

CHRISTA RODEN- KIRCHEN

ROLE MODEL IN FORESTRY

ABOUT CHRISTA RODENKIRCHEN

Christa Rodenkirchen was the first female board director of a forest owner association in Bavaria. She directed the FOA Füssen from 2000 until 2015. Füssen is in the south-western Allgäu region of Bavaria. Christa was in her early 40s when she inherited 33 ha of forest and the family's property from her parents. She had grown up with forests and forestry, farming, hunting and fishing. In her position as FOA board director, Christa facilitated PEFC certification for its members and helped setting up an FOA alliance for timber marketing in the Allgäu region. She is also a passionate forest pedagogue. In parallel to her presidency, Christa built up a center for forest pedagogy on the family's property where she led numerous courses and excursions. Beyond that, Christa was active in forest policy and is a key figure in supporting women in forestry.

HER CAREER

Christa Rodenkirchen started her professional career as a biology teacher. When she was in her early 40s, she became a forest owner and active member in the FOA Füssen. The director of the local forest service encouraged her to assume the position of FOA board director because of the large share of her forest property, among others. Christa's reply was: "Why not?", describing herself as "always open for new challenges". FOA Füssen evolved successfully under her leadership. Working closely with the managing director, Christa made sure that the volume of marketed timber increased. She has a strong stake in SFM, supports nature conservation and likes PR work.

PERCEPTION ABOUT THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN FORESTRY

When Christa was elected as FOA board director in 2000, female leaders were largely absent in Bavaria's forest sector. She met significant challenges to be recognized as an active woman in forestry and felt exotic when starting her position as FOA board director. Christa believes that women's status in forestry has changed a lot over the last 30 years. Women are more present in associations, at forest and forestry events, and as female foresters. Women have become more active in forestry, are eager to learn and more self-confident to work comfortably with men.

EXPERIENCES WITH WOMEN WORKING IN FORESTRY SECTOR

Christa has met women in forestry mainly as female owners.

Women have become more active in the forest sector. Nonetheless, reaching out to women and motivating them to assume responsibility for their forests is still very demanding.

When consulting with foresters, Christa does not make a difference between women and men but looks for high quality forestry advice.



WHAT SHOULD BE DONE FOR BETTER INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN FORESTRY?

Provide multiple opportunities for women to gain knowledge about forests and forestry. They must be easy to reach, have low thresholds, and help creating self-confidence.

Encourage women to become active in forestry by reaching out to them whenever occasions occur, listen to their interests and ideas, motivate them to build up knowledge and consult with experts to take decisions.

Women in forestry gain a foothold in forestry if they are able to show their genuine interest in the sector, have the courage to stand for themselves and are supported by decision-makers.



INTERESTING INITIATIVES WHICH HELPED WOMEN WITH THEIR CAREER

Community of interest female forest owners in Bavaria, which was initiated by Beatrix Enzenbach, among others.

Forest walks for female owners and women interested in forestry that encourage them to raise their questions and build up forest knowledge.

Chainsaw courses for "women only" to help women feel more comfortable and safe when doing manual labor in forests.

KEY MESSAGES FOR YOUNG FEMALES IN EARLY CAREER

If you want to achieve something in forestry, do it with enthusiasm and a solid knowledge base. Half-hearted actions in forestry do not succeed.

Develop your leadership competences, delegate tasks and communicate your expectations towards others.

Look for allies and same-minded peers.

Collaborate and network with women and men alike, and do not shy away from male-dominated events. Women are more present in the forest sector and bring in new perspectives.



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