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# WFAL - PREPARATORY CONTINENTAL MEETING

## LAND GRABBING AND LAND CONCENTRATION IN EUROPE

- Brussels, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2015, European Economic and Social Committee -  
Brief summary – non exhaustive - of the main issues raised by the participants  
of three themed sessions<sup>1</sup>



WORLD FORUM ON ACCESS TO LAND  
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All videos of the Conference are available online on the World Forum on Access to Land (WFAL) website <http://landaccessforum.org/> and on the AGTER's Online Knowledge Base website <http://www.agter.org>

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<sup>1</sup> Compiled by Coline Sauzion (AGTER) from transcripts and analyses of the participants' speeches by Chloé Saléry and Marta Fraticelli. Reviewed by Michel Merlet, Hubert Cochet, Gérard Leras and Robert Levesque. English version: David Reardon (Translators without borders)

As part of the regional debates of the **World Forum on Access to Land and Natural Resources**<sup>2</sup>, the EESC<sup>3</sup>, AGTER<sup>4</sup> and CERAI<sup>5</sup> organized a day of discussion **on land grabbing and land concentration in Europe**. The aim of the meeting was to bring together different views and analyses to identify pathways to change and concrete proposals to ensure that land use in Europe is organized in a way that meets the interests of society as a whole.<sup>6</sup>

## LAND CONCENTRATION IN EUROPE

### LAND GRABBING IN EUROPE TODAY

Contrary to some generally accepted views, the phenomenon of land grabbing<sup>7</sup> concerns not only the so-called “countries of the South”, but is also a reality in Europe. Taken as a whole, the data presented by the participants in this day of discussion highlight profound inequalities in the distribution of land in Europe. According to Eurostat, 50% of agricultural land in Europe today is concentrated in just 3% of all agricultural enterprises. At the same time, 80% of all production units control just 14.5% of Europe’s farm land. To mention but one of the most eloquent examples, in Scotland, 0.02% of the inhabitants own 60% of the land. (*Brendan Burns*) Naturally, there is a wide variation in land concentration from one country to another, with the most unequal distribution in Eastern Europe<sup>8</sup> and in some regions of Southern Europe, such as Andalusia (Spain).

In **Andalusia**, members of the Andalusian Workers Union (SAT) condemn a situation in which 65% of cultivable land is in the hands of less than 6% of landowners. While structural unemployment in the region affects 40% of the population and 65% of young people, large areas of land are underutilized or quite simply abandoned. Nevertheless, these large properties receive subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy. The growing involvement of the banking sector in Andalusian agriculture is a recent development: the land and property of numerous bankrupt small and medium-size production cooperatives are being bought up by the banks. The other face of Andalusian agriculture is the intensive farming of Huelva and Almeria regions, where examples of genuine destitution can be found. The agricultural workforce there consists primarily of immigrants working in conditions close to slavery. (*Pablo Gonzales Corrales*)

In **Central and Eastern Europe**, the traditional family agrarian structure was destroyed by the policy of collectivization imposed after the Soviet occupation. Post-Soviet agricultural reforms subsequently led to the creation of two types of farm: family farms and large agricultural enterprises. Over the years, many family farms have had to shut down due to a lack of material and financial

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<sup>2</sup> World Forum to be held 31st March – 2nd April 2016 in Valencia, Spain. To find out more about this initiative please visit the following web page: <http://landaccessforum.org/>

<sup>3</sup> European Economic and Social Committee <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/>

<sup>4</sup> Association for Improvement of Governance of Land, Water and Natural Resources <http://www.agter.asso.fr/>

<sup>5</sup> Centro de Estudios Rurales y de Agricultura Internacional <http://cerai.org/>

<sup>6</sup> See also summaries of the opening and closing addresses of the discussion day, which are not included in this document.

<sup>7</sup> Unlike the English term “land grabbing”, the French word “accaparement” does not necessarily imply violent action. “Accaparer” means “to take for oneself”.

<sup>8</sup> In Estonia, for example, the average farm comprises 800 hectares, compared to just 22 hectares before the Soviet era.

resources. Likewise, not all of the big agricultural enterprises that emerged from those reforms have been as successful as expected. Their failure has opened the doors of the agricultural world to new “investors” (financial and banking sector, insurance funds, traders...), who have taken control of those farms. Some big farms now belong to shareholders who quite often do not even live in the country in question and are building veritable agricultural empires. The lack of transparency and cases of corruption connected with the signing of contracts are frequently denounced. (*Sylvia Kay, Oane Visser, Kaul Nurm*)

To understand how this process of concentration works it should be placed in its historical context. Neither the situation in Eastern Europe nor that in Andalusia is the result of recent “land grabbing”: in both cases there is a historical backstory. It is therefore essential to examine current situations in the light of their origins. Looking back into history enables one to place the process of capital accumulation in a long-term perspective.

As mentioned above, the land ownership situation varies greatly from one European country to another. But this diversity of national contexts should not be a pretext for failing to consider the problem of access to land as a European problem. Different though the historical processes may be, in the end they all lead to an identical model of agricultural production, from Andalusia to Eastern Europe via Scotland and some regions of France. It is the universal spread of the model that raises the question. The link must therefore be made between these phenomena to try and interpret them and develop common responses at the European level, together with responses tailored to individual situations. (*Hubert Cochet*) While it is essential to clarify terms and avoid confusion over phenomena that can be very different in nature and effect, we must nevertheless move beyond arguments over definitions that threaten to stall the debate and prevent progress toward an urgently needed solution to the problems of land access in Europe.

The representative of the Directorate-General for Agriculture of the European Commission, who attended the conference, repeatedly voiced scepticism about the reality of land grabbing in Europe. In his view, the first action to be taken is to quantify the phenomenon. In particular, he insisted that it is essential to present clear statistics demonstrating, in figures, an increase in land concentration in Europe. (*Ricard Ramon i Sumoy*)

Many of the other participants considered this “technical” quantitative approach as reductionist. Some denounced the fact that decisions concerning the European agricultural model are taken by elected representatives and technical staff who are often very far removed from the reality on the ground.

Throughout the day, the majority of speakers highlighted the political, social and economic aspects of land grabbing and their numerous repercussions for rural areas, their inhabitants and society as a whole.

Finally, it was repeatedly underlined that land cannot be regarded as a simple commodity at the mercy of market laws, as it is a basic resource for all human life. The participants were reminded that it is not only land that is being grabbed, but also other natural resources including seeds, the commercialization and privatization of which are becoming widespread in Europe and around the world.

## **PUBLIC POLICIES THAT CONCENTRATE AID IN THE HANDS OF A FEW LARGE FARMS**

Although the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) does not directly concern the question of land ownership, which remains within the jurisdiction of each State, it has for a long time played a role in the concentration of land in Europe.

Since it was put in place, the system for distributing subsidies under the CAP has caused or accentuated imbalances and inequalities in the agricultural sector: firstly, by supporting agricultural prices, which

amounted to giving most help to the biggest producers; and secondly, by granting direct aid in proportion to the size of each farm. Since the 2003 reform, direct subsidies have been linked to the number of hectares and decoupled from production: the farmer receives aid for each hectare of land, whether or not he is producing on that land. The biggest production units therefore receive the majority of the aid<sup>9</sup>. This system of aid per hectare facilitates the enlargement and augmentation of farm capital and is symptomatic of a European policy that works in favour of big agriculture businesses at the expense of family farms. (*Robert Levesque*)

According to data available on the DG Agri<sup>10</sup> website, in 2013, 0.45% of all farms received 17% of CAP payouts. Conversely, 80% of farms receive just 15% of the subsidies (often in amounts below 5,000 euros per year). In Romania, for example, 1% of farms receive 50% of the European subsidies. From 2004 to 2010 that country lost 3 million farms, or 25% of the total number. (*Gérard Choplin*)

In some regions, the decoupling of aid has also accelerated the trend towards a reduction in acreage under cultivation, land ownership having been converted into a means of capturing subsidies whether or not it is used for agriculture.

In regions dominated by large estates, such as Andalusia, this mechanism plays a major role in destroying agricultural jobs. A large landowner can, in effect, live off the land without farming or creating a single job, simply by picking up large sums of money from Europe. (*Pablo Gonzales Corrales*)

## **CHARACTERISTICS AND REPERCUSSIONS OF THE CURRENT EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL MODEL**

### **DUALISM IN EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE: AN EVER MORE UNEQUAL BALANCE OF POWER**

As outlined above, European agriculture today is characterized by a rapid growth in inequalities in the distribution of land. The corollary of land concentration is the exclusion and marginalization of small production units and their workers throughout Europe. More and more, we are dealing with a dualist agricultural model in which family farms and large-scale agribusinesses are competing in an uneven struggle. The contrast between the two types of farm is becoming extreme, especially in the countries of Eastern Europe.

Land concentration is undeniably linked to the promotion and spread of an agricultural model that favours the creation of large specialized farms all over Europe. The agro-holding production model is becoming widespread at the expense of the peasant and family farms that used to predominate in many countries and were often supported by agricultural policies aimed at guaranteeing their preservation and development.

The distinguishing features of this production model are the same in Western and Eastern Europe. It is a model based on a small number of large farms:

- with access to a wide range of equipment (the use of machines is prioritized to the detriment of human labour, which is reduced to a minimum);
- necessitating a high level of consumption of fossil fuel and synthetic inputs;
- and employing a paid workforce in often every precarious conditions.

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<sup>9</sup> In Estonia, for example, some agro-holdings accumulate over 1.2 million euros in aid. (*Kaul Nurm*)

<sup>10</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/index\\_fr.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/index_fr.htm)

It is the big agricultural enterprises that get the most support from agricultural policies today. Small farmers with limited financial resources face serious difficulties in sustaining their activities. Forced to compete with the big producers, they are unable to be competitive.

It has become more and more difficult for new producers to start up in business, and even more so for people who do not come from an agricultural background. In many countries, the cost of land is skyrocketing while there is less and less land available to buy.<sup>11</sup>

Any land that is put on the market is quickly bought up to expand already existing farms, to the detriment of young farmers seeking land. Right across Europe, the number of farms is falling while those that remain grow in size.

An unregulated land market (farmland market, rental market and market in shares or equity in agricultural enterprises), as promoted in Europe today, gives this movement free rein. It is those who have the most capital who have access to land. Whereas in the 1970s and 1980s many European countries<sup>12</sup> had a policy of intervening in the structure of land ownership to develop or protect family farms, the current European model has no effective means of controlling land markets - in particular, the market in farm shareholdings - - capable of managing the process of expansion of agricultural enterprises. (*Robert Levesque*).

We also note that the number of agricultural corporates has skyrocketed over the past three decades. (*Robert Levesque*) This is contributing to the expansion of farms with a salaried workforce, a reduction in the number of workers per hectare and the separation between farming capital and the farming family. It opens the door to investment by foreign capital, which is acquiring equity in more and more corporate farming enterprises in Europe. Capital from all over the world is currently investing in European agriculture. These acquisitions by actors from outside the agricultural sector and the countries in which they are investing are undermining national food security. The situation in Eastern Europe is especially worrying. For example, Lebanon's Maria Group owns a farm covering more than 65,000 hectares in Romania. (*Sylvia Kay*) But this process also affects Western Europe, as demonstrated by the purchase of around a hundred Bordeaux vineyards by Chinese investors over the past three years. (*Robert Levesque*)

These new developments must be taken into account and regulations established on the transfer of equity in order to effectively regulate the way agricultural enterprises evolve. But this is not happening. In France, from 2016, a new agricultural law will allow the regional Land Use and Rural Planning Organizations (SAFER) to be informed of equity transfers, but they will have no power to approve or block such transfers. It is nevertheless essential that information on land and farm ownership be available so that, if necessary, those who wish to take control of our agriculture and, consequently, our food can be stopped. (*Robert Levesque*). While some participants in the meeting maintained that, on the contrary, it is not important to know who owns the land, others stressed that this is a decisive issue.

The goals pursued by the various types of family and peasant farmers, on the one hand, and farming businesses on the other, are not identical and will tend to create distinct agricultural models.

Shareholders in a corporation whose main aim is to make a profit will tend to exploit nature, people and animals as much as possible, with no concern for social or environmental considerations. Farmers in small and medium-sized family farms whose main aim is not to make a profit but to

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<sup>11</sup> *The ongoing process of destruction of farmland, especially in Western Europe, should be mentioned here. In effect, we are seeing a conflict over land usage between town and country: little by little, urbanization is nibbling away at farmland in suburban and rural areas. In France, 60,000 hectares of agricultural land is lost each year to urban expansion.*

<sup>12</sup> *To one degree or another, depending on the country.*

maximize added value per hectare through family labour and to earn a decent living in the country, will act differently. They will make more effort to protect the environment in which they live and produce than shareholders of a “*factory farm*” who have perhaps never set foot on the farm in which they own equity.

Thus, the impacts on the environment, animal welfare, employment and working conditions will be different, depending on who controls land usage.

“In Andalusia, in a period of economic crisis, it is mainly the banks that are grabbing new land. And an entity whose principal activity is profit and speculation is, naturally, not going to worry about the Andalusian rural world and the living conditions of the people who live there (...). A case in point is the La Rueda farm in Jaén province, which is in the hands of a bank and which, with more than 200,000 olive trees, has been completely abandoned (...). Clearly, these entities are not creating added value and are contributing nothing to the society around them, because they have no connection to the land, they have no connection to the local people. So yes, for us, it does matter who the owners are.” (*Pablo Gonzales Corrales*)

## ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF THE EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL MODEL

### *Questionable Economics of Large-Scale Agriculture*

The International Year of Family Farming in 2014 helped to remind people of the efficiency and virtues of family farming, including its capacity to create wealth while saving on inputs and materials and producing quality products, its effectiveness in terms of preserving and creating jobs, and its contribution to country planning and the protection of ecosystems.

Despite this, capitalist forms of agricultural production continue to receive the strongest support, protected by a powerful lobbying system that highlights their supposedly greater economic and productive efficiency.

Yet the arguments put forward to support the “productivist agricultural model” are often false. The economic criteria used to compare the efficiency of family and large-scale farms – two models which, in reality, are much more often antagonistic than complementary – are far from neutral, as *Hubert Cochet* explained.

The first criterion highlighted is usually *agricultural yield*, which is often mistakenly confused with *productivity*. Beginning by stating the difference in yield between family farming and agribusiness, they promote high-input production models that have the benefit of substantially boosting yields. But the yield takes no account of the net wealth created. For that, one needs to think in terms of added value. If, to produce 10 tonnes of cereals, one has to consume half of the value of what is produced in the form of inputs and fossil fuels, the added value will be greatly reduced. In a family farm that relies more on family labour, on producing crops for livestock and on organic techniques, and where inputs are low, the *added value per unit of land*, even with a lower yield, is often at least equal to and very often greater than that of large farms operating in the same region.

The third criterion is *labour productivity*. In large farms, a worker can cultivate 100 - 150 hectares – much more than a small farmer with neither the same level of technology nor the same amount of land. Even if the yield and added value per hectare are low, productivity per worker is generally higher.

For advocates of large-scale production, these farms alone are capable of producing in large quantities and standing up to international competition. Let us take an example from outside the European Union to avoid the issue of the CAP and its subsidies. Ukraine is an archetypal example of dualistic agriculture today: on the one hand, it has “very efficient” enterprises with several thousands

of hectares to position itself on the international cereals and oils & proteins markets; on the other, it has 5 million tiny farms of between 0.5 and 1 hectare that evolved from private plots of land during the Soviet period. Our studies show that these smallholdings, which are not even recognized as farms by the Ukrainian authorities, produce from 4 to 5 times more added value per unit of land than the big farms. (*Hubert Cochet*)

It is also worth looking at how the added value is divided between those who contribute the capital and those who provide the labour. In regions of the world where this dualism is most evident, researchers have demonstrated that the *financial efficiency* of the big farms - i.e. their ability to provide a return on invested capital - relies on boosting labour productivity, reducing pay and dividing up the added value to the almost exclusive benefit of capital.

In some large agri-holdings in Ukraine, only 3% of the added value goes to paying salaries<sup>13</sup>, 4-5% is returned to land owners who are former workers, and 0.1% is paid to the State in taxes (1 euro per hectare per year). 92-93% of the added value is used to provide a return on the capital. Thus, these farms may be *financially efficient*, but by no means *economically efficient* in terms of employment, added value per hectare and income distribution. So yes, the big farms are competitive on the international market, but the widespread application of this model is leading us into a dead-end. (*Hubert Cochet*)

The dualism in Ukrainian agriculture illustrates a situation that exists in many regions of the world and is also developing in Europe. The type of *economic analysis* devised by Hubert Cochet is absolutely essential to understand the dynamics in play and to become aware of the dangers that these developments entail. Instead of focusing on the sole criterion of financial profitability, which is only of interest to investors, the analysis must consider things from the perspective of the interests of society as a whole.

In their campaign to protect family farming, civil society and small farmers' organizations should take up these arguments rather than conceding the economic debate to financial and entrepreneurial circles, linking them to the environmental, social and ethical arguments they habitually use.

### ***Loss of Agricultural Jobs and Exploitation of Workers***

There is currently a shortage of almost 1 billion jobs worldwide to achieve full employment. By 2050, this figure will rise to almost 4 billion if current demographic trends continue and global agriculture evolves along similar lines to that in the developed countries. Full employment will then clearly become impossible. The loss of agricultural jobs is therefore a vital issue for consideration in any analysis of agricultural models. (*Henri Rouillé d'Orfeuil*)

The question therefore arises of which farming and land ownership models are most able to generate the job creation essential for the future equilibrium of our societies. Multiple examples from around the world demonstrate that family farming is the most efficient way of preserving and creating jobs.

In Ukraine, for example, small plots of land provide a living for (and therefore feed) between 50 and 100 times more people per unit area than big farms. (*Hubert Cochet*)

Many of the participants stressed that in Europe too, large-scale agriculture creates far fewer jobs than small farms. The reduction in the number of agricultural labourers is sapping the vitality of rural areas, which are continuing to depopulate in the majority of European countries. Throughout Europe one can see agricultural

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<sup>13</sup> A tractor driver in Ukraine earns 200 euros per month, which is much less than a worker with similar skills in Western Europe.

workers forced to leave rural areas where their economic survival has been undermined. It was emphasized that preserving small-scale farming is fundamentally important for maintaining the fabric of rural life.

One cannot talk about employment without touching on the issue of working conditions within the various models of agricultural production. As was often mentioned during the discussions, the conditions faced by workers in big farms are often very precarious. Sometimes, it is by having access to workers who are paid less than the legal limit that enterprises are able to boost their profits.

In the Almeria region of Spain, farm workers who are mainly from sub-Saharan Africa or Eastern Europe work for a miserly salary and live in deplorable conditions, very often in improvised camps around the greenhouses. In these zones, a farm worker earns an average of 20 euros per day for approximately 10 hours of work. Sexual exploitation of female workers, non-payment of salaries and unfair dismissals are amongst the abuses that can be observed in this region today. (*Pablo Gonzales Corrales*)

### ***Environmental Repercussions: European Agriculture as a “Global Warming Machine”***

The environmental impact of the European agricultural model must also be considered. The model currently being promoted is based on high levels of consumption of natural resources that are available only in limited quantities and are now known to be finite. This is therefore a destructive model that is not sustainable. At the global level, half of all food production involves the use of synthetic nitrogen produced from finite reserves of natural gas. European agriculture could be described as “mining agriculture” to the extent that it necessitates the extraction of phosphate and potassium, massive quantities of which are used as fertilizer. (*Robert Levesque*) This intensive use of chemical fertilizers in agriculture is depleting the soil and polluting rivers, thereby damaging the health of farmers and the general public over and above the damage being done by the use of pesticides.

In the face of global warming, which will in most cases cause a major reduction in farming yields, it is essential to come up with a form of agriculture that boosts the level of organic matter in the soil. (*Robert Levesque*) Preserving high-quality land is essential for future generations. In the context of the severe economic crisis we are currently experiencing, farming has an essential role to play in the struggle against global warming and the transition to sustainable ways of living.

## **WHAT TYPE OF AGRICULTURE DO WE WANT? A QUESTION THAT CONCERNS SOCIETY AS A WHOLE**

The spread of an agro-industrial model that is detrimental to family farming should preoccupy not only the agricultural world, but society as a whole. One of the key objectives of our commitment to changing the agricultural paradigm should be to flag up and make people understand that the issue of farming concerns all of us directly. The choice of an agricultural model for Europe is a genuine societal choice. It is a fundamental and cross-sectoral issue that should concern a very wide range of actors. It is therefore essential that we succeed in spreading our message on the importance of preserving family agriculture in Europe beyond the small circle of people who are already convinced. (*Marcel Mazoyer*)

## **SOME PROPOSALS ON NEW POLICIES TO MOVE FORWARD**

### ***Regulate Land Markets***

The principle of the self-regulating market - the fulcrum of classical economic theory - is not capable of guaranteeing equilibrium on the land markets. (*Henri Rouillé d'Orfeuil*) A large majority of participants in the

meeting spoke of the need to establish effective regulation of land markets. For that, it would be necessary, in particular, to ensure better linkage between the various national and supranational frameworks that regulate real estate. Some participants suggested that regulations must also be adopted at the global level.

The DG for agriculture explained that one should not expect the European Commission to intervene in these matters to try and impose regulation at the European level. According to the DG representative, land market regulation should be managed locally and nationally as it does not fall within the jurisdiction of the European Commission. He reminded the participants that the European Commission has a limited scope of action and that its prime responsibility is to guarantee the proper functioning of the single market and the free circulation of capital. (*Ricard Ramon i Sumoy*)

One of the essential conditions for the creation of national regulations on land markets would be that land can be insusceptible to market laws. Must one establish restrictions on the European principle of free circulation of capital for this? Or should one merely recognize, as all economists have for a very long time, that land is not capital, but a natural resource? Returning to the fundamentals of political economy and to common sense in this way would enable us to move forward, allowing States to adopt regulations on markets in agricultural land and the European Union to cease evading the need for reflection and community action on the evolution of agrarian structures.

Given that the available measurement tools are currently insufficient to assess the extent of land concentration, the idea of establishing an observatory to monitor the evolution of agrarian structures at the European level was suggested. (*Sylvia Kay*)

### ***Revise the Distribution of CAP Aid***

Rebalancing of the European land market also requires a revision of the way CAP aid is distributed to ensure that it benefits small farms more than large ones. Several of the participants underlined the urgency of creating a system of aid that promotes agricultural employment rather than the replacement of jobs by capital. Various measures that could give a different steer to the European agricultural model were put forward.

- A **cap on subsidies** could help to curb speculation and curtail the expansion of large farms operating in a way that is not in the interests of Europeans as a whole.
- The **replacement of aid per hectare by aid based on land in cultivation** while limiting the beneficiaries of **subsidies to people who work on farms** is an essential reform to address the issues that have been raised. (*Guillaume Darrouy*)
- The granting of **aid primarily for food production** rather than for biofuels, subject to the land actually being used for agriculture, was also mentioned.

For many participants, reforming the CAP would be one of the best levers to curtail the trend towards land grabbing in Europe. Unless the system of distributing European aid is reviewed soon, it will be too late to engage reverse gear, due to a lack of small farmers. Once a country has destroyed its agriculture, wiping out farmworkers and their expertise, it is very difficult to get the “food machine” running once again. (*Guillaume Darrouy*)

It is also important to think about making **aid conditional on respect for environmental principles**. Indeed, it is legitimate to believe that the CAP can play a role in protecting the environment and ecosystems. Given the financial resources allocated to the CAP, it could be expected to play a greater social and environmental role. (*Gabor Figeczky*)

Thus, against a backdrop of ecological crisis, the CAP should henceforth contribute towards creating an agricultural model for a transition to sustainable farming. To this end, consideration should be given to supporting agriculture that respects the environment (assistance for young farmers setting up organic farms,

aid to promote local consumption and short supply chains...). This reorientation of the CAP will necessarily call into question the agricultural model followed by the big farms.

We should also broadcast widely the message that agriculture has a central role to play in the fight against global warming.

### ***Adopt Rural Planning Policies and Facilitate the Creation of New Farms***

Action must also be taken to stop the growing practice of building on agricultural land. Faced with increasing urban populations, the politicians' reflex action is generally to build new housing rather than to make use of the numerous empty housing units that already exist. Although there are considerable numbers of vacant dwellings in many towns, too often the easy option of expanding towns by encroaching on agricultural land is taken. Yet savings could be made by rehabilitating existing housing – a far less costly solution than building new residential units and the infrastructure they require<sup>14</sup>. We must fight to ensure that new infrastructure (for housing, industrial and commercial activities, public facilities etc...) is built within the urban envelope as far as is possible. Moreover, people should be given a say on urban development plans. Rural dwellers are generally very poorly represented in political bodies, where their influence on decisions is negligible. (*Gérard Leras*)

We also need public policies to counter the process of desertification in the European countryside. In our high-unemployment societies, and especially in rural areas, agricultural employment must be put back at the heart of the debate. There is no genuine public policy to support start-ups today. The situation today is that most new farms are being set up “outside the family framework”<sup>15</sup>. Generational renewal within the agricultural world is therefore no longer taking place primarily within this sector. Robust systems should be put in place to facilitate start-ups and access to land for young farmers and to counteract the practices of agricultural officials who prioritize the expansion of existing farms over the creation of new farming units. (*Gérard Leras*)

### ***An Indispensable Alliance between the Rural and Urban Worlds***

There can be no longer be any doubt that if changes are made to the agricultural model they will not come from the urban world. The challenge today for any organization that claims to be campaigning for a different type of agriculture is to rally urban dwellers around agricultural issues. Thousands of initiatives such as Terre de Liens, Slow Food and the AMAP associations for preserving small-scale farming have already been pushing in this direction for several years. Efforts to establish strong links between urban consumers and agriculture must be continued and redoubled. (*Sjoerd Wartena*) For this, consumers need to be informed, educated and made aware of the way in which their food is produced. The consumer must also be empowered and invited to ask the right questions about the quality and origins of their food and the methods used to make it. We must get towns involved in the choice of agricultural model by demonstrating that rural issues also concern the urban world.

Concrete measures are essential to drive a re-localized production model, first and foremost by multiplying short supply chains. Developing direct links between towns and local farmers is one of the keys to changing the agricultural paradigm. Many of the participants emphasized the need to develop these good practices and

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<sup>14</sup> In France, a decree on compensation is currently being drawn up. But this principle of compensation follows the same logic of wasting land. Rather than working out complex compensation measures, the exploitation of land should simply be avoided wherever possible. (*Gérard Leras*)

<sup>15</sup> The expression “set up outside the family framework” means start-ups in which a young farmer's farm has not been transferred to him by members of his family. In France, depending on the region, between 50% and 66% of new farms are set up outside the family framework. (*Gérard Leras*)

to help them evolve towards concrete political action. Policies in support of local agriculture should become widespread and mandatory. It would also be good to harmonize European policies to ensure that Member States do not progress at different speeds on these issues. (*Jorge Hernandez*)

## **CONTRIBUTE TO CHANGING THE BALANCE OF FORCES**

### ***Organize to Get Public Policies Moving: a Broad European Campaign is Essential***

To act effectively, organizations campaigning for a different agricultural model must act in concert, forming a coalition at the European level. (*Sjoerd Wartena*)

Several participants highlighted the urgent need to come together in a powerful organization with the resources to become truly politically engaged on agricultural issues. Since this is not being done by the European authorities, it is time to agree on concrete proposals and take them to Brussels. To be stronger and to have a bigger impact on political decisions, broad alliances must be established to improve on the 1% of people currently mobilized on this issue. We need to go beyond the world of agricultural activists in search of allies.

“Alliances of people who already agree are not going to change things”, *Marcel Mazoyer* told us, stressing that we must try to win over some of the politicians in power today. The urgency is such that it is now imperative to envisage broader alliances. People need to be persuaded using a narrative that they understand. Decision makers must absolutely be made to understand that the protection of family farming is essential for the equilibrium of society as a whole. (*Marcel Mazoyer*)

### ***Social Movements as Agents of Social Transformation***

Other participants underlined the importance of social mobilization in any process of political change. In comments relayed here by *Monique Munting*, former European Commissioner Dacian Ciolos said that he was unable to do anything to the extent that “political decision making is blocked by lobbies”, highlighting the central role that civil society must play to drive the changes it wishes to see in society.

We must ensure that as many people as possible join the struggle against the destruction of family agriculture that respects man and the environment. Some participants expressed scepticism over the possibility of achieving change by reforming existing policies, such as the CAP. They stressed that the State and its public capacity for intervention should not be regarded as the sole agent of social change. While it is important to try to act through institutions, the transformational power of historical grass-roots struggles must not be forgotten. One should therefore act alongside agrarian social movements proposing changes to the agricultural model. (*Javier Garcia Fernandez*)

Rather than trying to rally decision makers, it is a question of building a strong social consensus to ensure that society understands that family farming is not a sectoral matter, but a global proposition that could provide solutions to many of the crises - political, environmental and economic - that we face today.