RURALIZATION

FRANCE

Demographics

- Nowadays, farmers only represent 2% of the active population.
- Family farms are at the heart of the rural scene in France.
- The number of agricultural workers has been decreasing since the end of the 19th century.
- The average age of farm managers, co-holders and associates is 52 years old, i.e. 11 years older than the average for all of the French workforce.

Rural development

- The agricultural workforce is more affected by poverty than the rest of the economic sectors. In 2010, for example, 24% of farmers were affected by poverty, a much higher percentage than the average of the population.

New entrants

New entrants are an old phenomenon in France which began with post-1968 "back to the land" movements. Today, field observations show an increase in their numbers. New entrants' projects are not only professional: they often want to build another way of life and promote ecological and local production models.

Difficulties

- Difficult access to land.
- Lack of education programmes and progressive farm set up schemes adapted to the specific needs of new entrants.
- Lack of financial instruments and subsidy programmes adapted to new entrants.
- Little acceptance from traditional farmers and difficult integration in mainstream agricultural institutions and circles.

Good practices

- Farm incubators providing "test areas" where new entrants can develop an agricultural activity in a supported environment and increase their skills.
- Farm reorganisation and restructuring.
- Actions aiming to favour the welcome and matching retiring farmers with a potential new entrant successor.

Policy

- Measures to encourage the entry and reception of non-farming newcomers' to rural areas have been included in regional policies relatively recently.
- When it comes to new entrants, a reform of the CAP first pillar distribution is particularly needed to curb the land concentration trends and better cater to the needs of new entrants.

"The project RURALIZATION has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Grant Agreement Nº 817642."

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