

FAMILY FARMING

According to the FAO, over 500 million agricultural enterprises worldwide are believed to be family farms, defined as such by the origin of their workforce, their control over their production resources and their land, and the free choice of what they produce and the cultural practices they adopt. This broad definition means that there is not just one but rather various forms of family farming, precluding those that deal directly with companies or investors. The majority worldwide are very small farms (with 72% spanning less than 1ha), but the differences are prominent.

Farms in OECD countries have been transformed by mechanisation, input products, expansion, agronomic innovation and the structuring of the relevant sectors. In many developing countries, however, no such developments have taken place.

A number of avenues have been explored in France since the early 1960s with the aim of significantly increasing agricultural production (including land policy, new statutes, subsidised loans, etc.) alongside technological progress, with farmers' organisations relaying the measures put in place by the public authorities. Common agricultural policy, which is largely dependent upon the rules of international trade, has gradually replaced the guaranteed price system with financial support for production and decoupled aid.

Beyond the productivity gains this affords, major changes in the nature of the goods produced, as well as in terms of job cuts, rural exodus and farm structures, have been observed. Finally, agricultural intensification has had both environmental and health-related consequences. Faced with growing competition, family farming finds itself under threat, notably from the arrival of powerful investors seeking immediate profit. Caught up in a race to lower prices and affected by the instability of world prices, these small businesses are finding themselves under intense land pressure and forced to go into debt if they want to invest. Furthermore, access to seeds is now a major financial burden. Finally, States have gradually lost the means to protect their family farming operations, despite the fact that they offer a number of advantages when it comes to fighting under-nutrition and poverty worldwide, supplying 80% of the world's food and accounting for nearly 40% of the working population, whereas other sectors fail to offer sufficient opportunity for populations that are forced to neglect their land. They also help to promote and protect natural resources and landscapes. Finally, they contribute to regional economic development by encouraging the creation of short distribution channels and maintaining public services.

« As a key factor in the social, economic and political balance of any country, family farming warrants being the subject of special programmes designed to reflect local contexts, since no model is universal and transferable as a 'turnkey' solution »



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PRIMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

➤ **Better understanding, defending and promoting family farming**

- Sustaining and breathing new life into the Observatory for World Agricultures

➤ **Guaranteeing farmers access to land, water and seeds**

- Facilitating access to land by limiting the concentration of farms and emphasising rights of use, particularly those of women
- Making the FAO's Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests legally binding
- Securing access to water, notably through more economic management and tighter public control
- Protecting the right of farmers to continue to produce, select and exchange seeds that are appropriate to the local pedoclimatic context and that are guaranteed to be healthy
- Rejecting any form of 'privatisation of life-forms'

➤ **Enabling farmers to choose what they produce and by what technological means, notably through support and access to credit**

- Encouraging alternative cultural practices in order to improve food security and protect natural resources
- Supporting the improvement of production tools by facilitating individual and collective investment
- Creating and maintaining a dense network of training bodies and developing work-linked training programmes
- Supporting innovation and the circulation of good practices whilst meeting farmers' needs

FIGHTING GLOBAL COMPETITION AND THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS THEREOF ON FAMILY FARMING

- Ensuring that the specific nature of agricultural products and foodstuffs is recognised by the WTO and in the framework of free trade agreements
- Actively fighting land-grabbing activity
- Encouraging farmer organisation and supporting their involvement in agricultural management
- Facilitating access to markets and improving sectoral organisation to ensure lucrative prices for farmers
- Developing storage and transportation infrastructures
- Reducing global food waste and agricultural losses

➤ **Recognising and enhancing the role of the farmer and other land workers**

- Completing the work undertaken by the Human Rights Council with the aim of producing a statement of small farmers' rights
- Putting in place real social protection for farmers and members of their families who work on their farms
- Instigating reflection within the UN on the social aspects of agriculture
- Communicating with a view to improving the image of the agricultural sphere and enhancing the appeal of the industry

➤ **Putting family farming and food (back) at the heart of public policies**

- Outlining public policies that reflect local contexts and the issues experienced by family-run farms and that are linked to coordinated action plans relating to food, education, health, employment and protecting natural resources, among other things
- Recognising the concept of family farming within CAP