

WOMEN'S COOPERATIVES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTH AEGEAN REGION, GREECE

by

Hristos Vakoufaris, Thanasis Kizos, Ioannis Spilanis, Maria Koulouri and Anna Zacharaki

University of the Aegean, Mytilini, Greece

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Abstract

In the last twenty years Greece has witnessed the emergence and establishment of women's cooperatives, a form of productive agricultural cooperatives. This paper explores their importance and their contribution to local development. Evidence is presented for an island region, the North Aegean. Personal interviews, using structured questionnaires, were conducted with the chairwomen of all the region's cooperatives in order to obtain an insight into their structure and dynamics. According to the findings of this study, women's cooperatives are characterized by substantial potential on the one hand and by serious drawbacks on the other. The economic performance of the cooperatives is satisfactory, while the use of local resources and 'know how' contribute to the development of the region. Interpersonal problems, the inability of the cooperatives' members to fully understand their new role as businesswomen and the small participation of rural women are the cooperatives' major problems. The future of the women's cooperatives is still unclear despite their 20 years of existence.

Key words: women's cooperatives, North Aegean, local development.