**F15 - Informal conversation with [name] researcher and board member of cooperative 08-11-2021**

**So your parents own an olive plot here?**

Yes, it is not very big, I don’t know how much hectares they have, but they have about 700 olive trees.

**And what do you in the field?**

Since I am little, me and my sister always went with our parents to the olive fields, and we helped out with all the work that needed to be done. Dependent on the time of the year. During the harvest, we help collecting. During the pruning, me and my sister both know how to do that, so we do that as well.

I have some pictures about how we do that, because I am in charge of social media. We have a website and facebook, so if you want, I can send you the photos. we also have a webshop.

**So, you and your sister help out in the field.**

Yes, not all days, but when we can, we go and help

**And what do you do in the cooperative?**

I am in the board of directors, we are with 8 people. And until not that long ago, there were no women in the board. I am now 2 years in it, before that, it was a very old board, with people of 80 years old, with another mentality. Since 2 years, there is a new board, we are there with 3 women, because we also want to see the presence of women in the sector, I like it a lot. Because we can also work in the fields. It is true that we don’t have that much physical strength, but now everything is mechanized, we are very valuable. For example, we have a motor, a quad, and I ride that, I take it to the field. And why not? Why wouldn’t I be able to ride that? I can do that equally as good as a man. So in the board, we are in charge of the sale of the olive oil. We talk with the people who will buy and discuss the prices.

Apart from that, because I am younger, I am in charge of the social media, to promote our olive oil, because we have our own brand. I also manage the website, where I put information. For example, today, we have a course about the pruning rests, and I put information about that on the website. The course is about the use of the pruning rests in the fields, to chip them instead of burning it.

Also, we are looking into the efficiency of the machines at the mills, if we need to replace them. We do all the things that need to be done to manage a cooperative.

**You said that there are now 3 women in the board, but before this was not like that?**

No, before it was not like that. Members yes, but not in the board. Also not that much female members, every time a little bit more, but still not that much.

**Ok, so also the members of the cooperative, the majority is male?**

Yes, the majority is male still.

**And how is that for you, working as a woman in this sector?**

For me, I don’t have a bad experience, I am used to it. Yes, there are people that say, oh look, a woman doing all these things, but for me, it’s nothing. I can do it as good as someone else. Working with machines, doing the pruning, I can also do that. Those are things that are normal to me. I always did it, since I was little. My sister as well.

**And how is it to be in the board? How do the members react to you as women in the board?**

In my case, very well, perfect. The members all votes in favour, so they are supportive. All the members need to vote for all the things are done. Also is we want to buy a new machine, we vote for it, because it is not my money, it is money from all of us. So also, when we came with 3 women in the board, they were okay with it because they voted positive. We don’t experience any problem.

**And what do you see as challenges in this sector?**

A lot, there is a lot that can be changed. We have a traditional olive, often in the mountains. That is difficult to modernize. Now, the olive oil is sold for a very low price, is a misery. And a lot of people in the mountains left it, because it is not viable, it is not possible. That is something that can be changed. How? Superintensive, but that is also expensive. And that is difficult for a family that lives from the olive fields, they cannot afford the investments that are needed for that. These are important challenges. Another one, the machines now, are very old. That is also a handicap, because the olive price was low, it is difficult to make the investments. So it is difficult to come to a solution. So that the farmer goes forward, that is difficult.

**And what do you think of the idea to use the pruning rests?**

Problem of the pruning rests is that it should be viable. For example, I prune the trees and then a company should come to collect the pruning rests. But that is a very big volume, the transport will be difficult. But I am in favour that it will be utilized. In my work, I look at the use of orujillo to valorize it. But it is difficult, especially with other farmers, because they are very closed. They burn it and that’s is, the problem is gone. They don’t see it can also be used in another way. The pruning rests, that’s what I was saying, you need a big place to store it and a company that can collect all the volumes, and then that must be economically viable. You need to study that well.

**And how is the situation with the younger people here, are they interested to work in the sector?**

Yes, there are still a lot of young people that are dedicated to olive cultivation, that are not that interested to study and want to work in the field, yes. Because their parents have land, they learned it from their were little and they continue with it. Or there are young people, that studied and now don’t have work, and come back to work in the field. Here in Villaracillo there are a lot of young people working in the sector.

**Are they also members of the cooperative?**

Yes, maybe not directly, but then their parents will be.

**Do you want to work in the field?**

I really like to do research, it is not like I don’t like working in the field but because I love what I do. My sister yes, she works in the field. She studied, but now works there as well.