

Chapter 3

Defining, Characterizing and Measuring Family Farming Models

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3.1 A Definition for Each Domain

Chapter 2 shows that the wide diversity of agricultural forms stems from the political and social structures rooted in historical trajectories, where representations have been forged by power relations and the dissemination of technical progress.¹ This diversity and its reasons invite us to make an effort, necessarily reductive, to define, characterize and measure family farming models, and to clarify what makes them a political and analytical category. To name the production units² of the agricultural sector, several categories are mobilized by actors, all of which pertain to different professional spheres but do so in interaction with each other.

There are four broad domains in interaction within which categories are generated and used to describe agricultural production actors. These representations are

¹ This chapter incorporates some of the elements presented in an expert report (Bélières et al. 2013) due for publication in 2014 as part of the *À savoir* collection of the French Development Agency.

² We make a deliberate choice to focus the analysis on the dimension of the “organization of agricultural production.” Other approaches, discussed in Chap. 4, choose instead to focus on the multiplicity of functions that coexist with agricultural production: consumption, residence, accumulation, etc.

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not fixed, they are constantly changing under the reciprocal influence of exchanges between these strongly interconnected domains. We present them here in a segmented manner in an attempt to find the reasons for ambiguity in the designation of forms of organization of agricultural production.

- The *cognitive domain* is the source of analytical categories which allow actors of agricultural production to be designated. It pertains mainly – but not exclusively – to academia and research. Its purpose is to improve the understanding of agricultural realities and the changes taking place. This requires going back and forth between production of concepts, collection of empirical data and development of models to represent reality. Categories thus generated relate to disciplines that tend to segment the reality according to the theories and frameworks mobilized.
- The *policy, administration and public action domain* (public and private actors, collective civil society actors) generates normative categories by defining beneficiaries of (and therefore also those excluded from) public policy measures. The definition of normative categories thus pertains to choices which depend on the objectives sought by the policies. The categories defined have to identify the target audience of the policies, and, subsequently, assess the effects of these policies.
- *Societies*. Citizens and their organizations have more or less direct and proximity links with agriculture, based on their personal histories but also influenced by the place agriculture occupies in society. These links are, of course, highly variable and any generalization of them would be perilous. However, agriculture is specific in that its productions are mainly intended for human consumption and they are therefore “constituent” of individuals. In addition, the large extent of land devoted to agriculture still strongly shapes territories. Here, the peasant as a class occupies a special place, between a “naturalist” image carrying with it historical and cultural representations,³ and a socially shaped and constructed image. This concept used by historians, economists and sociologists is also part of everyday language and of social imagination, especially in a country like France, but also in India, China and Latin America (*campesinos*). While the peasant character has been historically dominant, it is now part of the diverse denominations used with reference to the farm (sometimes capitalist), cooperatives and other associative forms, commercial agriculture or, more rarely and recently, to the family farm.
- The *professional domain*. The actors of production define by themselves how they should be called, which, in some ways, also relates to the normative and political dimensions. By choosing its name, the group constitutes itself as a social entity in order to interact with others, especially with public authorities, but also more generally to communicate with society. For example, the term

³ As example, we refer to the naturalist novels of the nineteenth century, among them Honoré de Balzac’s *The Peasantry* or Émile Zola’s *The Earth*. Brazilian writer Jorge Amado too described class struggles in the cocoa plantation region of his native Bahia.

“peasant” is claimed at the international level by Via Campesina, a movement that is in favor of agriculture based on family groups as opposed to entrepreneurial farming. The question of professional identity is also addressed by the Network of Peasant and Producer Organizations in West Africa (French acronym: *Roppa*), which brings together “peasant organizations” representing family farmers and “organizations of agricultural producers.”

These different domains are not distinct and separate, neither through the many individual affiliations, nor through the ideas of and values represented by different actors and social groups, which are constantly changing and influencing each other.

3.1.1 Limitations of Current Denominations

Neither in common language nor in academic works have we found a foolproof way of denoting family farming, especially as translations from one language to another help introduce inaccuracies. But it seems possible, as first approximation, to distinguish four parameters commonly used to define family farming.

- The *size of the farm*, in hectares, is often used (Eastwood et al. 2010). It can also be expressed in heads of cattle or by turnover or sales volume (United States). This approach of distinguishing farms by size pertains to number of expressions, generally relative (large, medium and small farms), which can, of course, be combined with other characteristics (for example, small family farm). This classification by size in hectares has its usefulness because the land is a strategic factor for the development of agricultural production. This data is often the most systematically collected through agricultural censuses and therefore most accessible for analysis. However, the surface area is only one element of the capital mobilized by rural households. It is a criterion which depends on the type of production system and physical investments (irrigation facilities, plantation, buildings for livestock, etc.). And, finally, the area farmed is largely dependent on national contexts and is meaningful only at that level: a small farm in Argentina has nothing in common with a small farm in Kenya or in Asia. Differentiating by size often excludes pastoral farms – where access to common property resources is vital – and, more generally, shifting and itinerant farming systems. It also excludes production based on activities of harvesting “nature’s products.” Designating by size tends to overvalue the large farms and undervalue small ones, thus implicitly contributing to polarizing the debate between “large farms,” perceived as “efficient,” and “small farms,” which are thought to be less so. This vision pertains to a representation of progress which is dominated by economic functioning. In practical terms, it translates into the desire for increasing the size of farms, especially through the development of motorization and intensification through artificialization of the type advocated by the Green Revolution, in an economic environment in which price competitiveness is king. It is also not surprising that the term “small agriculture” or smallholder

agriculture has entered the lexicon of international institutions, and that it has, over the last two decades, become widely used in the cognitive domain. Yet, the functions that family farms fulfill are far more diverse.

- The understanding of *farm rationalities or strategies* is often based on the destination of the productions or only on the economic dimension of the unit, but is also often combined with identities. The tendency is thus to contrast subsistence (or semi-subsistence) farming with commercial or capitalist agriculture. However, leaving aside the case of farms which have chosen to specialize or even hyper-specialize, farms are, in general, found in an “in-between” state between food production for the family and for marketing. Furthermore, the relationship with the market can also take the form of the sale of labor, the purchase of food, products and services, or via the market-oriented development of non-agricultural activities. This is what is meant by the terms “pluriactivity” or “non-agricultural diversification.” Similarly, reference is often made to the manner of production, especially in terms of how intensive a particular production system is. We can thus refer to intensive agriculture, often associated with large farms, or to extensive farming, which may correspond to an economic advantage (livestock rearing in New Zealand) or to a social practice (extensive *latifundia*). But these are not invariable correspondences: farms that are small in surface area often prove to be very labor and inputs intensive. Finally, the literature also refers to capitalist logic or rationalities, as opposed to other types of rationality – peasant, subsistence, etc. –, which shed light on the behavior of some entities in given contexts. It is also difficult to arrive at a satisfactory and accepted definition of capitalist agriculture⁴ because, besides the traditional definition of a capitalist venture which separates owners of capital from workers, an effective capacity of capital mobility will be required (Petit 1975), which is what the dynamics of extreme financialization at work today may be attempting to bring about (Ducastel and Anseeuw 2013). While the rationalities approaches are very commonly used in the cognitive domain, their criteria of differentiation are not robust enough to define stable categories.
- The *identities* of those who work on farms are represented by various terms: peasant, farmer, producer, etc. These identities are constructed using concepts originating from militant social movements (unions, associations, cooperative movements, etc.), as well as from disciplines such as sociology, history and the rural economy. In many parts of the world, especially in Asia, the peasant has a stable identity, without any pejorative connotations, at least until recently, because there has been no questioning of this identity in the absence of diversification of forms of production (see the case of India and China). In some contexts, such as in Latin America, peasant agriculture (*agricultura campesina*)

⁴ According to Bergeret and Dufumier (2002), “in capitalist farms, the owners of the means of production do not work directly themselves; they only contribute the capital. These farms are often run by employed managers whose task it is to adopt production systems that maximize return on capital.”

makes sense for many in academic and political circles in response to the historic agrarian dualism, as opposed to commercial agriculture or to *latifundias*. In the European context, the farmer has taken over from the peasant (Mendras 2000), even though the “peasant” denomination is now once again being claimed collectively by some farmers who do not recognize themselves in the terminologies of conventional modernization. Identity is sometimes associated with farm size: small peasants are often contrasted with large-scale intensive commercial agriculture, also called “capitalist.” Categories based on identities reveal a sometimes demand- or protest-oriented dimension, associated with value judgments and grounded on ideological or political positions.

- The *judicial status* and *legal forms* pertain to the normative domain of public policy (what legal, judicial, fiscal statuses for “farmers”?). They are therefore highly dependent on institutional contexts and social and political recognition of farmers within societies. In the case of France, statuses of type “shareholder” may be more attractive to family farmers for reasons of taxation, social security, inheritance and transfer, especially since they can be acquired without losing the family character of the farm. The legal forms thus generate some confusion because a family farm can be registered as a company. . . and some companies are mostly family-run or -owned.⁵

The manner of denominating farms refers to how professional and social identities are constructed or deconstructed (Rémy 2008). It also depends on the orientation of agricultural policy that will decide the organizational model of production to support, such as the transition from the farm to the enterprise in France with the laws of 2005–2006, or the emergence of family farming as a target category of dedicated policies in Brazil in the late 1990s.

3.2 Proposal for Definitions

We place ourselves in the cognitive domain to propose a definition of family farming which makes sense and which is “robust” across different institutional and political contexts that shape and are shaped by the actors of the agricultural sectors across the world. Our aim is also statistical in the sense that the proposed definition is intended to allow family farms to be counted, to assess their contributions and identify them so that dedicated public policies can be implemented. Our definition must also allow the comparison or aggregation of situations. It is not a choice which is exclusionary for agriculture which does not correspond to this category. It is a matter rather of proposing a way of naming that is able to justify specific and possibly differentiated public policies.

⁵ Thus GAEC (Common Grouping of Farms) in France, or GFA (Grouping of Agricultural Lands), which are most frequently associations formed between parents and children or between siblings.

3.2.1 *The Agricultural Holding*

To define forms of agriculture, we choose to start at the concept of the farm, as it is at this level that decisions are made regarding the organization of agricultural production. We mobilize the definition established and validated by the FAO, which forms the basis of its recommendations on agricultural censuses, and which have worked well over several decadal census cycles.

An agricultural holding is an economic unit of agricultural production under single management comprising all livestock kept and all land used wholly or partly for agricultural production purposes, without regard to title, legal form, or size. Single management may be exercised by an individual or household, jointly by two or more individuals or households, by a clan or tribe, or by a legal person such as a corporation, cooperative or government agency. The holding's land may consist of one or more plots, located in one or more separate areas or in one or more territorial or administrative divisions, providing the plots share the same production means utilized by the farm, such as labor, farm buildings, machinery or draught animals. (FAO 2007)

This definition captures the observable diversity of functionings, but as regards family farms, four observations can be made:

- Non-agricultural activities are part of the strategies developed by farmers and they have to be taken into account in order to assess the real functioning of production units. Possibilities to develop agricultural activities or, conversely, their limitations will directly depend on non-agricultural investment choices. It is therefore essential to inventory these activities in the same manner as agricultural activities. This pluriactivity has historically been prominent – even dominant – in the developed countries (Mayaud 1999), and generally plays a stabilizing role for small holdings. This includes efforts to increase the added value of agricultural products. It also provides opportunities for change to family farms (Gasson 1986) based on its members' professional and personal aspirations. Pluriactivity and professional mobility are consistent with the perspective developed by Tchayanov (1990) that it is strategies for production and for the use of family labor that guide choices, not economic rationalities directed towards the pursuit of profit or marginal productivities of commercial agricultural activities alone (Shanin 1986).
- The non-monetary dimensions of agricultural and rural activities are also key. Self-sufficiency of food, gifts and return gifts hold great importance to many family farms because they help to reduce food costs and operate as “social safety nets.” Such activities can be a source of protein at low-cost, offset the risk of exposure to volatile markets or help pass through difficult periods resulting from economic shocks or social obligations Lamarche (1991).
- This definition of the agricultural holding includes the multi-localization of activities for a same farm, which can manage plots and animals in different locations. Spatial contours of the farm are therefore flexible and, in some situations, even if the definition does not mention it, the farm is “multi-located”

beyond just agricultural activities. Its members' mobility is integrated into the strategies implemented (temporary or permanent migration).

- Finally, the diversity of possible legal forms or statuses of the farm is taken into account: households, firms or other social forms of production.

Nevertheless, this definition of an agricultural holding is too generic and therefore insufficient to fully and specifically characterize family farming and farms. We will need to identify specific and robust criteria in order to do so.

3.2.2 Putting Family Farming in Perspective with Other Types of Farming

Political and activist discourses make a rough but schematic distinction between family farming models and enterprise farming models. This distinction is usually based on the place occupied, on the one hand, by the family organization and, on the other, by the modalities of control of productive capital.

To us, this contrasting vision does not seem to correspond to the realities in place. While there are two major ways that agriculture is thought to be organized – entrepreneurial farming and family farming –, by placing ourselves in the cognitive domain necessary to understand the process, we come to the conclusion that there exists a gradient of situations. We also think it is important to introduce the question of the wage relationship, especially of permanent hired labor, to better describe this gradient of situations. Indeed, the use of permanent hired labor profoundly alters the characteristics and the rationales of a farm's functioning (status of workers and relationships between farm workers, regular monetary expenses and cash flow requirements).

This choice leads us to propose three organizational forms of agricultural production which translate into three very different types of farms, themselves highly diverse, but which can be further distinguished on the basis of finer criteria and operational characteristics (Table 3.1).

Besides the nature of the labor relationships, five non-exclusive criteria of differentiation take into account the different dimensions of activity: origin and ownership of the capital, the modalities of decision making (administration and management), destination of production (i.e., the share for home consumption), legal status and land rights. These combined criteria also provide information on the level of economic independence of the technical system.

The table shows that criteria other than the labor relationships are not robust enough. Too dependent on local and national contexts, they do not allow the definition of stable forms of agriculture. Nevertheless, the three types of agricultural holdings thus correspond to a gradient of situations that goes:

Table 3.1 The different types of family farms

	Entrepreneurial forms – family forms		
	Types of enterprises	Types of family business farms	Types of family farms
Labor	Exclusively salaried employees	Mixed, presence of permanently salaried employees	Family dominance, no permanently salaried employees
Capital	Shareholders	From family or family association	From family
Management	Technical	Family/technical	Familial
Home consumption	Not relevant	Residual	Ranging from partial to full
Legal status	Limited liability or other company form	Farmer status, associative forms	Informal or farmer status
Land-rights status	Property or formal rental – property, or formal or informal rental		

- from the family’s exclusive role in the mobilization of production factors and their management to its complete absence in entrepreneurial forms;
- from an informal legal status (corresponding to an exclusive domain of the family or community) to the recognition of different formal legal forms, with an intermediate form of the recognition of the specific status of the farmer by certain public policies;
- from home consumption of the entire production to exclusive reliance on the market, i.e., from a non-monetary purpose to a fully monetary one.

In order to characterize agriculture objectively and robustly, we find that holdings can best be differentiated based on the origin of production factors, especially labor, and less on other, more ambiguous criteria listed above. On this basis, we distinguish three forms of agriculture:

- forms of family farming, which rely on the labor of family members – usually exclusively, sometimes partially, with occasional temporary recourse to some proportion of non-family labor;
- forms of entrepreneurial agriculture corresponding to an exclusive use of hired labor with no link between capital (means of production) and the labor mobilized;
- forms of family business agriculture – an intermediate form – corresponding to a situation with many variants, but whose business status stems from the permanent recourse to permanent hired labor, which assumes here a structural nature.

In many cases, this recourse to permanent hired labor can be avoided by a significant substitution of family labor by capital (mainly mechanization) with similar effects on the farm’s financial operations (expenses and cash flow requirements). Because of their importance in the history and development of agriculture in some national situations, these family business forms deserve greater attention, both from research entities and development policymakers. Taking them into

account will, in particular, enrich the debate on production models suitable for the future and those worth promoting.

Each of these three forms of agriculture covers, of course, a wide variety of real situations. However, our proposition based on the family-entrepreneurial gradient and focused around the issue of labor has the advantage of a robustness that transcends production systems and the size of farms. Our characterization – represented by a grid applicable to all situations – allows us to view the dynamics of agricultural transformation and the effects of policies on these transformations in a new light. It also allows us to overcome the normative definitions adopted in different countries and contexts, without preventing the definition of typologies more specific to local situations within each of these forms. Our approach is similar to that adopted by Otsuka (2008) when he defines the peasants. It is also similar to that developed by Hayami when he defines the plantation (Hayami 2010) by building on the work of Jones (1968), and also when he contrasts the same plantation with smallholders (Hayami 2002).

But in our approach, we have opted for a strict demarcation, pertaining to a clearly measurable structural variable in the context of standardized agricultural censuses: the use of permanent family labor.

3.2.3 A Stand-Alone Definition of Family Farming

Family farming designates one of the forms of the organization of agricultural production which encompasses farms characterized by organic links between the family and the production unit and by the recourse to family labor with the exclusion of permanent hired workers. These links are formed by the inclusion of productive capital in the family patrimony and by the combination of domestic and economic rationales, both monetary and non-monetary, in the process of allocation of family labor and its remuneration, as well as in choice of product distribution between final consumption, inputs, investments and accumulation. (Bélières et al. 2013).

By including this definition in the debate, we position ourselves in the perspective put forward by the rural economist Tchayanov (1990) in the early twentieth century. Organic links are formed by the inclusion of farm capital in the family patrimony and by the combination of domestic and economic rationales, both monetary and non-monetary, on the one hand, in choices of product distribution between final consumption, inputs, investments and accumulation and, on the other, in the process of allocation of family labor and its remuneration.

The close link between the family and the farm marks the relationship between the social sphere (domestic and patrimonial) and the economic sphere (Cirad-Tera 1998). This relationship between the family patrimony and the farm capital partly explains the resilience of family forms because it permits adjustments to be made to limit the effects of shocks (economic, climatic, etc.). Given these links, choices in product allocation are made as follows. Once the inputs and any loan interest are paid off, priority is given to family consumption, then to the accumulation of social

capital, and only finally to productive accumulation, with both these forms of accumulation often being intrinsically linked because of the farm's family nature (Chap. 4). And, conversely, when economic, social and climatic hazards so require, family patrimony can be mobilized to overcome the farm's difficulties.

The second criterion is the use of family labor. In the literature, there are several qualitative terms to describe the ratio between family labor and hired labor: primarily, essentially, almost exclusively, in a dominant manner, etc. These expressions leave too much room for interpretation between what is the familial form and what is not. At best, they establish thresholds that are very context-dependent (Hill 1993) and can certainly allow any particular definition to be adapted to different national contexts. However, in our view, the definitions that do so result obscure two elements. First, it becomes important to distinguish occasional or temporary hired labor (but which can acquire a regular character over time) from permanent hired labor. Only the latter is structural in the sense that it permanently modifies the farm's productive structure, such as the development of a specific component of the production system (for example, the raising of small cattle) or an expansion of the cultivated area, in a way that would not be possible without this permanent labor. Second, the presence of one or more permanent hired agricultural workers supposes the creation of wage relationships within the production unit. This relationship changes significantly the farm's productive rationale insofar as it becomes necessary to ensure that part of the production generated globally at the farm level is permanently earmarked for revenue generation to allow the worker(s) to be paid. The logic of this fixed remuneration is clearly different from the logic of the remuneration of family labor which can be adjusted downward or upward, depending on the level of production reached.

We note that this definition of family farming is in line with the one previously used by researchers from CIRAD (CIRAD-Tera 1998). It referred to "the central and privileged link between agricultural activity and the family organization, especially with regard to patrimony, the means of production, mobilization of labor and decision-making."

3.3 An Inclusive Definition that Singles Out the Family Farm

Defining family farming "strictly" in this way allows the inclusion of similar denominations – usually mobilized in the literature on rural or peasant studies⁶ – in a metacategory.

⁶ We refer here to studies that refer to "peasant agriculture" or "peasant" categories. These studies pertain to different schools of economics and sociology, even political sociology, and have, in particular, appeared in the *Journal of Peasant Studies* and in the *Journal of Agrarian Change*.

For Friedmann (2013), “the term ‘peasant’ has entered the political field” and it assumes very different meanings in different contexts and domains in which it is used. It is difficult to use it to define a category rigorously on the basis of structural data alone. The proposed definition of family farming potentially allows the inclusion of “peasant” or “smallholder”⁷ forms of agriculture based on a simple criterion – family labor versus “non-family” labor.

Shanin (1986) defines peasants “as small farmers who use simple equipment and the labor of their families to produce primarily for their own consumption, directly or indirectly, and to meet their obligations towards holders of political and economic power.” Ellis (1993) also refers to family labor: “Households [...] use mainly family labor.” He takes into account the diversification of activities, and the difficulties in inserting them in upstream and downstream markets: “The peasants derive their livelihood mainly from agriculture. They primarily use family labor in agricultural production activity, and are characterized by partial engagement with input and product markets, which are often imperfect and incomplete.” Finally, Otsuka (2008) combines farm size and family nature of the work: “The peasants are considered primarily oriented towards production for subsistence, full-time or part-time in the case of small farms, and towards production of food and cash crops while developing non-agricultural activities. Peasants can thus be defined as small family farmers who either own their farms or rent them from others.” The criterion of home consumption – as well as the notion of subsistence – is called upon frequently to characterize the peasant, even if the share of resources devoted to the production of food for the family is subject to fluctuations induced by market instabilities (Ellis 1993). Mendras (1976) likes to define a peasant based on his being part of wider community: the peasant society. But this criterion too is very difficult to assess or qualify through structural surveys or censuses.

In all these cases, over and above the other – highly variable – criteria used, the common denominator is family labor as the main source, if not the exclusive source, of farm labor. We find this same presence of family labor in most definitions in studies on smallholders (HLPE 2013).

The proposed typology also distinguishes family farming from other forms of agriculture. This proposal refers to a long-standing debate that preoccupies societies and academia on how to organize the production of food and non-food products from agricultural activity. In these debates, the family-labor agricultural model is challenged by advocates of enterprise models using hired labor (Collier and Dercon 2013) in the name of efficiency. The classic agrarian debate initiated by Marx, then taken up by Kautsky and Lenin in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is thus revisited. Chap. 5 seeks to clarify the characteristics of other forms of agricultural production and their relationships with family farms.

Finally, our approach is partially consistent with that used by Hayami (2002). For him, the farm size is not a discriminating factor, at least not for family farms in developed countries, but does remain one for developing economies. This is a

⁷ The reference to size in this denomination inserts this concept into a highly contextual relativism.

distinction that we do not share here. The importance of “small structures” in family models means revisiting the thinking and the discourse on “agricultural modernization.” Can we even consider a modernization which will lead to a drastic reduction in employment in contexts of high population growth and the relative lack of opportunities in other economic sectors? “The family farm [is] defined here as the production unit controlled primarily by the farm head, resorting primarily to the labor of his family members [. . .]. The farm can be large in terms of arable area since a farm of several hundred hectares in high-income countries can be cultivated by one or two family workers relying heavily on mechanization.”

The aim is also to overcome certain assumptions pertaining to rationalities which have been “assigned” to farmers. For example, family farms are not synonymous with poverty, although some situations are marked by economic or food insecurity. Indeed, family farming may, in favorable agricultural policy conditions, engage in dynamics of economic accumulation. Family farming systems are not focused on home consumption; they are in the market but they can produce for subsistence or for non-monetary exchanges (which tends to increase their resilience as a safety net). Family farms are not necessarily synonymous with small size or “small-scale agriculture” as assessed by the amount of land resources put to use. Rationalities of family farms cannot be analyzed with the economic tools of theory of the firm.

3.4 An Approach of the Diversity of Family Farming Models

In order to fully understand family farming models, we have to go beyond the invariants and principles that distinguish this category from others and understand their diversity (Bélières et al. 2013; Sourisseau et al. 2012).

Our approach to the diversity of family farming does not, unlike the previous approach, consist of establishing a “closed” typology of these farms. It is a matter rather of identifying and then discussing the criteria of differentiation which we deem essential and which make sense in light of the challenges agriculture in its diversity has to face. These issues pertain and may be specific to national contexts. To this end, we adopt the approach proposed by World Agriculture Watch (WAW) (FAO 2012). Table 3.2 lists key criteria and their possible modalities which provide a broad idea of the main forms of family farming. They can, of course, be broken down to each local situation, depending on important issues specific to family farms.

We have identified six first-level criteria to explain – more through the functioning of families than through only farm structures – most of the diversity of family farming models. In what follows we will not go into details of the possible modalities of the various criteria listed in the table. For this, see Bélières et al. (2013).

Table 3.2 Main criteria of differentiation of family farming models and possible modalities

Criteria	Modalities
Security in access to resources	Unsecure access
	Secure access (legal or not)
Investment capacity	Reduced
	Increased
Home consumption	Yes
	No
Type of insertion into downstream markets	Little insertion/insertion only in proximity markets
	Insertion into local supply chains with local standards
	Insertion into niche international markets
	Insertion into international commodity markets
Pluriactivity/system of activity	Agriculture only
	Agricultural and non-agricultural activities
Level of agricultural diversification or specialization	Specialized agriculture
	Diversified agriculture, including on-farm processing activities
Additional composite criteria	
Substitution of family labor with capital	Family labor only, no substitution
	Moderate substitution by non-family labor
	High degree of substitution by non-family labor
Strategies and objectives of the activity and usage of the result	Simple reproduction (priority for family consumption)
	Family and social accumulation
	Productive and social accumulation

Source: Bélières et al. (2013)

Our reasoning relies on the security of access to land resources, including common property resources (not to be confused with free access), as a basis for agricultural activities or as a source of extractions from “nature” production (fishing, hunting, gathering, etc.). There are two main reasons for this choice. First, private ownership is less important than the guarantee of the right to exploit the resources through farming or other primary activities and transmission rights.⁸ Second, access to common property resources contributes significantly to the food security of some rural households, both during normal and critical periods and, in particular, allows them to obtain animal proteins at low cost (hunting, fishing).

While the level of capital is significant for differentiating family farms, the issue of access to appropriate sources of credit for investment in all its forms is a key

⁸ See Courleux (2011) for France or the work of the Land Tenure and Development Committee for the countries of the South (Colin et al. 2009).

determining factor for the future of family farming. The challenge, indeed, is of connecting financing systems to the needs of family farmers by considering not only the diversity of possible investments in agriculture but also those outside agriculture for family farms which are pluriactive in their vast majority (HLPE 2013).

A farm with self-supply of food for home consumption is not synonymous with “backward” farming at a primitive stage of development, as the dominant discourse advocating market integration and the importance for family farmers to make their production part of major supply chains would have us believe (Shanin 1988). In fact, the overwhelming majority of family farmers are connected to the market economy across multiple markets in which they participate through labor, inputs, access to land and, of course, the agricultural products they sell and the food they purchase. The conditions of their participation in different markets are the issue and require regulation (HLPE 2013). But farming and non-farming families also produce food for their own subsistence or for non-commercial trading systems (see, for example, Cittadini 2010; ENRD 2010).

Taking non-agricultural activities or pluriactivity into account is not inconsistent with the development or maintenance of agricultural activities. Rather, this “co-existence” describes the vast majority of situations in the South and a significant proportion of the rural populations in countries that have developed their agriculture through a very intensive model.

For farms, as far as agriculture is concerned, it is important to distinguish between those which have specialized (with a view to improving economic performance but also assuming an increased risk) and those which have chosen to diversify production, accompanied with specific methods of production to improve returns (processing, direct selling).

We also believe it necessary to introduce a specific criterion for differentiation on the basis of the real practices that link – or are complementary between – family labor and physical capital. This is the core of the issue of family farming and of the preference accorded to family labor relationships when taking major strategic decisions. The decision to rely exclusively on family labor – which therefore is usually limited in size – may come into conflict with the expansion required to accumulate capital or to support a larger family. In our opinion, how this conflict is resolved indicates specific strategic orientations.

Finally, the nature of the organic links between family and production is a distinguishing criterion which expresses the fungibility of patrimony and family capital. It is a source of flexibility and allows the farm to withstand shocks better than if labor remuneration is in a monetary form. The remuneration of family labor expresses the use made of the farm’s income, after deducting the fixed costs and expenses. This is a composite criterion, which allows family farms to be located on a gradient going from, at the one end, a peasant ideal-type to, at the other end, agriculture that is capitalist in terms of the end-use of production. It is similar to the criterion on the ability to invest, by qualifying the concretization of this capacity. It can also be considered by taking into account the strategies of transmitting agricultural patrimony.

3.5 Contributions Which Are Difficult to Measure and Quantify

Not only is family farming hard to define, measuring its size and effects remain a cognitive and methodological challenge. The data available today are unsuitable to allow us to “count” family farms, estimate their share of the agricultural labor force, their share of the area farmed and their share in total production and thus, ultimately, to assess their political significance for each country. The attempts to do so (below) and the limitations encountered underline the need for a renewal of national and international statistics to better weigh family farming systems.

It is at the country level that information about farming is obtained and recorded through agricultural censuses. The FAO has created a common reference which it recommends States use for their agricultural censuses. The responsibility for their implementation, however, as well as the ownership of the data remains with the States. Censuses are held regularly since 1950 on common basis with a time frame of 10 years, a pattern followed by a growing number of countries: from 81 in 1950 to 122 in the 2000s. As far as the last round of censuses (1996–2005) is concerned, 122 countries have completed their census and 114 of them have submitted their reports to the FAO (FAO 2010). Furthermore, while there are a limited number of countries which have held several such censuses each, allowing changes in production structures to be analyzed on a chronological basis, the data available, though not exhaustive, still covers 83.5 % of the world’s population. These include 81 countries which, on the basis of data compiled by FAO for 1996–2005, are comparable by surface size class (HLPE 2013). We can consider these data as representative from the viewpoint of orders of magnitude, especially as they include the most populous Asian countries (Fig. 3.1).

As far as numbers of family farms are concerned, “structures” of a size smaller than 2 ha encompass almost 85 % of farms worldwide. This proportion rises to almost 95 % if we consider holdings of less than 5 ha.

In the case of the 27 countries of the European Union, the available data show that 70 % of the number of farms are smaller than 5 ha and this proportion rises to 80 % when considering holdings of less than 10 ha (HLPE 2013). In the United States, which measures the farm sizes by volume of sales, 87.3 % of the total number of farms are small family farms and among large and very large farms, only 4.1 % are entrepreneurial (i.e., non-family) farms.⁹ Even in countries with “developed” agriculture, the issue of family farming systems looms large, both for their proportion of large farms (8.6 % in the U.S.) as for their dominant presence in small farms (Fig. 3.2).

As for the proportion of the population and the labor force involved in agricultural production by type of farm, the quality and availability of census data varies widely and we must content ourselves with agricultural labor data originating from

⁹ <http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/ag101/demographics.html>, retrieved 28 January 2014.

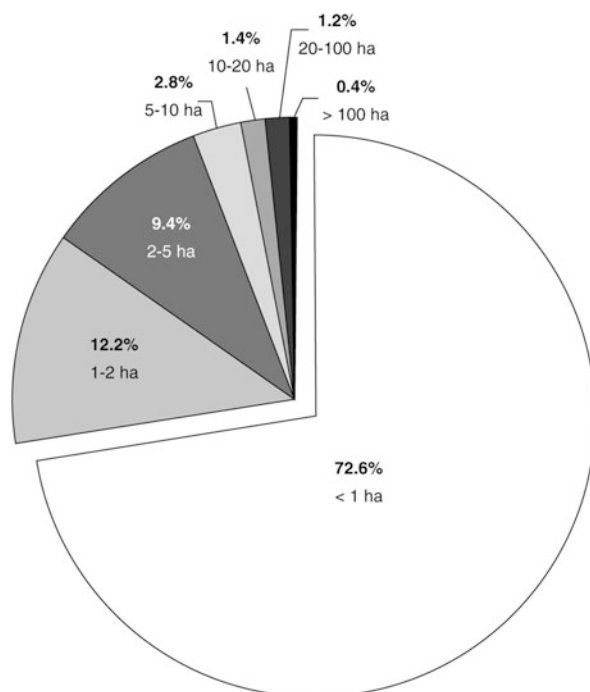


Fig. 3.1 Distribution of total number of holdings classified by surface area (81 countries) (Source: FAOSTAT data, graph by authors)

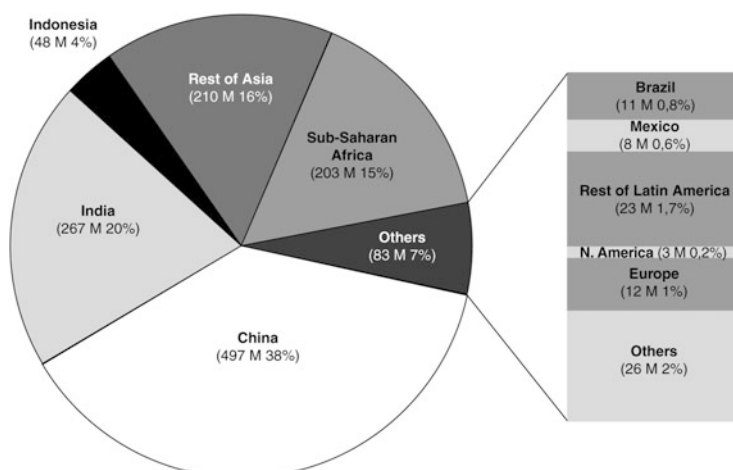
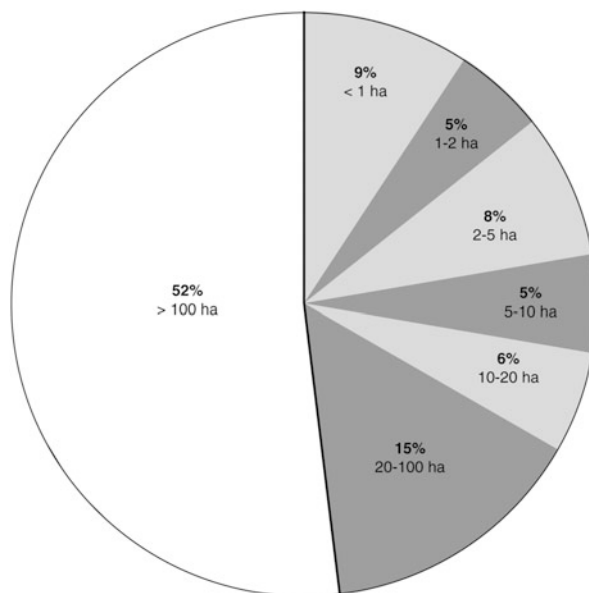


Fig. 3.2 Distribution of the agricultural labor force by continent and country (Source: FAOSTAT, graph by authors)

Fig. 3.3 Distribution of agricultural surface areas by size class (81 countries) (Source: FAOSTAT, FAO 2010, graph by authors)



population census data (rather than agricultural censuses). Nevertheless, given the large number of farms we can safely assume to be family farms, at least for the vast majority which are smaller than 10 ha (about 98 %), the bulk of family farms are located in Asia. India and China, along with other major Asian agricultural countries – Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and the Philippines –, account for 78 % of the global agricultural workforce.

The other continent that is significant in this geography of family farms is Africa, sub-Saharan Africa to be precise, which has about 15 % of the global agricultural workforce. Africa has the distinction of having not yet completed a demographic transition, unlike some Asian situations which will find themselves affected earlier than Africa by the issue of an aging agricultural population.

As for the area used by family farms, the agricultural census data by size class is not comparable across countries. They do not allow us to draw a clear and definite conclusion, given the incompleteness of the data (Fig. 3.3).

On the basis of our estimation in Fig. 3.3, we see, however, that farms of more than 100 ha occupy a little more than half of the cultivated land, while they represent only 0.4 % of the number of farms worldwide. It is certain that in many countries with an agrarian structure that includes large farms, many of these are family farms or family business farms. Finally, little is known of the surface areas farmed and used by enterprises or firms. Similarly, common lands, primarily used by family farming – especially for livestock rearing purposes – find little if any mention in the statistics. The available data, however, show an unequal distribution that must be analyzed in each country separately in order to take historical and institutional conditions into account.

3.6 For Policy Measures Adapted to the Characteristics of Family Farming Models

Discourses on and the policies implemented in the agricultural sector have historically accorded priority to developing the sector's production function, the supply of commodities for the agri-food industry (Gervais et al. 1965) and, since the inclusion of agriculture in GATT negotiations and the creation of the WTO in 1994, on the need for greater integration of farmers into markets, especially international ones (Vorley et al. 2007; Biénabe et al. 2011; OECD 2011).

These orientations have resulted in an ever-increasing specialization of agriculture and pursuit of productivity. Farms are becoming larger, with revenue targets dependent on other sectors (Dorin et al. 2013), but they require fewer workers and are more and more dependent on the prices of agricultural commodities, which even the most organized and largest of them can no longer influence. These policy choices are accompanied by a considerable concentration of agri-food industries (Rastoin 2008) which have captured a significant share of added value of the global food system (Rastoin and Ghersi 2010; Mc Cullough et al. 2008). These farms, touted as "hyper-efficient" from the point of view of strictly economic efficiency (as measured by labor productivity) are the direct outcome of public policies of direct or indirect support they continue to receive. The conventional model of technical intensification on which they are based not only induces risks at the individual level but also generates negative externalities at different community levels such as the economic (employment and income) and the environmental (greenhouse gas emissions). The long-term management of ecosystems and resources is also adversely impacted. These negative externalities find little or no place in economic calculations, as this would lead to a drastic rethinking of the production model.

Thus, the proposed definition of family farming should help establish an alternative rationale, relying in particular on the notion of autonomy present in the definition of the peasant by Mendras (1976, 2000) and taken up by, among others, Van der Ploeg (2008, 2013) in a context of agriculture's continuing market integration. The notion of autonomy is, however, not synonymous with autarky or regression. It is a matter of a reasoned approach to production systems and their market insertion in order to make the practice of agriculture more resilient in technical terms – self-regenerating fertility, taking account of biodiversity – and more remunerative of family labor. Adopting this definition also means revisiting the issue of subsistence production, which does not reflect an archaic vision of agricultural practices, as some would have us believe, but a way to ensure food security and improve nutrition in a decentralized manner, through the use and localized strengthening of social networks. While subsistence agriculture no longer finds mention at the global level – except in the discourse of some entities who compare it pejoratively to commercial agriculture –, production for subsistence is a true social reality which extends beyond the agricultural sector in the North (Deléage and Sabin 2012) as well as in the South (Cittadini 2010) in the context

of improving the food security of agricultural, rural and even urban households. In this, subsistence production is in line with the idea of the economy of proximity, where autonomy is considered not only at the farm level, but also through its role in the surrounding territory.

This reflection on the definition of family farming also allows us to revisit the issue of the substitution of family labor by physical capital. This issue can thus be approached through the perspective of the generation and distribution of added value and agricultural and rural employment in a context of diversification of production systems.

This contribution around a proposed definition can finally be an invitation to revisit the historical trajectories and to provide some basis for specifying the development options available for the future of the world's family farming systems.