialises in one specific area. This could involve beekeeping, forestry, livestock farming, etc. A general assumption has been that these differ significantly from each
other and that it would not be possible to draw general conclusions if no specific area was chosen. For this thesis, only women who are livestock farmers were chosen. More specifically, these women have in some way kept and worked with cows on their farms, whether it be dairy work or for meat consumption. The farmers do not solely need to have this focus on cows and can also farm other animals as well, but the main link between these women is dairy work or raising cows for meat consumption.

1.3 Disposition
The first part of the thesis has been structured to present a timeline which gives a background to the situation before the 1950s and shows important aspects of the role of women in agriculture in Sweden. What follows is a timeline from the 1950’s up until the 2020s that showcases important happenings and milestones of Swedish farming women. This is followed by previous research that presents other researchers’ findings and what has been conducted within the research field so far. After this, the theories are presented. This section discusses how patriarchy and reproductive labour have been used as tools of analysis for the research. Following this is an operationalisation. This further shows how the theories will be used to analyse the material by stating different indicators to measure what cannot generally be measured. The next section is a methodology, which shows how the interviews have been conducted, how the material has been analysed, and how the participants have been selected, followed by a discussion of criticism towards oral history. After this, the result of the empirical material is presented in three sections: economic activities, institutional change, and social change. This section has been structured to present the statistical findings and laws first and then present the result from the conducted interviews. After this is a discussion of the empirical findings where the three research questions are answered. This section also sought connections to the theoretical framework. Lastly is a conclusion that summarises the thesis and gives suggestions to further research.

2. Background
This section shows the changes over time for Swedish farming women that relate to social, institutional, and economic activities. It is presented in a timeline of events that have made a difference for farming women from before the 1950’s up until the present time.
2.1 Before the 1950s

Historically, a vast majority of women’s chores were reproductive labour. Farming women were not seen as actual farmers during the beginning of the 1900s but instead seen as a farmer’s wife or as a housewife. They were subordinated to their husband and lacked recognition as individual farmers.

An article by Lena Sommestad (1994) shows how dairy work has for many centuries been labelled as “women's work”. The de-feminisation of the old traditional milking practice shows a clear historical connection between labour and gender. At the end of the 1800’s century, it was even considered improper and shameful for a man to participate in the milking practice. Many pre-industrial agricultural societies drew a connection between women and milk, and the feminization of milking was exceptionally strong in the Scandinavian countries. Society’s strong beliefs that milking was a labour that only should be performed by women were strict enough that people often refuse to drink the milk if it was known it was milked by a man. Farms during this period had a strong division of labour in terms of who made the final decisions and represented the farms in public. It was men who were the head of farms, both in terms of being the ones making all the decisions, but also deciding how the income they made on the farms would be spent. Women did participate in all types of farm labour and not just milking cows. They did daily chores on the farm and help in the field when needed. However, the active participation of women in farming was mostly limited to poorer farming areas (Sommestad, 1994:60).

In the late 1900 century, the research on milk production evolved. Previous female knowledge that had been based on experience was slowly being replaced by science, resulting in new technologies within farming the dairy industry. The technology and science revolution meant a turnaround for farms in Sweden. Modern technologies replaced old ways of farming and milking and changed how people viewed milking as belonging in the feminine sphere. Gone was the traditional feminine way of milking and replaced by technology and male science (Sommestad, 1994:62).

It was first in 1920 it became possible for women to own farms through a new marriage code in Sweden. However, the actual rights for women to own agriculture and property and not only be subordinate to their husband’s agricultural property were not fully possible until many years
later as reported by The Swedish Farmers' Association's Gender Equality Academy (LRF, Lantbrukarnas riksförbunds jämställdhetsakademi in Swedish) (LRF, 2009:32).

Many men learnt new improved and innovative skills of how to farm, the most significant one being machinery work. This innovative way of farming was viewed as of utmost importance for male status on the farms and men that were able to handle and use this skill were deemed important and held an influence over other farmers. Cultural influences from both Germany and Denmark strengthen the masculinity of dairy farming and helped to further challenge old female traditions within the Swedish dairy farming society. The shifting to code the previous feminine dairy work as masculine changed the whole farming industry and there is still evidence of this shift that can be seen today. The industrialisation processes in the western world also brought tendencies to further marginalise women that actively participated in the production chain by pointing out that they were subordinates to men in both dependency and physical attributes. Since men were getting a new male status with the new way of using machinery for dairy work, women as dairymaids were further pushed back in rank on the farms. The change of labour pattern within the feminine sphere could be traced to the undermining of the old traditional female connections to dairy work. At the end of the 1930s, many young Swedish women who previously lived in rural towns left the farms for larger cities in pursuit of work, leaving the dairy work and farming behind (Sommestad, 1994:64).

2.2 The 1950’s to 2000

In 1951, about half a million men were working in agriculture and about 365,000 women. There was a difference of about 150,000. In 1991, by contrast, only 135,00 men were left and 65,000 women, almost double as men as women. Table 1 shows the numbers of men and women that have been employed in agriculture between the years 1951 to 1991.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of men in agriculture</th>
<th>Percentage of men</th>
<th>Number of women in agriculture</th>
<th>Percentage of women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Ca 510 000</td>
<td>58.28%</td>
<td>Ca 365 000</td>
<td>41.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>Ca 330 000</td>
<td>61.11%</td>
<td>Ca 210 000</td>
<td>38.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Ca 170 000</td>
<td>62.96%</td>
<td>Ca 100 000</td>
<td>37.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Ca 150 000</td>
<td>68.18%</td>
<td>Ca 70 000</td>
<td>31.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Ca 135 000</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
<td>Ca 65 000</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Number of people employed in agriculture divided by women and men between the years 1951–1991 (Source: Jordbruksverket, 2011:19).

What can be understood from these statistics is an increase in the gender labour gap between men and women in the agricultural sector over time. In the 1950s there was almost 42 percent of women made up the total labour force in the agricultural sector. During that same year, men made up 58 percent of the total labour force in the agricultural sector. Looking at the statistics from the year 1991, it becomes clear that men still made up the larger percentage of the agricultural sector in Sweden. In 1991, men represented 65.5 percent of the total number of farmers. Only 32.5 percent were women. These statistical data show that there has been a negative change between the years 1951 to 1981, where the total percentage of women in the Swedish agricultural sector had decreased by 10 percentage units in a period of 30 years. However, the years 19981 to 1991 reveals a small but important change of these percentage unit, where women had increased their participation with 0.6 percent. Table 1 reveals that 1991 could be considered the year of change, and women’s participation in farming increased instead of decreased.

Another significant change during the 1950s was that research started to focus on farming women. To start, the critique was directed at the notion that everyone on a family farm would have the same interest, which has proven to be untrue (LRF, 2009:34). In the 1950s this perspective started to develop into a more individual form for family farms in Sweden. This decade also developed how and what research focused on. One major change from before was that now scientists started to count the number of hours that females worked. It was also noticed how and if women were part of decision-making processes and their access to capital and resources, which were rare during that time. Women’s contribution to both reproductive and productive labour on farms started to be recognised which eased the economic burden for women. However, many women were still not properly counted as individual farmers that laboured on the farm but were seen as assistants that were able to help the men where it was needed. Men were still seen as the real farmer (LRF, 2009:35).

Society developed fast during the 1960s and farmers in Sweden were under increasing pressure from the government. The industry sector needed labour and consequently, the government wanted agriculture to modernise faster. The global market had plenty of cheap food available for Sweden to import. The production from the Swedish farmers was not seen as big of a
necessity to the country as it had been during earlier decades e.g., during both world wars when it was central that Sweden had a functioning agricultural sector that could provide the population with food. A new agriculture policy was presented by the parliament in 1967 that determined that there would be a restructuring of the agricultural sector. The policy prioritised efficiency and farmers’ income would be secondary. Many farmers would not get as much financial support as before but were instead required to be more efficient and produce more crops and livestock products such as milk and meat. Many farmers were upset and protested this decision and stated that it would result in unacceptable consequences for the farmers. The parliament’s decision was perceived as a ‘bounty on farmers’ (Rydén, 2018).

The way labour was performed had evolved further on farms in Sweden in the 1970s. An interview conducted with a dairyman during this decade stated that he believes dairy work became seen as masculine “because the work was physically too demanding for women” (Sommestad, 1994:70). The same man stated later in the same interview that women working in farming and dairy work were strong women who did not shy away from hard and demanding work and were just as physically capable as men. By looking at the history of dairy work it becomes clear that it has throughout different periods been labelled either masculine or feminine, but it has always been perceived as gendered. However, women in dairy work were spoken about as competent and skilled who represented an old tradition, whereas men were seen as innovative business managers and symbolised industrial progress and modernity. There are several complex political, cultural, and economic processes that have over the years produced what may be perceived as a natural gender division of labour. Labour on farms was often coded as masculine labour which included ploughing, cultivating the land, forestry work, and handiwork. Other farming activities that were central to the income of the farm but instead coded as feminine labour included caring for children, household labour and making sure the farming men got fed. This has further pushed women from decision-making processes, owning farms, and being recognised as decent farmers (Sommestad, 1994:72).

2.3 The 2000’s to present time
At the beginning of the 2000s, there was an upswing of women that participated in the agricultural sector. Table 2 shows the numbers of men and women that have been employed in agriculture between the years 2001 to 2020.
Table 2: Number of people employed in agriculture divided by women and men between the years 2001 to 2020 (Source: Jordbruksverket, 2011:19 & Jordbruksverket, 2021a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of men in agriculture</th>
<th>Percentage of men</th>
<th>Number of women in agriculture</th>
<th>Percentage of women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Ca 120 000</td>
<td>66.66%</td>
<td>Ca 60 000</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Ca 93 000</td>
<td>57.76%</td>
<td>Ca 68 000</td>
<td>42.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Ca 85 000</td>
<td>57.04%</td>
<td>Ca 64 000</td>
<td>42.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Ca 80 000</td>
<td>55.74%</td>
<td>Ca 63 500</td>
<td>44.26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It becomes apparent that the previous trend that was shown in table 1 between the years 1951 to 1981 was not being repeated during these years and men’s and women’s participation in farming had changed. Men still made up a larger part of the agricultural sector in Sweden. From 1951 to 1981, the percentage of men in the farming sector increased. However, looking at the statistics between the years 2001 to 2020 reveals that women had instead increased their percentage of participation in the farming sector in Sweden with over ten percentage units. The total number of men participating in the farming sector had dropped down to 40,000 in 20 years. The number of farming women had instead increased with around 8,000 more women in just 10 years. During those 10 years, the number of men in farming had decreased by 27,000. These statistical number shows a more equal gender division of labour in the farming sector.

At the present time, the gap between the number of men and women participating in farming has as shown in Table 2 levelled out. In 2020, it was estimated that women made up 44 percent of the total number of people in the Swedish farming sector. Furthermore, Gohde (2018) states that women made up 42 percent of farmers in 2018. Both media and news outlet have reported that the total number of farmers in Sweden are decreasing and as shown in both Table 1 and 2, this has proven to be true. However, this is because the numbers of men participating in farms are decreasing at a rapid pace, while the numbers of women are decreasing relatively slow. The biggest group of women are within the age group of 55 to 64 years old. However, between the years 2013 and 2018, the number of farming women in the age group 25 to 34 almost doubled, showcasing a new young wave of women taking interest in farming entrepreneurship (Gohde, 2018).

Research conducted in 2010 examined the differences in access to land between men and women. LRF (2009:8) conducted a study in 2009 which focused on statistics of the difference
in how many men versus how many women who owned and managed farms in Sweden. The result showed that out of the participating people which were 71 percent men and 29 percent women, only 8.5 of the participants' farms were managed by a woman, while 62 percent were managed by a man. 29.5 percent stated that their farms were managed jointly by a man and woman (LRF, 2009:11). A report from the European Parliament (2014:35) shows that traditionally, male descendants have historically been prioritized to inherit the farm and it was usually the oldest son that inherited the farms in the 1900s. The belief that a man is more suitable to inherit land is still present on many farms today and daughters and other female relatives have a disadvantage in inheriting land.

Another noticeable difference between women and men is that women own significantly smaller areas of farms and arable land than men usually do. It was registered in 2016 that men owned a collective number of 1 227 162 hectares in their companies while women only owned 70 901 hectares collectively. This reveals that only 5.5 percent of arable land is owned by women in Sweden, and there is little to no increase in these numbers since 2006. Comparing this with the earlier statement that almost 2 out of 5 farmers were women in 2016, it becomes clear that 5.5 percent of arable land being owned by females is not an equal distribution (Gohde, 2018).

After the Me-too campaign in 2017, many companies and organisations, such as LRF and the Swedish Board of Agriculture introduced a function in their organisation called “Whistle-blower” (Visselblåsan in Swedish). The function is meant to act as a tool for the farmers that are members of the organisations to easier and anonymously be able to report harassment or any wrongdoings (Jordbruksverket, 2022a). Many organisations mean that the Me-too campaign showed how important a function like this is for Swedish farmers and the organisation that they are a part of. The “Whistle-blower” function is supposed to provide support and aid for farmers that have experienced sexual harassment. Farmers that suspect harassment on farms can report this as well to a safe source where it will be investigated further (Lantbruk, 2017). Even if this is not directly linked to how and if farming women are being recognised or if they receive proper compensation for their labour, a function like the “Whistle-blower” is a milestone. It is a tool to potentially expose gender inequality on farms, within the farmers’ communities, and in organisations that the farmers take part in.
The total number of farming businesses has reduced remarkably from the year 1951 to 2020. Table 3 shows statistics from the Swedish Board of Agriculture and the reduction in framing enterprises over the last 70 years. It reveals that there has been a decreasing number of agricultural businesses between the years 1951 and 2020. Furthermore, it shows the numbers of men versus women stated as official owners over a farm between the years 2005 and 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of agricultural businesses</th>
<th>Number of men stated as official owners</th>
<th>Number of women stated as official owners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>378 095</td>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>Not stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>155 364</td>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>Not stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>96 560</td>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>Not stated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>70 721</td>
<td>61 977</td>
<td>8 744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>53 497</td>
<td>44 287</td>
<td>9 210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Statistics retrieved showing the change in the total number of farming businesses in Sweden (Source: Jordbruksverket, 2021a, Jordbruksverket, 2021b, Jordbruksverket, 2022b).

In the last 70 years, there has been a huge decrease in the creation of new farms and the maintenance of older ones. In 2020 the number of businesses in farming was 86 percent less than in 1951. Just as Table 2, Table 3 also shows a positive trend for women. There was a slight increase of women entrepreneurs from 2005 to 2020. The proportion of men that are entrepreneurs had instead decreased by over one fourth during the same period. This shows that there is a positive change over time for women as official farming owners and the gender division of ownership are decreasing.

2.4 Concluding remarks

This section has shown the change over time regarding how many women and men have been employed in the Swedish farming sector from 1951 until 2020. Furthermore, it also has shown the changes in total numbers of agricultural businesses from 1951 to 2020. These tables all reveal an overall decrease in the total number of people that work on farms. There is a positive trend for women from 2001 to 2020, where statistical data reveals that more women are venturing into the farming sector to become entrepreneurs. Women as farming entrepreneurs have dared to establish themselves as farmers in Sweden. As the statistics from Table 3 show, the total number of women listed as official owners of farms is on an upswing. As a general
assumption, this could likely be due to the evolution of the Swedish society and labour market that have developed remarkably since the 1950s. The large gap between the number of farming women and men entrepreneurs entails that the farming sector could not entirely be deemed gender-equal. However, significant improvements are noticeable from the years 1950 to 2020, which this section has examined.

3. Previous research

This section introduces previous research on farming women that are relevant to this thesis. First presented is previous research on farming women’s social aspects, followed by studies of institutional and laws that have influenced these women. Lastly presented are the economic aspects.

Women’s important but often neglected role on farms in both the farm production and contribution to the household has been acknowledged through studies of women in Western farming. These studies have revealed a patriarchal and gendered structured division of labour among farming families (Whatmore, 1991:66). However, most of the focus has forgotten the individualism of women, and instead treats them as a farmer’s wife and does not acknowledge them properly as farmers. Even if studies have acknowledged their subordinated position, they are often considered as a single group of women who are all quite alike each other without any individualism (Haugen, 1990:198). Some studies do however regard these farming women as individuals and regard women as independent and individual farmers (Rosenfeld, 1986:45). An example of this is Sachs's (1983:26) critique of how Norwegian women’s role on farms has involved being assistants to their husbands, and that many people see them as farmers’ wives. According to Sachs, many people considered farming a man’s work. It was rare that women own or manage a farm on their own when Sachs wrote the article in 1983. In Germany, it was seen as strange that a woman could be a farmer without a husband or other male relatives. Her main role on the farm was to act as an assistant and perform household work (Prugl, 2011:29). Furthermore, the women who owned a farm often granted a male relative or their husband to farm, and thus the women would lose the majority of the control over the land (Salamon and Keim, 1979:115). Moreover, a farmer’s work is heavily entwined with all other aspects of their life and their identity. People outside of the farm rarely see them as other than farmers. Women are also most often not seen as anything other than their farming husband’s wife (Gregoire, 2002:72).
Another angle that Brannen and Moss (1991:106) argue for is that after women enter the labour market, there is little to no effect on how much household labour her husband performed. On family farms, women are traditionally responsible for reproductive labour. One interesting finding that the authors bring forward is how marriage usually leads to more household work for women, while men usually tend to the household even less than before marriage. The most significant consequence this had on women was that they felt that they did not have time to properly fulfil any of their duties of being a housewife, a mother, and a farmer. However, the authors also reported that farming women did not question this unequal gender division of labour. An explanation for this could according to the authors be because of the stigmatisation that women are expected to perform all these tasks and that it would be considered a failure if she was not able to keep up with the different tasks. Brannen and Moss (1991:115) mean that there was barely any time over for her to question the structures of society's expectations of her. Research conducted by Hauser (2021) thirty years after Brannen and Moss released their research concludes that women today are freer than before the 1990s to talk about their hardships and have someone listen to them and take them seriously. Since more women are also venturing into farming, this also points towards a positive change for women. Hauser (2021) acknowledges that there are often many places today, whether it is through social media or physical gatherings, where women can gather and receive support from other farming women.

Haugen and Brandth (1994:207) investigate different laws that have made it possible for Norwegian women to get access to land. The authors state that women did not generally have access to land, and they often faced inequality from male farmers which was a political problem in Norway. The nation did not want a whole sector to be dominated by men, since this was not seen as ideal for the democracy. The “Allodial Law” was presented in 1974. This meant that farms would no longer be inherited by the eldest son from his father, but now the eldest child, regardless of gender, would inherit the farm. This law was the most important for equal rights between farming men and women in Norway. Similar laws in other countries have also played a huge role in how farming women are portrayed and enabled them to start closing the gender division of labour that has been present in the farming sector for decades.

Several institutional changes need to improve to further shape a gender-equal farming sector. Holmqvist (2011:29) argues that the subsidies regimes and regulations have a general
preference for large farms. As stated earlier, men often operate on large-scale farms, while women tend to operate on small-scale farms. This preference for bigger farms sets back the improvement that has been done within the farming sector regarding gender equality. Because of this, men with large farms receive more benefits than women often do from EU subsidies.

Haugen and Brandth (1994:217) examine how farming women often tend to operate on smaller farms that they manage part-time. In this case, the husband is normally the one to have an off-farm earning since he generally gets better paid. However, even if the woman is responsible for the small-scale farm, it often tends to be the man who is registered as the owner, even if he is only working on the farm sporadically.

There is a lot of research regarding the differences in farmers' incomes available. One study shows that farming men and women are becoming more similar in level of education, participation, and tasks on farms and how many hours they spend working. However, men still tend to earn more than women do in farming (Haukaa, 1991:219). Other studies also show that farming women usually earn less from the actual farming than men do (Coghenour & Swanson, 1983:27). Sprung (2022:155) pointed out that one thing that has not changed over time for farmers is the economic stress, which farmers have always felt as particularly stressful. An explanation for this is that both a farmer’s income and expenses differ over the years. Farming is often dependent on factors outside of a framer's control (Rosenblatt et.al, 1978:91). The economic stress can potentially lead to conflicts within the farming family, and it would affect both their private life and profession more than in other families since their work and family roles are heavily integrated into each other (Sprung, 2022:156).

Ljunglöf and Pokarzhevskaya (2003:3) investigated why men earn more than women in the farming sector. They concluded that men and women have different positions and different jobs on farms. For example, women are often responsible for caring for the livestock animals, while men tend to often be responsible for cultivating the land. Different jobs on-farm are also valued in different ways and the positions that are dominated by men are often better paid. However, more women are venturing into the farming sector today and as stated before, two out of five farmers are now women (LRF, 2009:11). More farms are also being registered in a woman’s name today. This brings a positive change for women which in turn helps them to generate more money than before and rely on their farming income without needing to have an off-fam income (Gohde, 2018).
This section has examined previous research on economic, institutional, and economic aspects of farming women that have been studied. It could be understood that more things need to change for farming women to be completely equal with farming men. However, there have been a clear improvement and a positive trend for a more even farming sector between men and women and a positive change over time can be detected for women in farming.

4. Theoretical framework

In the theoretical section of the thesis, the concept of patriarchy and reproductive labour theory will be presented. These two aims to aid the analysis of the interviews that are conducted with the farming women for the research. The theory section will be followed by the operationalization that will explain how the theories will be used to explain the empirical material.

4.1 Patriarchy

The first theoretical framework that will be used is the concept of patriarchy. The word “patriarchy” means “the rule of the father” and was in its original form used to describe a family that was dominated by men (Mies, 1998:37). Patriarchy has been a difficult concept to define by social sciences, as many theories have used it in different ways. An early definition of patriarchy was made by Weber (1947) that referred to “a system of government in which men ruled societies through their position as heads of households” (Walby, 1990:19). Nowadays it is generally explained as “to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterise a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways” (Bhasin, 2006). It goes beyond the core family and exists in both public and private spheres in forms of e.g., politics and beliefs, societal institutions, and economic dominance (Mies, 1998:37). Sultana (2011:2) states that feminist scholar has in the last decades primarily used “patriarchy” to describe gender inequality in social, economic, and political spheres. However, the interpretation of the concept may be very individual and formed to fit into different social sciences depending on the theorist. Mies (1998:37) argues that the new feminist movement uses the concept because it covers the total exploitation and marginalisation that is done towards women in society by men. As seen in the empirical source material, these explanations fit well into how farming women in Sweden have been treated for decades. Their experiences will in this research be analysed with the concept of patriarchy.
Sylvia Walby (1990:16) states that old conventional views on the relationship between gender and labour argue that women earn less than men in general because they have less experience and skills, which have many times been proven untrue by econometric data. Even statements such as that women do not experience much violence has also been proven false by new innovative method to collect such data. The main argument Walby (1990:16) makes is how mainstream social science has always been influenced by patriarchal biases, and thus new social research needs to be collected to understand the exploitation of women in both everyday lives and also exploitation within the workplace. Previous social science has been heavily influenced by patriarchal beliefs and thus new social science without these predetermined assumptions are hard to come by, which is also proven by looking at how little women have been represented in both statistic and research, as stated in the literature review.

An important argument that Anthropologist Susan Carol Rogers (1975) makes is how these patterns of patriarchy and marginalisation take form in society due to both men and women continue to behave as if men were the ones that are dominant in society and that decision-making processes that men control are the most significant. Both men and women enable these patterns to continue. The how this has come to be, whether it is because of old traditional gender roles that society has created or men and women naturally have found themselves in, is not what is important. What matters is why these patterns of gender roles continue long after society arguably outgrew them.

Two main systems of patriarchy can be distinguished by Walby (1990:19), the private and the public. Both the private and public spheres are important to address for the sake of the research since the labour performed by women in both households- hence the private, and farm work—hence the public, can be considered as sites of marginalisation for women working on farms.

4.2 Private and public patriarchy

In the case of farming, the private patriarchy includes the household labour that farming women perform that is unpaid and not recognised as actual labour. It is in the private sphere household that women experience the most marginalisation and exploitation. Patriarchy takes form between two household members in the private sphere, often between the wife and husband or daughters and fathers. The private patriarchal structures are most noticeable through the clear
outdated gender roles within the household (Walby, 1990:24). Löfgren (1982:6) points out that on old traditional farms, the farmer's husband often felt like his wife did not contribute and just sat at home enjoying herself cooking food and did nothing to support her family. What many failed to acknowledge is that without the wife performing all the reproductive labour there would be nothing to produce the labour force that was needed for the husband to be able to work on the farm. This further proves how women in the past have been exploited for their labour. Most of it was invisible and would mostly only be noticeable if no one were making sure the household chores were done. This concept will be used to further analyse the result of the interviews conducted with farming women.

The public patriarchy refers to the marginalisation and exploitation of women in the public sphere such as in the state and employment. It is important to note that the private structures of patriarchy overlap with the public in this case, however, it is not the central site. While the private patriarchy is often played out by family members, the public form of patriarchy is more a collective gathering of marginalisation and exploitation. Women are experiencing both segregation and are subordinated to male colleges and other parties that act in the public sphere (Walby, 1990:24). The case of the farming women that are interviewed for this research is a special case. They work on farms that are also their home, which blends the boundaries of what could be considered public and private spheres. The concept of public patriarchy will aid the analysis of the interviews to further examine how the farming women have experienced different social interactions from e.g., bankers and salesmen.

Walby (1990:24) argues that the patriarchal structures are most noticeable through the clear outdated gender roles within the household. Because the farming conducted in Sweden is mostly family farming, it becomes important to look at aspects outside of the actual labour of farming. Because of this, this theory that could at first glance be perceived as not central to the research is included.

To conclude, both private and public patriarch exploitation and marginalisation have been used as a tool to analyse the result of the interviews that have been conducted for the research. The different spheres have been used to determent how they affect each other and spur each other on and enables a continuation of the exploitation of livestock farming women. The concept of patriarchy can also be connected to reproductive labour which is the other theoretical framework that will be used in the research.
4.3 Reproductive labour theory

Another theory that have been used to aid the analysis is the reproductive labour theory. This theory have often been referred to as unpaid labour by feminist scholars and includes housework that the wife is typically responsible for but is not paid for. It is important to point out that it is not the unpaid labour itself that the theory opposes, but rather the fact that women are the main producer of such labour, without proper recognition or compensation. The harming invisible mental and physical labour that is conducted within the family sphere which is not recognised as actual labour is the main reason why the theory is included in this research. Many feminist scholars have argued for decades that this is a directly exploiting women (Mies, 1998:46).

Mies (1998:31) states that the reproductive labour and housework that the housewife is often responsible for turns to produced labour-power that the husband can use in his works. In short, reproductive labour produces productive labour. In the context of Swedish farms, unpaid labour-power is still a commodity that is mostly conducted by women. The family household is the social factor that enables so-called labour-power to continue being produced. The state has limited women mentally within the family sphere on farms, where their household labour is socially invisible and ignored. However, it is still extremely important and enables the farming husband to produce the paid labour that requires the farm to make a profit. Both theoreticians of Marxist and non-Marxist praxis have labelled this as “non-productive”. The reproductive labour is instead seen as care, love, emotionalism, motherhood and wanting to be a “good wife” (Mies, 1998:31).

As many activists and theoretician feminists have done before, the inclusion of the reproductive labour theory in the research thus aims to continue challenging the oppressive treatment of Swedish farming women. The invisible reproductive labour matters and is the reason why much of the labour that falls into the productive category can continue. Reproductive labour theory will be included in the research to determine and be able to draw conclusions about the unpaid and unrecognised labour that farming women often experience. Mies (1998:32) identifies the link between reproductive labour performed by women on farms and the productive labour performed by male farmers that the state and capital strategically created. The men are spoken about as the “breadwinner” while women are referred to as housewives,
and the state hides behind the notion that women work out of love and devotion and not because of old man-favouring patriarchal ideas. The sole concept of “househusband” or “stay-at-home-dad” is not a widespread concept today. It could even be argued that it would be frowned upon or questioned by many people in most societies if a man would quit his job to take care of the household and the children while the wife continues to work and thus becomes the sole provider for the family. The state act to regulate the exploitation of housewives and reproductive labour which the farming men, whether it be unconsciously done, continue to uphold these old beliefs and comes out as the winners (Mies, 1998:45).

4.4 Operationalisation of the empirical material
This research investigates what social, institutional, and economic changes since the 1950s have made it possible for women to be treated as equals as farmers through the theories of reproductive labour and patriarchy. Through these, the research will bring forward farming women narratives that have been almost invisible in both statistics and research. To be able to analyse the gathered material with the theories, an operationalisation needs to be created. The operationalization is made to see if the theories are reflected in the material and to show transparency of the research.

Olsen et.al (2019:58) state that the connection between practice and theory is labelled operationalisation. This process contributes to making the theoretical knowledge of patriarchy and reproductive labour relevant, more accurate and well-defined for this specific research. It aims to explain how the theories will be used to measure what cannot generally be measured by defining several aspects that will act as indicators. Patriarchy and reproductive labour theory are similar, but they will have different aspects that indicate if they are present or not in the case of the interviewed farming women. The women will not know during the interview that these are the specific aspects that are being investigated since this could limit what is being discussed during the interviews. One may not want to acknowledge that they live under a patriarchal hierarchy due to feeling ashamed or guilty.

What follows is an explanation of what indicators will be used to measure if patriarchy is evident. Power relation, men as head of households, women being subordinated to men, not being properly recognised, and inequality in the social, economic, institutional, or political sphere that is directly connected to one’s gender, are the indicators of patriarchy. After the
material gathered from the interviews has been coded, it will be analysed to see if any of these indicators are present on the farms. If they are present, it will be interpreted that patriarchy is evident on the farm. The concept does not need to be directly discussed since a person does not always recognise that patriarchy is evident in their life. As stated earlier, the argument that Rogers (1975) made of how these patterns of patriarchy and marginalisation take form in society due to both men and women continuing to behave as if men were the ones that are dominant in society is important to keep in mind during the operationalisation.

The indicators for reproductive labour theory are as follows: traditional gender roles within the household, care work, caring for children, unpaid household labour, and women acting as project managers in the whole family which goes over all interactions within society. Here it is important to remind that reproductive labour itself is not the problem, but rather the fact that women are the main producer of unproductive labour, without proper recognition or compensation. An important view of reproductive labour is the one Mies (1998:31) made when she argued that reproductive labour is often seen as care, love, emotionalism, motherhood and wanting to be a “good wife”. This view on reproductive labour, whether it be labouring within the household or on the farms, will arguably be apparent in the context of farming families.

5. Methodology
The methodology section explains the design of the research and how the statistics were gathered and used, how the interviews were conducted, how the result of the interviews has been analysed and gives a clear background to the participants of the interviews. This section also acts as a way for the researcher to be transparent in the research.

5.1 Research design and data sources
Both statistics and interviews have been used for the thesis to answer the research questions. The statistic has been included to give the thesis a concreteness while the interviews have provided a narrative. The goal of including both statistics and interviews was to create a better understanding of how the farming women’s social, institutional, and economic activities have changed from the year 1950 up to the present.
The economic, institutional, and social development sections were determined before the interview guide was constructed. These three areas were decided to be the focus points of the thesis and the interview guide was conducted based on these three areas. A semi-structured interview style was decided upon since the goal was to make the interviews feel as a discussion rather than an interrogation, which gets more information from the interviewees since they feel valued and safe. Semi-structured interviews have been a suitable approach to achieve this (Hjerm & Lindgren, 2014:20). After this, eleven questions were prepared (see Appendix for interview guide). The materials gathered from the interviews were made into a transcript which was after this ready to be coded into different themes. The approach to convert the material from the interviews to themes was to conduct a qualitative context analysis. Bryman (2001:505) stated that this approach aims to seek similarities and relevancy to the text to later be able to analyse these themes.

As stated earlier, the statistics bring concreteness to the thesis and have been gathered from The Swedish Parliament’s website (Riksdagen.se), The Swedish board of agriculture’s website (Jordbruksverket.se) and The Swedish statistical authority’s website (SCB.se). The Swedish Parliament’s website provides a wide range of different legal documents. This will show different laws that are relevant to the research.

5.2 Participants

The participants for the interviews are five women who currently work in farming or have previously worked on farms. The farming women that participated operated on farms in the south of Sweden, or more specifically in Götaland to narrow down the geographical area. The women are also involved in some type of livestock farming, as mentioned in the introduction. The participants have been anonymised to not put them in any compromising position and to create a safe space for discussions while the interviews took place. What follows is a presentation of the five interviewed women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Off farm labour</th>
<th>Type of farm ownership</th>
<th>Type of farm</th>
<th>Responsibilities on farm</th>
<th>Length of interview</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Husband owns the farm (family farm)</td>
<td>Milk production and livestock farming</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>42 minutes</td>
<td>Feb 15th (On zoom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Husband's family farm which he owns with his brother</td>
<td>Milk production and livestock farming</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
<td>Feb 17th (On zoom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Owns the farm with husband (husband's family farm)</td>
<td>Livestock and crop production</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>35 minutes</td>
<td>Feb. 21&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; (On zoom)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Owns the farm herself (family farm)</td>
<td>Livestock and crop production</td>
<td>Livestock and crop production</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
<td>March 17&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (On zoom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Owns the farm with husband, her family farm</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>1 hour and 4 minutes</td>
<td>March 24&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (On zoom)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4:** Introduction of the participants.

The first interviewed women were found through LRF’s website that has “visiting farms” that people can visit to learn about farming and the livestock animals on the farms. Around 50 percent of the visiting farm had a woman’s email address stated for contact information for the farms, which were the ones contacted for interviews. It was important to get direct access to the women and not go through their husbands or any other male colleague on the farms, as to not give any power to the men and if they would allow their female colleagues or wives to participate or not. The rest of the women that were interviewed were found through a classic snowball effect, where the participants already gathered were asked at the end of the interviews if they know other farming women that could participate.

### 5.3 Semi-structured interviews

A fitting strategy to bring forward opinions and personal stories is to use semi-structured interviews. This interview technique was chosen for the research since it gives the participants a chance to share their experiences in their own words. It is meant to feel like a conversation between two people instead of an interrogation. Questions designed for semi-structured interviews have acted as a tool to allow the participants' narratives to be in-depth and detailed (Nilsson, 2014:156).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen for the meeting with the participants because it enables the interviews to be experienced as a discussion rather than an interview. It often helps the participants to feel more secure and be more sincere to the interviewer during the meeting. When speaking of a particularly sensitive topic, semi-structured interviews could work in favour of the interviews since if done correctly makes the participants often feel that their knowledge and information are valuable to the research and that they are actively participating, rather than just being a vessel of information for the interviewer (Nilsson, 2014:162).
structured interviews are suitable for this kind of research since an important aspect to bring to the forefront is the women’s experiences and stories. Conducting interviews like this gave the women the opportunity to control the interviews themselves. Even if the questions were prepared beforehand, it still left space for the participants to speak freely about topics they felt were important (Nilsson, 2014:165). This aimed to reveal information that could be of importance to the research.

The interviewer’s attention to the participants’ narrative and storytelling during the interview is a key element to a successful and effective interview process. The interviewer guides the participants with open-ended questions while also listening for interesting and useful information the participants are presenting (Nilsson, 2014:164). The role of the researcher using this type of interview have been to keep the focus on where the interview is heading, but still, listen and focus on the information presented in the present (Galletta, 2013:76). For this research, a semi-structured interview approach has been used as a tool to prepare and conduct the interviews, but still leaving room for additional information that would be of importance to the research.

5.4 Criticism towards oral history

Another important aspect to address is the criticism of people’s memories. Since this qualitative research include asking questions about change over time, it is crucial to remember that memories as a historical source can be quite unreliable (Thomson, 2011:77). The arguments that memory is misleading by physical deterioration and the biases of both the interviewee and interviewer are at the forefront of the criticism of oral history. It has also been criticised that human memory often has a retrospective and collective version of the past and that it can often be selective as to what people choose to remember (Thomson, 2011:79). However, the approach can be both valuable and valid. Oral historians in the 1970s argued that the criticism and the unreliability of memory could instead be understood as a strength. Michael Frisch argued in the 1970s that memory should be at the centre of oral history, as it could display a reality of how things were. It could be seen as a resource and should thus not be limited as a problem. If oral history is used in this particular was, Michael Frisch stated that it could be “a powerful tool for discovering, exploring, and evaluating the nature of the process of historical memory – how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and
its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them” (Thomson, 2011:80).

For this research, the statement from Frisch (Bryman, 2011:80) has been considered during the process of interviewing and analysing the coded material. In terms of historical events that have been discussed during the interviews and the arguments that have been brought up, statistics have been included in the research to further evaluate that what the women talk about in their interviews is aligned with statistics and existing research to support their claims.

Time can change how a person understands and make sense of past happenings. The codes of society and how different persons should behave are part of why women have been subordinated by men for centuries. What society considers masculine and feminine plays a huge part in how one acts and feels. What is happening around us and what the norms of society are can determine how people feel and analyse certain events (Thomson, 2011:85). This can be particularly true for the women that participated in the interviews. The women that have been asked about their memories could remember how things were on farms several decades ago, and they may feel that they were unfairly treated in terms of income, recognition, and respect. However, they could also analyse this as that they did not feel this way at that current time since back then, and it was seen as “normal” for women to be subordinated to their husbands in turns of pay and recognition. Even if it was far from fair, it was the historical reality of society’s structures.

A lot has happened since the 1950s in terms of gender equality, which is discussed in a much broader way in the present time than back then. The interviewed women may feel that the way farming women were treated was accepted by society a couple of decades ago, but the same treatment today would be deemed unacceptable. To connect this with the criticism towards oral history, it is important to point out that memories do fade, and people could remember something different from what originally happened decades ago. Nevertheless, they could also change how they remember things since the codes of society have changed, and what was deemed acceptable decades ago is not acceptable today. For this very reason, past experiences that the interviewed women talked about will not be considered a weakness of memory, but rather a strength. There has been a possibility that because of the structures and codes of society in the 1950s, most women were not aware of the unfair treatment towards them. It is also
possible that they were aware, but not taken seriously when they complained since they were “only” women.

6. Empirical findings

The empirical findings are the main body of the research. This section will be divided into the three areas that have been examined throughout the whole thesis which are economic activities, institutional changes, and social changes. First presented are statistical findings for the three areas, followed by findings from the interviews with the five livestock farming women. The empirical findings laid the groundwork for the discussion that is presented in the next part of the thesis.

6.1 Economic activities

Equal income is arguably the most important economic activity to promote gender equality in the farming sector. The economic empowerment of farming women is central for the Swedish farming sector to become gender equal and acknowledge women’s rights (UN Women, 2018). Because income is such a major aspect of economic activities, it is important to look at the history of income between farming men and women.

The Ministry of Agriculture investigated how farming men and women spent their income, and they determined that in general, a farming woman’s income is often only a third of what men make from farming, and their main income is often from employment outside of the agricultural farming (LRF, 2009:18). Höjgård and Nordin (2017:11) further confirm that around 50 percent of Swedish farmers in 2005 had to have some type of off-farm work to be able to afford to continue farming and keep the household economy stable (Höjgård & Nordin, 2017:13). Furthermore, the off-farms worker is often the woman in the household, while the man often continues to work on the farms. However, if the roles would be reversed and an off-farm earner is a man, the household is more likely to increase their off-farm earnings. In general, men earn more than women do for the same labour in most sectors of society in Sweden (Höjgård & Nordin, 2017:16).

The income that women make is also often the one that acts to support the family, while men’s income is often re-invested in their farming business. The unequal spending of the farmers’ personal income leads to a big economic gap between men and women within the same family.
Many women struggle to save money because the money she makes all goes to support the family and the household. Women often find themselves having to lower their sick benefits, unemployment benefits, parental benefits, and pensions because of this economic income gap (LRF, 2009:18). Since a farm is often only registered in the man’s name, women are more likely to have jobs outside of the farms. Even if the women work part-time on their husband’s farm and help whenever they can, women are often left without compensation for these hours of labour (LRF, 2009:19).

The Swedish statistical authority’s database reports that in the year 1950, men that worked on farms made on average 4 SEK while women made 2.4 SEK per hour (SCB, 1953:20). SCB (1987: 40) also reports that in 1977, men working in agriculture made on average 24.93 SEK per hour, while women only made 21.48 SEK. Within the agricultural sector, men made on average 3.45 SEK per hour more than women this year. In 1986, men in agriculture made 53.72 per hour, while women made 50.85 SEK per hour, which entails that those men made on average 2.87 SEK per hour more than women did this year. In 1992, farming women earned almost 4 SEK per hour less than men did, which may not seem like that big of a gap, but when added up to the total income becomes a noticeable gap in income (SCB, 2022a). There is a noticeable pattern that the gap in income between men and women has increased from 1950 to the present time. Table 5 and 6 shows farming women’s and men’s income per hour from the years 1950 to 2020.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>24.93</td>
<td>53.72</td>
<td>73.76</td>
<td>75.56</td>
<td>77.93</td>
<td>84.10</td>
<td>89.40</td>
<td>94.50</td>
<td>101.80</td>
<td>108.90</td>
<td>114.80</td>
<td>122.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>21.48</td>
<td>50.85</td>
<td>69.81</td>
<td>68.16</td>
<td>69.59</td>
<td>76.71</td>
<td>82.00</td>
<td>86.20</td>
<td>91.80</td>
<td>100.30</td>
<td>105.00</td>
<td>110.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>24.52</td>
<td>53.30</td>
<td>73.76</td>
<td>76.74</td>
<td>76.64</td>
<td>82.96</td>
<td>88.20</td>
<td>93.20</td>
<td>100.20</td>
<td>107.40</td>
<td>113.20</td>
<td>119.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Statistics over average hourly wage by agricultural workers divided by gender and year, from 1992 to 2007, in SEK. (Source: SCB, 2022a).

As can be determined from table 5, farming men have since the year 1950 earned more than farming women have. Inflation is, in a general assumption, one reason why the average income has risen drastically from 1950 to 2020. However, that is not to say that inflation is the explanation for the economic gap between farming men and women.
Table 6: Statistics over average hourly wage by agricultural workers divided by gender and year, in SEK. Showing the years 2008 to 2020. (Source: SCB, 2022b).

Table 6 reveals that between the years 2008 to 2020, full-time farming men and women’s average income has increased by around 30 SEK per hour for both men and women. Men do however still make around 10 SEK more than women hourly on average, which has not changed over these years (SCB, 2022b). Another interesting thing to look at here is the wage difference between the years 2014 and 2015. As can be understood from Table 6, men’s average wage went down by one SEK, while women’s average wage was raised by 3 SEK. However, the average wage gap between men and women in farming has, as far as table 5 and 6 can confirm, always existed and women still earn less than men for the same work.

Women face a lot of obstacles when attempting to become farmers, but the most significant one is undeniably equal access to land. As stated earlier, the land holds an important part in how much income a farm can generate. Thus, if a farmer has little access to land to begin with, it would unquestionably be harder to have farming as one’s sole occupation without an off-farm income. Not much has changed over the decades for this, and women have had an unequal distribution of land. A reason for this could be because it is most common to inherit the land and not buy it on the market in Sweden. But as stated earlier, women are rarely the ones who inherit land from a family member. In recent years, the conditions for this have improved in Sweden, but the inheritance of land is still subjected to old and deeply rooted gender norms that often result in men inheriting land instead of women (Kuns, 2021:40).

Another distinctive difference between male and female operated farms regarding access to land is how large the farms are. Females have on average 15 hectares of arable land, while men have on average 36 hectares of arable land. Large-scale farms are also more supported by EU subsidies, and generally more preferred by the union. Since females, in general, runs smaller farms, they are not able to produce the same revenue as larger farms. Additionally, they suffer a lack of support from EU subsidies which results in a loss of income. Because of this, the female lead farms have a higher requirement of off-farm earnings to ensure a stable income. It is reported that 72 percent of farms managed by a woman are supported by off-farm income, compared to farms managed by a man where only 56 percent need off-farm income (Kuns,
2021:40). The size of a farm and the amount of arable land available is clear indicators of how much income the farms can generate. The size of farms also plays a huge role when it comes to if farming families need to have off-farm earnings or not. Large- and midscale farms earn over 17 percent respectively 4 percent more than small-scale farms in Sweden, thus resulting in less need for an extra income outside of the farms (Höjgården & Nordin, 2017:13). Men own a large portion of larger farms than women generally do, and there are still far from equal numbers of men and women that own farms in Sweden. These numbers were presented in table 3.

It has become more usual for farmers that marry someone to use a prenuptial agreement as a guarantee that the farm would not be lost in a possible divorce. It is used to protect the business that the farmer is managing. In the case of a divorce, it is thus extremely difficult for the wife to get back any investments that she invested into the farm if she signs a prenuptial agreement. Furthermore, women are not stated as official an owner or co-owners over the farms on official documents, thus further creating inequality between a wife and husband (LRF, 2009:33).

Moving on and looking at the results from the interviews that were conducted also reveals a difference in income of livestock farming men and women. Other aspects that also were brought up were how the women tend to spend their respective income and different experiences of interactions between the women and financial institutions.

Some of the interviewed women expressed that there was a huge difference in income between a male farmer and a female farmer. Since women are more traditionally the one that takes care of the children and does the reproductive labour, she has less time for productive labour. In turn, she will not have the same income as her husband. Participant 1 stated that she believed one reason that farming women do often not make the same income as men is that farmers, in general, do not want to pay more taxes than necessary. If a family farm can hold down their income by not paying a huge amount of wage to one family member, then they may not need to pay as much in taxes. Participant 1 stated this as a reason why, in some cases, farming women does not earn the same amount of income as their husband. The downside of this, according to participant 1, is that women will not have the same sick benefit or pension as their husbands. In the case of a divorce, the wife would most likely struggle financially a lot more than her husband.
Another noteworthy issue that was discussed during the interview with participant 1 was an experience that at first sounded like something that could be from the 1980s. She stated that a friend of hers who also worked on a farm with her husband, had at the beginning of 2022 became an elected representative of an organisation where she got compensation for her work. Participant 1 stated that her friend had felt a huge financial relief since she now for the first time had her own money. Before she had always had to ask her husband for money, who in turn always complained and wanted to know how the money was spent. Even if she would just need money for groceries, she would before have to ask for money. She was now able to send her son to more sports training since she paid for that by her pocket. This leads to the next result of the difference in income and financial spending. Participant 1 stated that she had off-farm earnings but still managed to help several hours a week on the farm but did not get any financial compensation for her hours spent working. At the end of the year when the profit of the farm was divided, it was only divided between her husband and his brother who worked on the farm, and she got no compensation for the hours she spent labouring.

A statement that was discussed during the interviews with the livestock framing women was how it is mostly the women that pay for any household spending, while the men often invest their money on the farm. Since women are often the ones that have jobs outside, it becomes economical unequal when a woman is the only one that contributes to the private family economy with her salary while the husband gets to reinvest and potentially increase his financial profit. Many of the interviewed women who had outside farm earnings, agreed that a woman’s income is most often the one that goes towards the private household. Several women also expressed that because of this, they have a harder time saving money. In the case of a divorce, they would be left financially vulnerable. Both participants 2 and 3 stated that in their case, they did not feel that they had an unfair financial situation on their farm and that both they and their husbands contributed to the private family economy. Both participants expressed that they often came across women who did have to pay for most of the household costs and that their husbands often reinvested their money. Participate 3 made a point where she stated that in society in general, men make more money for the same job. It would therefore be more beneficial for the family if the husband were the one having an off-farm job.

Participant 2 had argued that many farmers often found it hard to own farms together. This was especially the case if either the man or woman had claims to the farm through heritage or owning it before a couple decided to manage it together. Not surprisingly, it was often easier
and more likely to create equal ownership if the farm was bought together instead of either the man or woman has inherited a family farm. Participant 2 stated that it was more likely to become equal ownership since no one in the family would have invested money beforehand, which would most likely lessen any financial conflicts in the future. A connection can be found here with what was previously stated in the findings of the statistic about the difficulties women face when moving onto their partner's farm. LRF (2009:38) reported that a woman who marries a man and moves onto his farm often struggles with creating a new identity in relation to her husband as an equal partner. These women do not often have a say in where the family should live. Moreover, it is often more likely to become a mental hierarchy between the two. This could potentially result in the husband having a higher rank on the farm than the wife since the man lived on the farm before the wife moved in.

Another discussed topic with participant 2 was an experience she and a couple of other livestock farming women had when they would invest in a start-up company that produces green energy in early 2000. The women needed to lend money from the bank and the treatment they received from the banker was very negative and discouraging. They sought a loan for over 5 million SEK and the banker was very quick to tell the women how they were not eligible for that big of a loan. Participant 2 argued that in early 2000, it was unusual for women to want to invest and lend money anywhere over a million SEK. When Participant 2 stated that she invested in green energy because she wanted to make money many women also expressed that they also wanted to make money, but there was a lot of stigma and shame against women stating this. The women went to a couple of different banks, and most thought it was very “brave” of the women to ask for that big of a loan but the response often was that there are several rules when it comes to lending money and that the women did not qualify for.

The micro-loan project, they are great, but it is also a great way to keep women on a small level without letting them participate in the larger macroeconomy (Participant 2).

After finding a bank that agreed to lend the women money, participant 2 stated that she had reflected that the staff at most banks they went to did not have any experience with women lending that sum of money. She reflected during the interview that she feels that the bank would have treated them better if it had been men that were seeking a loan. She believed that the bankmen would have been more willing to find a way for the loan to go through and she believed she had been unfairly treated.
6.2 Institutional change

As stated in the background section, in 2020 women made up around 44 percent of the total number of people employed in the agriculture sector in Sweden. However, only 7 percent of the Swedish Board of Agriculture’s support was distributed to women in 2008, showcasing a clear unequal distribution. The main reason for this is that the support is only distributed to the person who runs the farm or owns the company, which is often the man. When a farm is officially registered as a company most time only one name can be put down on official documents, resulting in women not being recognised as part-owners since the man’s name is often chosen for the documents and thus also presented as the sole owner in both public and private spheres, resulting in marginalisation and hierarchy on the farms (LRF, 2009:26). This in turn results in only around 7 percent of the Swedish Board of Agriculture’s support being distributed to women. This is problematic since the farming women are missing out on important support that should help them to further establish themselves as entrepreneurs, but instead, it could become another aspect that holds the farming women back from reaching their full potential. Statistics also show that women are often miscredited for new ideas or plans of improving the farm they are labouring on (Grändeby, 2009).

The EU also enables the upholding of gender inequality within Swedish farms. The subsidies regimes and regulators have shown a preference for large-scale farming units and as previously stated, women own smaller farms than men do. Consequently, men with larger farms receive more benefits from the subsidies from the EU than women often do. This is directly linked to the maintenance of gender inequality for Swedish farmers (Kuns, 2021:40). Farming women are left without important economic support from the EU which becomes another obstacle that the women must tackle. The systems EU has built that distribute the subsidies are not constructed in a way that gives farming women a fair chance at farming entrepreneurship. It is instead pushing them further away from a fair system and acts as another barrier between farming women and gender equality (Kuns, 2021:43).

There are several laws and reforms that The Swedish Parliament have implemented that affected farming women from the 1950s until the present time. In 1955, it was decided that Employment School (Yrkesutbildning in Swedish) would be open for men and women on equal terms, to give an equal education to both men and women in Sweden. The Parliament noted
that there was no actual hinder as to why women could not receive the same education as men. Still, women did not have the same opportunities as men to enter the labour market. The Parliament meant that women’s lack of participation in Employment School was because of other reasons. Firstly, women were quite new to the labour market, and for many of the women, professional work was mostly only for women who had not married yet. Secondly, women’s interest in performing household labour would take up the greatest part of her time, according to The Swedish Parliament. Thirdly, many employers only considered women as a temporary labour force and that men were more worth investing in (Riksdagen, 1955:9). This decision would push for more women to enter employment school and get an education. As seen in Table 1, almost 900,000 people were working in the farming sector in the 1950s. Equal education between men and women made it easier for women to have higher-paid positions in the agricultural sector and not just be limited to household work on the farms. Education also made it possible for women who were married to a farmer to receive jobs outside of the farm. They would in that case not be as dependent on their husband’s money since they made their own. This shift in education was a positive change and also liberation for women during the 1950s.

In the year 1970, the Swedish Parliament decided on a new tax reform. The primary purpose of the proposal was to ease the tax burden for people with a low-income wage by implementing individual taxation on their earned wage. The decision would be put into effect the following year. Before this tax reform, only a third of all married women in Sweden participated in labour outside of their households. By introducing this reform, the Parliament wanted to make it easier for married women to participate in the labour market. The parliament saw this as a win-win situation since more people joining the workforce also meant more people would pay taxes, and women would also have an easier time entering the labour market with the new tax reform. The Family Tax Committee had previously pointed out that the tax rules before 1970 had been decided upon from a one-sided perspective. Married women had prior to this reform had very limited opportunities for income which had resulted in economic inequality between men and women (Riksdagen, 1971:99). This had a large impact on farming women who were married. After the tax reform had been put into effect, it became easier for more women to participate on farms as an actual paid work (Riksdagen, 1971:91). Farming men were after this also able to hire their wives as actual employees and still pay low taxes for their labour and she would be able to make their own income. With the old tax reform, farmers could have decided that the high tax they had to pay was not worth employing someone for and that it was more
beneficial to the family if the wife only participated in reproductive labour. The tax reform also recognised the inequality between men and women and those women were often the ones that had such low-income wages. It was a move in the right direction for gender equality in Sweden. As seen by the decision made in 1955, the Parliament made it easier for women to get an education in Employment school, and the tax reform was also another way to empower women.

In 2004, an older law regarding the prohibition of discrimination got changed. Before 2004, this law did not include discrimination against gender. However, the new reformulation of the law did acknowledge that gender would be part of the law and added it in the reformulation. After the law was restructured, it now included the prohibition of discrimination of gender when it came to seeking financial aid, registering one’s business, and seeking permits (Riksdagen, 2005:21). This was all important for women who started their own businesses. Farming women were indeed positively affected by this. As seen in Table 3, the number of women registered as official owners were rising from 2005 to 2020. Even if there are other causes that also explain the increase in these numbers, a law that prohibited discrimination against gender is arguably the most crucial for women to be able to participate in agriculture activities to the same extent as men. In a conclusion, what has been presented are three laws and reforms that show the changes over time. Women at the beginning of the 1950s were seen as temporary labour force and men were more worthy to invest in for employers. In the year 2004, a formulation of a law that essentially made it easier for women to start their own farming business was implemented. The law implemented in 2004 would not have accepted the way that employers spoke about women in the 1950s regarding women being seen as temporary labour force, which shows a positive change towards gender equality.

A topic that was thoroughly discussed in most interviews was how many women expressed irritation that official documents most often only could hold one name, which was mostly the husband. There are agricultural organisations where the farmers can put down both the husband and the wife’s names, but some organisations still lack the ability to do this. A few women expressed that even if they were not necessarily bothered that only one name could be put down on the documents because they expressed that on the farm they worked as equals with their husbands, but that it was still a recognition towards society, revisors, and banks, to name a few. The husband’s name is often the name that is put down on these documents, due to the husband owning the farm from the beginning since he was the one who took over the family farm from his parents. A reminder of what has previously been stated about the ownership of farms could
be needed here, which is that men are often the ones that take over the farms from their parents due to old traditional beliefs that men are more suitable for the hard labour that agriculture requires. However, it is not impossible to have both names put down on official documents. Participant 1 stated that a woman on the neighbouring farm had complained that she was not stated as an owner on official and that her husband had stated that she only does household labour and did not contribute to the actual farm as much as he did. This was an explanation, according to participant 1, for why many farming women were not stated as owners. The men on the farm are traditionally more involved in the farm labour while the wife tends to the children and household and helps where it is necessary on the farms. She did not participate as much as he did on the farm, but she still made sure that every other aspect of their life was working accordingly.

Furthermore, participating 1 stated that when they applied for a loan from the bank, it required both her and her husband’s signature. But when it comes to who is stated as the owner of the farm it was only her husband’s name stated. She was not seen as a registered owner by many people outside of the farm because of this. Participant 2 stated that a bank could sometimes require the farm to be individual property if the farmers wanted to lend money from the bank. She stated that this was often because banks did not want to take risks in case of a possible divorce between the woman and man. Participant 5 that was interviewed stated that when she and her now-husband took over her parent’s farm, it was extremely important that they were equals on the farm. She expressed that she did indeed understand why some couples did not put both names on documents in case of a possible divorce. However, if she and her husband were to work on the farm with an equal labour force, and economic and emotional investments, it was obvious that they should both be recognised as owners. Participant 5 stated that they agreed to this ownership together and that this was a signal to them both that they were a team.

Another discussed topic was how different attitudes from different agricultural institutions and organisations were, and how that could become better. Participant 1 stated that one of the most important things that need to change is how these organisations communicate with the farmers. She could feel that she was not fully respected as an owner when she talked with institutions since many often believe that she did not have the authority to make a decision on her own. She stated that her husband never faced these attitudes. She believed that a small difference in how she was spoken to by these organisations and institutions would essentially mean that women got proper recognition from them. Participant 3 stated that she also felt that institutions
need to change their attitudes towards farming women since many of them do not see women as part of decision-making processes and that the final agreement should not be made by a woman alone. There are of course exceptions, where organisations do recognise the farming women to the same extent as her husband, but more organisations need to make sure that they do not treat farming women differently than they do male farmers. The negative attitudes from organisations do make a big difference according to many of the interviewed farming women.

6.3 Social change

The social change section focuses on women’s role and responsibility on the farms, the reproductive labour, the social results of livestock farming women earning less than their husbands, how gender equality is talked about on farms and in an agricultural organisation, and how and if the farming women feel that they get the proper recognition, and lastly, what the interviewed women themselves express needs to change.

There are a lot of social aspects of how men and women working on farms are differently perceived by other farmers, but also by outside sources. It is not unusual for salesmen from agricultural companies or organisations to not take the farming women seriously and directly belittle them for their lack of power. This behaviour was still present in 2020 and shows that there has not been a huge change over time in terms of how the farming women do not have respect from these salesmen. Furthermore, women managing and working on farms are often discriminated against because of their gender, particularly when they are in the stage of inheritance of a farm. Many male farmers and other actors often protest this and state that women are not able to work as hard as what is required to manage a farm (Kuns, 2021:41). Additionally, it has also been reported that women who marry a man and move onto their farm often struggle with creating a new identity in relation to their husband as an equal partner. These women do not often have a say in where the family should live and often get an impression that since the man lived on the farm before she moved there, it is often a hierarchy which results in the husband having a higher rank on the farm than her (LRF, 2009:38).

Over several decades, there have been a lot of negative attitudes from society toward women that are venturing into entrepreneurship and owning farms. Partners and family members often demand that the business should not take away from the woman’s time spent on taking care of the household and her children. There are numerous reports of women owning farms claiming
that they often get comments about how managing a farm makes them less of a mother since the women would not have time to take care of children. These negative attitudes and preconceptions from society hinder women from becoming businesswomen and managing their own farms (LRF, 2009:53).

The role of women and men on livestock farms and their different responsibility differs a lot. One remarkable thing that most of the women talked about was how women’s role on farms was often the ability to assist where it is needed. Participants 2, 3, and 5, all stated that their main role on the farm was to take care of the livestock, and they were responsible for making all decisions regarding the livestock. Participant 2 stated that technology and modernisation have also helped a lot since most work on the farm does not need as much manpower as it did before. Participant 3 argued that most of the machines are made for someone tall and strong, meaning that there still is room for improvement in the technology of machinery today. Participant 5 had encountered in her off-farm work as an advisor for agricultural work and farms, that women’s work is more hidden in the sense that she is not the representative of the farm. The man is more visible to the public, while the woman is often in charge of the economy and accounting. Participant 5 described farming women as “the spiderweb” that kept everything together and going forward. Women on farms often perform tasks that would only be noticeable if they were not done.

Another thing that was confirmed from the interview with the five women was that unpaid labour is mostly conducted by women. However, participant 2 shared a memory from when she worked on a neighbouring farm in the 1980s, where the wife was paid for the household labour. The wife had the same rank as the other workers on the farm as an employee, the only difference is that she worked and took care of the household. She remembered that this was extremely norm-breaking at the beginning of the 1980s, but it created a good atmosphere on the farm and the woman got recognised for their labour. However, participant 2 also states that this is not common at all. Most women that work on farms full time also must take care of children and perform unpaid household labour, which in most agricultural companies does not count as actual labour, and thus, they will not be paid for it. This becomes problematic since it lessens their income which in turn affects their sick benefits, parental benefits, and pension. There are old traditional expectations that a woman is responsible for the household and caring for children, which lessens the time she can spend on paid labour.
One interesting aspect to look at is how gender equality is being discussed by farmers, and if it is discussed at all. Participant 2 stated that she often sees discussion regarding gender equality on social media, where every part of the spectrum is shown. Some women online state that they are equal with their husbands, while often women from older generations say that they are oppressed. However, the conversation on equality is not really discussed on the farm according to participant 2 and participant 3. The women also stated that even if agricultural organisations such as LRF worked towards gender equality, they do not consider it to be discussed enough. Participant 2 stated that she never felt particularly unequal to her husband, but that she noticed the overall structure of how things were managed, both on her own hand, but also in the agricultural sector.

One thing that most women mentioned was how different salesmen and businessmen talk to the women. It is often that they are disregarded as someone who actually holds any power over the decisions on the farm. Participant 3 stated that someone who tried to sell her something told her “We will call on Monday” when she told them that her husband was sick for the week and that she was in charge. This was according to participant 3 not a one-time thing since many people asked for her husband instead of talking to her, even if they are both stated as owners on any documents of the farm.

I believe that if it instead was my partner and his brother, it would not be the same. I'm quite sure, they had been seen as equals (by salesmen and businessmen) (Participant 3).

She stated that how farming women are being recognised by businessmen and salesmen is one of the most important aspects that need to change for women to start to feel equal. Participant 4 had similar experiences to tell during the interview. She often felt that she was not seen as a potential customer by salesmen when she was without her husband and that many people often ignored her. Participant 1 had also encountered these types of misconceptions about women as heads of farms. A salesman had mistaken her friend for a worker of lesser status instead of the owner of the farm and had tried to do business with her son who laboured on the farm instead of her.
The seller appeared with a price of about 2.4 million on a self-propelled notch. Then the seller turns to me and says, “it must be fun for you to help a bit on the farm”. Considering that I’m the one who works all day in the barn and cares for the animals with back pain, it does not feel very fun (Participant 1).

This shows the misconception that many farming women experience from salesmen, even when they are the head of the farm. The salesman had mistaken her as someone less important than the one he was about to do business with which participant 1 thought was because she was a woman. A similar comment that participant 4 had gotten when she took over her farm from her parents was from one of the workers on the farm that had stated that she needed a man on the farm for things to run smoothly. This was something that participant 4 analysed later after the process of taking over the farm had been finalised. The notion that a man is needed on the farm is, according to her, something that most farming women encounter often. Farming women always need to prove themselves and why they are enough.

I feel that there are many women in agriculture who are visible, on blogs and social media. So, I do not believe it is society itself that needs to change, but rather the ones we address or who address us. And it is male-dominated on the sales side (Participant 3).

Many of the women that has been interviewed expressed a willingness to develop themselves further to continue to improve and learn. They also wanted to make way for other females that are interested in farming. Most of the women also stated as a final remark for their interview that many farming women in their surroundings want to succeed just as much as men do.

6.4 Concluding remarks
As exposed by statistics and the interviewed women, farming women are still being oppressed in term that they are the one that perform most of the unpaid work on farms, including both care work and household work. There are old traditional expectations that a woman is naturally responsible for the household and caring for children, which also lessens the time she has over to work on the farm. It was also confirmed that many of the interviewed women who had an off-farm earning agreed that a woman’s income is most often the one that goes towards the private household, while her husband reinvest his income in the farm. Because of this, women would most likely struggle financially in case of a divorce. Furthermore, if a farmer operates
on a larger farm, the bigger the economic income will most likely be. These farms will also be more favourable by EU’s subsidies. Because women in general operate on smaller farms, as seen by the statistics, results in them being able to generate less income. The statistics also revealed that women have since the beginning of 1950 earned less than men have, and they still earn less than men in present time. Moreover, it was also stated that many of the interviewed women felt that they were not fully respected as owners when they talked with institutions or organisations, since many often believe that they did not have authority to make decisions by themselves without their husband. Because of this, organisations need to make sure that they do not treat farming women differently than they do male farmers. It was also revealed that equality is not really discussed on the farm in general, and that even if agricultural organisations such as LRF worked towards gender equality, it is not discussed enough within the organisations. The negative attitudes from businessmen and salesmen towards farming women are one of the most important aspects that needs to change for the women to feel equal, since they in general have quite bad attitudes towards farming women.

7. Discussion

This section answers the three research questions that were asked in the introduction, which are as follows; How did economic, institutional, and social changes affect farming women from the 1950’s up to the present? What factors hinder gender equality and empowerment on farms? And What element could empower women to further establish themselves in farming? This section also finds connections between the empirical findings and reproductive labour theory and patriarchy.

There are several economic, institutional, and social changes that affect livestock farming women from the 1950’s up to the present. An economic obstacle is the unequal distribution of farmers' income. It has been revealed that women mostly pay for any household costs while men reinvest most of their money into the farm. The problem with this is that in case of a divorce there is no way for a woman to get back money spent on paying bills or buying groceries, while the man is more likely to be able to make a financial profit for the money he reinvested. It could also be harder for these women to save money and thus not have any financial stability of their own.
Furthermore, looking at the result from both the statistics and the interviews, a few things stand out as important to highlight from the institutional change section. The statistics have revealed that around 40 percent of farmers are women, but only 7 percent of the Swedish Board of Agriculture's support was being distributed to farming women. This could be interpreted in two ways. It could be because of gender equality in the farming sector, and that the women are not being regarded as actual farmers. They have not been prioritised and are facing unfair treatment from the ones distributing the support. On the other hand, it could also be because livestock farming women are not stated as owners. It was revealed in the background section that a study by LRF revealed that 8.5 percent of the participants' farms were managed by a woman, 29.5 percent were managed together by a man and woman, and 62 percent were managed by a man. Looking at these numbers, it could be understood that women only get the Swedish Board of Agriculture's support if they are stated as the sole owners of a farm. This in practice could be argued to not be inequality, since it is the owner of the farm that should get the support. However, it is unequal that women make up 40 percent of the farming sector but are not even close to holding an equal amount of “manager positions” as farming men do. The results from the interviews reveal that the women felt an irritation that they were not stated as equal managing partners with their husbands. This is also considered a hinder of gender equality and empowerment of women.

Looking at what factors hinder gender equality and empowerment on livestock farms, it becomes apparent that the unequal distribution of land leaves the farming women with a financial disadvantage that in turn hinders their empowerment. This research has recognised that less land equals less income. The statistics show the importance of equal access to land since it has been proven that farmers with more land are often favoured by the European Union’s subsidies. Most women did not mention access to land directly, but statements such as that one of the farmers needed a man on the farm for things to run smoothly and that she should not manage the farm without a man have been discussed. This points toward the old traditional beliefs that are common on farms and acts as an obstacle to the farming women’s inclusion.

Another hinder of gender equality and empowerment of farming women is the attitudes that several agricultural organisations, salesmen and other people that are in contact with the farmers are often very negative and judging toward farming women. The old traditional way of thinking about farming women hinders them from participating to the same extent as male
farmers. This is most likely not something that can change over a couple of years but rather needs to be implemented early on in agricultural education. More education about this has in this research also proven to be needed to be provided to all actors and farmers who have contact with farmers in Sweden to achieve change. The fact that men have for years been more visible is a fact, but many farming women have expressed that they feel a positive change regarding this. They expressed that the old traditional way of thinking is changing and that farming women could be a great resource for new innovative ways of farming. There is a sense of motivation behind the farming women’s reflections on their role on farms. There is a lot more that needs to be done, and it will most likely take several years to notice a change in the structure. The old traditional ways of believing that a son is more suitable than a daughter to inherit a family farm have improved since the 1950s, but it has been a considerable hindrance to the empowerment of women and gender equality. There has been progress regarding this, but there are still a lot of social stigmas around the inheritance of farms.

Regarding the economic activities, many of the interviewed women expressed that it was not unusual that a livestock farming woman’s salary went to support the family while the men got to reinvest their money. The financial disadvantage that women face by this is severe, and it would most likely leave them dependent on their husband’s income and support. Even though how a husband and wife spend their income is mostly considered a private matter, it is worth questioning when the farming men are somehow the ones that are always the breadwinner. This has also economically affected livestock farming women from the 1950s up to the present. Statistics from SCB also reveal that farming women are still being unequal paid compared to a man. In the empirical findings, it was stated that equal income is arguably the most important economic activity to promote gender equality in the farming sector. However, being unequally paid is, as seen by both the background section and the empirical findings section, a factor that has hindered the empowerment of farming women since the 1950s. Since there is statistical proof that women are still not paid the same as men are in the farming sector in Sweden, there is an urgency to solve this to not hinder their empowerment further in the future.

Looking at what element could empower women to further establish themselves in farming, a few things stood out from the interviews. The most important one is, as stated for the institutional development, how farming women are being treated by outside actors. One participant stated that one of the most important things that she expressed that need to change is the attitudes that agricultural organisations, salesmen and other people that are in contact
with the farmers have. Owning and managing a farm should be enough proof that these people need to treat the farming women as equal and at least show some type of respect instead of walking into an office and directly assuming anyone who is not a man is not a prioritised person or customer. There is no doubt that the old traditional beliefs and way of thinking have affected how farming women are being treated by salesmen, bankers, and other actors from organisations. The interviews have revealed these actors hold a major role in making the farming women do not feel as valuable and equal as their husbands. A solution to this could be to implement discussions of gender equality in agricultural organisations to try to increase people’s knowledge of gender issues in the farming sector. It is important that these discussions reach everyone involved in agriculture and not only keep the conversations between farming women. To make proper and lasting change, everyone needs to be on board and have knowledge of what needs to change.

There have been, as seen in the empirical findings, several laws that have empowered women to further establish themselves in farming. The decision of the right to equal education that was established in the year 1955 was a solid start for farming women to get a proper education. By educating themselves, women during this period could prove that the employers were wrong who had thought that women were not worth investing in. Their chance for employment would also increase with education and thus empowering them further. The reformulation of the law of prohibition of discrimination in 2004 also further empowered farming women and continues to do so in the present time. As shown in the interviews, this law is very much needed in the farming sector. However, it could in some situations potentially be hard to argue if it is discrimination or prejudice that the farming women have been experiencing. The answer to this could be that there is a mixture of both in the way the farming women are being treated.

It has been important to seek connections to the theories used to analyse the empirical material to further prove or reject what has been shown in the statistical data and the interviews. However, before seeking this connection to reproductive labour theory and patriarchy, an important thing to note is that a connection to the empirical findings and the theories is not black or white since reality is considered more complex. In this research, reproductive labour theory and patriarchy are instead understood as a spectrum. As a result of this, there is no easy answer as to determine if the theory and concept are apparent in the content of the Swedish farming women. There is not possible to answer these as simply “yes” or “no”, only to try to
understand to what extent patriarchy and reproductive labour theory are apparent in the context of the farming women.

In the operationalisation section of the research, a few indicators were stated that will be used to connect the research to the concept of patriarchy and the reproductive labour theory. The indicators for reproductive labour theory are as follows; traditional gender roles within the household, care work, caring for children, unpaid household labour, and women acting as project managers in the whole family which goes over all interactions within society. These will be used to determine if, and to what extent reproductive labour is apparent.

Firstly, looking at reproductive labour theory and the indicators stated, it can be interpreted from the material that men are traditionally more involved in the farm while the wife tends to the children and household. There is important to note that if the wife did not take care of these chores, it would be hard for the man to continue labour in the same way he did before. A reminder that it is not the unpaid labour itself that is considered oppressive, but rather the fact that the women are the main producer of such labour, without proper recognition or compensation. The harming invisible mental and physical labour that is conducted within the family sphere which is not recognised as actual labour has proven to hinder the farming women. The household and care work could mean that the women lose time they could spend earning money or working on the farm. As stated in the theory section of the thesis, many feminist scholars have argued for decades that this is a directly exploiting of women. Because of this upkeeping of an unequal distribution of reproductive labour between the farming men and women, it could be understood that gender roles are evident on most farms in Sweden. It could also be interpreted from the interviews that the farming women are more likely to act as family project managers and make sure everything runs smoothly, whether it is labouring on the farm or managing the household.

Secondly, the result of the interviews has been analysed with the concept of patriarchy. The indicators for patriarchy are as follows; power relation, men as head of households, women are subordinated to men, not being properly recognised, and inequality in social, institutional, and economic spheres that are directly connected to one’s gender. These will be used to determine if, and to what extent patriarchy is apparent.
The concept of patriarchy has shown significant signs of power relations between farming men and women. Most apparent is the economic inequality between farming men and women. The large difference in income between livestock farming women and men that was mentioned in the interviews by most women is also backed up by statistics on farmers' income. This proves that there is an economic inequality evident, which was one of the indicators for patriarchy. Furthermore, the economic gap between the two has not decreased in the last ten years. This resulted in a continuation of keeping women on a smaller level on farms.

On institutional level, the problem with only being able to state one name on several official documents was something that most women expressed their irritation over. Arguably the name stated on documents in most cases are the husband, which in turn creates a power relation that affects the woman negatively. Even if one of the women stated that a name on a paper does not mean anything, it is still a mental signal that one of them is superior to the other. The reason why a man’s name is stated on official documents, as interpreted by the interviews, is because he is considered the farm manager since he is the husband and not necessarily because he is more suitable, capable, or skilled than his wife is. In this regard, it becomes apparent that the indicators of power relation and men being superior to women is noticeable, which in turn speaks for patriarchy being evident on many of the interviewed women’s farms. It also brings forward the social inequality that the interviewed farming women experiences. Several women stated that they knew that this was a severe problem on many farms and not just their own. It could be understood by this statement that many Swedish farms still hold on to old patriarchal beliefs. It is difficult to say whether it is intentional or not by only analysing this statement. Nevertheless, there is evidence of both private and public patriarchy in the regard that this is both a public and private problem.

Instead of observing the different tasks on the farms as typical gender roles, many of the farming women expressed that they would rather describe it as doing tasks that they feel more interested in and have knowledge about, and their husbands get to do the same. Reding between the lines of the interviews and what has been discussed, it could rather be understood that the two farmers do what they are good at or interested in. The farming women do not see it as typical gender roles since they have had discussions about this as equals with their husbands and together come to a solution as to who does what on the farm. With this, it could be understood that patriarchy is evident in some areas of the farms more than others. Private
patriarchy is evident since it has been revealed that men are more likely to earn more money than women.

As a final remark, it can be concluded that patriarchy and reproductive labour are both still present on farms in the south of Sweden. There are elements in which they are more visible, for example when a farming woman does business with salesmen or interacts with people outside of the farm. In that case, the farming women are more likely to face gendered discrimination against them. They are not taken seriously, and the women have also experienced being belittled by outside actors because of their gender. Furthermore, society has an overall expectation of women that care work and household work are supposed to be performed out of love, emotion, and the sense of wanting to be a good wife and mother. Unpaid work is still mostly performed by women and is mostly unrecognised, which is confirmed by looking at what was stated during the interviews with the five farming women. They have expressed that they are almost exclusively the ones that perform reproductive labour, pointing towards an unequal social division of household labour between men and women. This is something that could potentially shorten the time she can spend farming, meaning that her private income could be affected negatively. This in turn leads to an unequal economic situation between farming men and women. There has been progress since the 1950s and women are more recognised and equal to faring men than they were during that period. However, there is still a noticeable gap in terms of social equality and economic equality.

8. Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to bring forward the experience of Swedish livestock farming women in Götaland by conducting interviews with five women who are or have been involved in farming and examining already existing statistical data. It was acknowledged that farming women in Sweden need to be recognised in research and statistics by including an individual perspective. The thesis aimed to contribute knowledge of the change over time in economic activities, institutional change, and social change from the 1950s until the present time.

The reproductive labour theory and the concept of patriarchy have aided the research and showed that gender inequality can be distinguished between farmers in the economic, institutional, and social spheres on farms. The empirical research shows that many women are still exploited in terms that they are the ones that perform the unpaid work, including both
family care work and household work. There are old traditional expectations that a woman is naturally responsible for the household and caring for children, which lessens the time she can spend on paid labour. It was also confirmed that many of the interviewed women who had outside farm earnings agreed that a woman’s income is most often the one that goes towards the private household, while her husband reinvests his income in the farm. Furthermore, women would most likely struggle more financially in case of a divorce. Another important finding was the issue with access to land. It was revealed that collectively, women own far less land than men do. In 2016, only 5.5 percent of arable land was owned by women in Sweden. The unequal distribution of land becomes clear when it was discovered that 44 percent of farmers were women in 2020.

There have been several laws that have empowered women to further establish themselves in farming. There was a reformulation of an old law of prohibition of discrimination. Before the reformulation in 2004, this law did not include the prohibition of discrimination against gender. Another hinder of gender equality and empowerment of farming women is the attitudes that several agricultural organisations, salesmen and other people that are in contact with the farmers are often very negative and judging toward farming women. The old traditional way these salesmen and organisations have towards farming women also hinders them from participating to the same extent as male farmers. Moreover, there are old traditional beliefs that a son is more suitable than a daughter to inherit a family farm. This has improved since the 1950s, but it has been a considerable hindrance to the empowerment of women and gender equality. There has been progress regarding this, but there are still a lot of social stigmas around the inheritance of farms.

While this thesis has focused on bringing forward the change over time, it also acknowledges that more work needs to be conducted to keep bring the farming women’s experiences forwards. For further research, it would be interesting to make a comparison between farms in the north of Sweden and the south of Sweden, to see if they have developed similar to each other, or if it is possible to distinguish a difference in how gender equality has been adapted in the different areas. It would also be interesting to compare Sweden with another country that had a similar farming structure in the 1950s and analyse the progress and changes over time in comparison to each other. Another interesting aspect to research would be how and if tourism on farms have facilitated for women in livestock farming. It has been discovered that tourism on farms have played a huge role in how women on farms are perceived (Busby and Rendle,
2000:639). It would generate interesting research to examine the social, economic and institutional aspects of tourism on farms. It would be interesting to research how the role of women on farms have changed from before and after the shift to tourism on farms. It would also be interesting to investigate if the women have received more or less responsibility, credibility and authority on farms in this case. Furthermore, it would also be interesting to investigate how livestock framers, both men and women, operate their farms after they became a widower or widow. In this particular research focus could also be put on the change over time to observe how the farmers role changed from before their wife or husband passed away. The concept of patriarchy and the reproductive labour theory could both be used in this instance since it would, by a general assumption, not be typical women’s and men’s role on farms since one person potentially has to fill both roles on their farm. Also, more agricultural organisations need to include farming women in their research and develop how and what they research. More focus needs to be put on the social aspects and bring forward farming women’s opinions and experiences to really archive gender equality.
References


SCB. 2022a. Genomsnittlig timlön (för arbetad tid), arbetare privat sektor (SLP), kronor efter näringsgren SNI92, kön och år. [PDF]

SCB. 2022b. Genomsnittlig timlön (tid och prestationslön), arbetare privat sektor (SLP), kronor efter näringsgren SNI 2007, arbetstidsart, kön och år. [PDF]


Appendix

Interview guide

1. How long have you worked in agriculture?
   a. Did you grow up in an agricultural family?
      i. What was it that drove you to continue working in agriculture?
   b. How did you start working in agriculture?
      i. (If because of spouse) do you think there were clear gender roles in your work on the farm.
      ii. Did the gender roles depend on knowledge (i.e., if someone worked longer on a farm = results in more leadership roles) or were men = typically doing men's work and women = doing typically women's work?

2. When you were little; What was the division of labour between your parents regarding agriculture? Were there typical gender roles?
   a. How did it appear in your upbringing in relation to agriculture? Were there clear gender roles between the children when you participated in the farm work as a child (even though it was then considered more like play)?
   b. (If they inherit farm): was it obvious that the farm would go to a man? I.e., male relative or brother?

3. What does the division of labour look like on your particular farm? Are there typical gender roles there as well?

4. How do you think agriculture has developed with gender equality?
   a. In your opinion: Has it become easier for women to run their own farms?
   b. In your opinion: what needs to change for women to take an even bigger role in agriculture?

5. How do you think the conversation about gender equality is in agricultural societies? (Within the farmers’ network)
   a. More equal than before?
   b. Is there something that makes it harder for women to succeed?
      i. If not: Is there anything special that has changed that makes agriculture is considered more equal today than before?

6. Are there laws and regulations that you are aware of that have made it easier for women to farm?
   a. Has there been any change at state level that you know of?
7. Do you think that the government and other institutions (the Swedish Board of Agriculture and others who help and support farms) make it equal between men and women?

8. In your opinion, has national support (from the state) been given fairly? That is: do you think that justice is done between men and women?
   a. If yes: Has it always been fair? Or was it common for women to receive less funding from the state in the past? (Could this be due to the fact that they performed "typical women's work"?)

9. According to background facts, I have read that it is often the woman who has a job on the side of agriculture if needed.
   a. Do you think this is correct / correct facts?
   b. Could this be a reason for much difference between economic income for men and women in agriculture?

10. In summary: would you say that agriculture is more equal, both when it comes to:
    a. who does what?
    b. Who has contact with authorities and other farmers?
    c. Who "speaks for the farm" or for the farm's action?

11. Is there anything else you feel you want to add?

    • Can you develop…
    • How do you think… has developed?
    • Difference between now and then?
    • Change over time?

Important note: All interviews were conducted in Swedish, and the above is the translated semi-structured questions that were used.