

Research on Women in Rural Israel: The Gender Gap

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Abstract

Agricultural production has been in decline in Israel, especially in the wake of financial and ideological crisis in the kibbutzim and moshavim in the mid- 1980s. As part of a general process of transformation of the position of agricultural production in the economy and in national ideology, women's roles and positions in cooperative settlements have also shifted. This essay offers a critical review of research that has documented the place of women in the rural sector in Israel. It explores the existing data on women in three sub-segments of the rural sector: women in the Jewish cooperative and non-cooperative settlements and women in non-Jewish rural settings. Based on a more general analysis of the sociology of knowledge production about women in Israel, the essay proposes that there are serious gaps in our knowledge on women in the Israeli rural sector. The analysis offered in this essay suggests that more gender-focused research must be carried out in rural Israel if the impact of the recent dramatic transformation in both the cooperative and non-cooperative settlement is to be understood.