ECONOMIC RATIONALITY, SOCIAL EMBEDDEDNESS AND THE FEMALE LED RURAL ENTERPRISE (FLRE) (SUMMARY)

Izzy Warren-Smith
Harper Adams University College, United Kingdom, iwarrensmith@harper-adams.ac.uk

Lynn M. Martin
Birmingham City University, United Kingdom

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://digitalknowledge.babson.edu/fer/vol28/iss8/5
SUMMARY

ECONOMIC RATIONALITY, SOCIAL EMBEDDEDNESS AND THE FEMALE LED RURAL ENTERPRISE (FLRE)

Izzy Warren-Smith, Harper Adams University College, United Kingdom
Lynn M Martin, Birmingham City University, United Kingdom

Principal topic

Rural areas are characterised by the importance of the very small scale enterprise and self-employment. The social and economic effects of both macro and micro-economic adaptations within the economy have all subsequently played their part in the way FLRE pressures have been managed. As a result, it is difficult to determine whether social or economic factors have exerted greater force in shaping the rural revolution observed over the last 30 years and continuing. This paper presents some of those forces, including the social changes underpinning the creation of opportunity for the development of female self employment in the U.K. It highlights the dearth of serious analysis in the area of female led rural enterprise development, calls for a systematic measurement of the full economic and social contribution made by these FLREs.

Method

Primary survey data was drawn from a UK national membership-based networking organisation formed to help FLREs (WIRE) with a rural catchment area via a survey questionnaire to 3,569 current and previous members. The 559 responses were analysed using SPSS and included 29% farm-based and 71% non farm-based female rural entrepreneurs. This was followed up via a qualitative survey of regionally based female led rural enterprises.

Results and Implications

Three groups of rural entrepreneurs emerged, distinguished by differing growth trajectories:1. “lifestyle” entrepreneurs whose focus was more on community and caring commitments rather than growth. 2. “accidental” growth businesses where growth had occurred despite intentions to focus on community and lifestyle; 3. “intentional” growth entrepreneurs where activities were based on aspirations to grow rapidly. All groups contributed to economic sustainability but with the greatest socio-economic contribution coming from groups 1 and 2 and the greatest economic contribution coming from group 3. Analysis of the results in the paper show the limitations of a wholly quantitative approach in assessing social impacts and sustainability of these enterprise, which requires a broader, more multi disciplinary approach. This analysis of socio-economic contribution needs to be undertaken not just for policy redirection to avoid the continued profligate waste of public resources through the inaccurate targeting of “agents of change,” but also to encourage the positive development of sustainable rural economies.

CONTACT: Izzy Warren-Smith; iwarrensmith@harper-adams.ac.uk; Harper Adams University College, TF10 7LR, United Kingdom.