

## 9 Territorial food plans in France: Do they facilitate access to land for new generations? (Nicole Mathieu and Blandine Veith, CNRS)

### 9.1 Introduction

In the 1960s, the 1960-1962 orientation laws established a strong re-foundation of French agricultural policy. One could almost say that the objective of these laws was a renewal of access to land for the young generation. New instruments were created to promote a family farm model (2 labor units) adopting modern techniques to obtain a socially correct income from their work. **Access to land is largely dealt with**, for example, the regulation on the accumulation of land (cf. SAFER) and the life-long departure indemnity encouraging farmers to retire.

Since this 'glorious' period, this orientation and the tools that were linked to it, have, undoubtedly, lost their effectiveness for reasons internal to the French agricultural sector (in reference to the power of majoritarian Unions and the so called 'co-management' policy), but above all because of the development and enlargement of the CAP, which has become the main institution regulating countries as they integrate into the EU: a policy of quotas to regulate surpluses, agri-environmental measures, etc. In France, this, more globalized vision of the agriculture functions, has led to the development of intensive farming methods and a race to expand farms and livestock. The question of food is not at the forefront, neither in 1960 when it should seem obvious, nor 20 years later, when foreign trade indicators are valued.

Faced with this transformation, which is increasingly difficult to control, and with protest movements by both agricultural and consumer activists defending a peasant production method, a 'sustainable agriculture', and marked by growing environmental and health concerns, successive Ministries of Agriculture have, on several occasions, attempted to renew their 'instruments' of political action. These efforts can be read in the changes of titles where 'sector words' that the ministry would like to reclaim appear or reappear: 'rural affairs', 'agri-food' and even 'rurality and territorial planning' (*aménagement du territoire*). Since 2017, under President E. Macron, the Ministry took the name 'Ministry of Agriculture and Food'.

In response to the question asked by this report, i.e., 'what are the policies and legal arrangements that promote access to land for new generations?', we have identified a relevant legal arrangement as is presented in the latest *Loi d'orientation agricole* (2014), which aims to renew French agricultural policy to face novel challenges (as is the case for several European countries). This arrangement is the Territorial Food Project (TFP), which aims to relocate agriculture and food in the 'territories' through supporting starting farmers, short chains or local products in schools' canteens. This policy tool is innovative as it aims to realize the needed reorientation of French agriculture towards 'alternative agriculture' by combining the concept of 'territory' (already experimented by the Territorial Farm Contract) with the emerging one of 'food' (new food system). These two terms are part of the 'new political

ideology' that leads a part of the young generation, most often without agricultural background, to implement a 'return to the land' or a 'return to the countryside'.

But once this choice has been made, there remains the question of evaluating the real scope of this new legal arrangement with regard to the objectives of access to land and generation renewal. Do the TFPs promote that new entrants start farming and the succession of young people? Do they promote access to small plots of land and to small farms that are not considered 'professional' and that are not eligible for the DJA (*Dotation Jeunes Agriculteurs* in French)? What role does the 'territory' and the territorialization of agricultural policy play in relation to the expected change? Do the TFPs differ according to the types of rural areas and urban/rural relations? Does the focus on the food system and sustainable development influence land regulation? What is its scope in rural regeneration?

These questions are answered as follows: firstly, by taking stock of the characteristics of this legal arrangement through an already abundant bibliography (academic articles and in newspapers, local and national TFP sites, etc.) and by expert opinion, all this in order to select two case studies, one in a metropolitan area, the second in an intermediate rural area around a medium-sized town; secondly, by presenting the analysis of these two case studies, which were the subject of a two-week survey (cf. appendix) and, finally, by discussing our results in response to the initial questions and attempting to propose perspectives on the future of this tool and its potential for replication.

## 9.2 Context for the emergence of TFPs

### 9.2.1 From 'producing more' to 'producing better'

Health crises (bovine spongiform encephalitis (BSE) in 1996, avian flu in 1999, foot-and-mouth disease in 2001, etc.) have raised issues of health and confidence. Environmental issues are stirring up public opinion and national decision-makers. The power of the Ministry of Agriculture has been affected, which has led it to develop new regulations with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Environment (*Ministère de la Transition Écologique*).

The "Future Law for Agriculture, Food and Forestry" of October 13, 2014 defines the new orientations of the National Food Plan (NFP) through four major national priorities: social justice, food education for young people, fight against food waste, the territorial anchoring of actions and the enhancement of heritage. In this context, it has created a tool: the "Territorial Food Project" (TFP) (in French '*projets alimentaires territoriaux*' as defined in article L.1-III *Code rural et de la pêche maritime* [Act on rural areas and sea fishing]), which meets both the objectives of the NFP and those of the Regional Plan for Sustainable Agriculture (PRAD). **The aim is to relocate agriculture and food in the territories by supporting starting farmers, short chains and local products.** The TFPs must be developed collectively at the initiative of territorial actors (communities, agricultural and food companies, craftsmen, citizens, etc.). Their main purpose being food, they include health, food autonomy and nature protection concerns. Above all, it generates an **integrated and systemic political vision of food**. As a result, local authorities intervene on the agricultural land preservation, the urbanization limitation, education on food hygiene, the orientation of production towards market gardening and organic farming, and the reconsideration of supply chains through short chains.

**The strictly agricultural field is contextualized by other competencies fields of the territories and by the human, agronomic and economic characteristics of each territory.**

The Minister has expressed the aim to support the development of 100 TFPs by the end of 2017 and 500 by 2020 (Premier Ministre, 2016). This is why the minister (MAAF, 2017) has launched a recognition system of territorial food projects (Figure 10). The minister is so using two other lines of force of local authorities in France: the extension since the 1982 decentralization laws of the public policy powers of their governance bodies (which happened through numerous decentralization laws from 1982 to 2015); the increasing urbanization which leads to the reduction of agricultural land.



Source: RnPAT, <https://rnpat.fr>

**Figure 10 The 41 TFPs recognised by the minister in September 2020**

### 9.2.2 Territorial policy as a way towards effectivity:

Texts produced at the national level define ambitions, guidelines and global objectives, but do not lead to binding measures or voluntary actions. This is why the national definition of TFPs provides a framework based on both content and methodology, but not on concrete results. The content is centered on food quality (agrobiology) and food autonomy (short circuit). It uses the project methodology and require: i) to make a food diagnosis of the territory, ii) requirement to associate the main actors to this diagnosis and to the objectives' definition, iii)

to deduce an action plan implemented under the responsibility of a project leader. **Adaptation to the territory is based on these two aspects: diagnosis and partnership.** To facilitate the employment of a project manager and the launch of his activities, the initial budget is set at 70 000 €, half of which is financed by the State. Then, the actions can be financed by the answer to national or European calls for projects or by private funds. The project leader can be an elected local authority (municipality, department or inter-municipality) but also an association of the civil society, an agriculture chamber, a territory of Country (example: a regional natural park). In December 2020, there were 191 TFPs, 110 of which were led by a community of communes, 7 by a municipality and 11 by a department (RnPAT, 2021b). It is most often a local authority, which has the legitimacy of being elected and of having human and logistical resources. They are the most likely getting involved, even if the food field, and even more the agriculture field, are not their main areas of competence.

To answer the questions asked in the introduction, we must therefore conduct a field investigation. We need to understand why a territory engages in the creation of a TFP and to what extent the ambitions of this policy serve those of access to land. Because it is systemic and territorial, does this policy contribute to the reconciliation of non-farmers and farmers? Does it make it possible to link policies together by taking agricultural policy out of its "sectoral" mode of operation and linking it, through food, to urban and rural development policies?

## 9.3 Narrative of the case

### 9.3.1 Methodology

As TFPs are relatively new, we turned to several types of sources: e.g., professionals, elected officials, researchers, and we gathered information from several types of sources (interviews with actors experiencing this change, official documents, articles by researchers and experts). As it is a territorialization of national public policy, we rely on both national and local sources. We investigated on site in Redon and remotely for Toulouse and interviewed experts online (Box 6).

The literature study included national documents concerning the national context (including, Guillemain *et al.*, 2018; Darrot *et al.*, 2019; RnPAT, 2021a), but also diagnostic or survey reports on each of the territories as well as the writings of the two projects. There are a number of articles published in scientific journals (such as, Maréchal *et al.*, 2019; Chiffolleau *et al.*, 2020; Gasselin *et al.*, 2020; Perrin and Baysse-Lainé, 2020), but most research is work in progress.

A total of 13 interviews have been conducted:

- In both regions: the elected official responsible for local policy
- In both regions: the administrative official(s) responsible for the implementation of TFP
- In Redon, 3 representatives of the 'consortium' and the regional person in charge of Terre de Liens
- In Toulouse, 2 experts who participated in the preliminary studies, as well as 2 researchers.

#### Box 6 Methodology

National sources, including the national network of TFPs, provided us with evidence for comparison across various TFPs of which two have been selected for further investigation. The



equipment. It also supports producers' and consumers' associations and environmental actions. In 2016, the inter-municipality brought together some twenty local organizations to write a TFP. This participatory method brings together producers, processors, distributors, local authorities and consumers whose interests are often different: the aim is to seek convergence and to put contradictions into perspective. These meetings lead to the creation of a local intersectoral body, the 'Territorial Food Governance', which steers the implementation of the TFP and evaluates its actions. In September 2017, the commission validated the TFP Charter composed of 3 major approaches:

- Agriculture on a human scale, preserving natural resources and ensuring the respect of men and women.
- Local, healthy, quality food products, accessible to all and vectors of health.
- A commitment of all in a partnership approach of sustainable development.

Each approach is broken down into 16 objectives that serve as the basis for the action plan. In 2020, several actions have been implemented:

- Support for collective catering: setting up a network of cooks, training in the drafting of public procurement contracts, experimentation with group purchases, etc.
- Implementation of the 'Positive Food Challenge' (assistance to 50 families during 6 months for organic and local meals without spending more than for conventional meals).
- Raising awareness among children in 10 schools about the role of natural resources in food production, the impact of transport, seasonality, food waste.

Thus, the old participative and militant dynamics of the territory were used and organized by the TFP method and hopes were born to be able to influence the agricultural policy in its local effects. Actors who were previously ignored participate in local choices, including, consumers, farmers, shopkeepers and cooks.

Nevertheless, some criticize the slowness of the process and the compromises made with the powerful agri-business powers, and point out the powerlessness of the TFP in front of land speculation. This is why they have created a 'consortium', a working group in which the representative of the agglomeration participates, to define a more ambitious program. They warn for the exhaustion of farmers who are currently being encouraged to produce organically, to process and to sell. They call for long-term support, logistical means for short chains, and income support. The consortium proposes to mobilize the actors, to put them in network, to initiate research-action, to disseminate their needs to professional high schools and training organizations, to work on the professional insertion. It plays the role of activist spur in front of the necessarily heavier and more negotiating organization of the TFP governance.

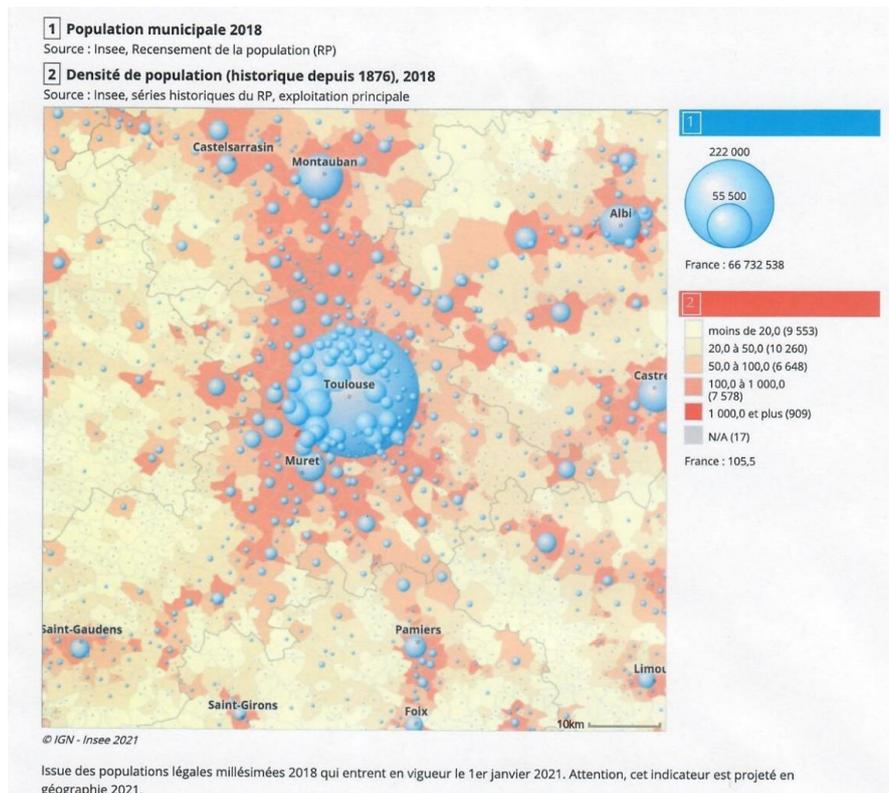
Although the territory as a potential subsistence agriculture, it is the mobilization of professionals to maintain family farming that leads to a TFP. Although the TFP has low ambitions in terms of land, it is through its support for a human-sized agrobiography and a direct relationship between producers and consumers that family structures are favored. Thus, we

studied the 3 members of a 65 ha GAEC producing all the feed for 50 dairy cows whose milk is processed and sold on site and which supports 3 households and one employee.

### 9.3.3 The TFP of the metropolis of Toulouse

Toulouse has a more urban influences (Figure 12). In the early 2000s, farmers, represented by the Agriculture Chamber, were concerned about the rapid urbanization of land and in 2004 participated in a working group with the metropolis to develop a peri-urban agricultural policy. Between 2009 and 2012 they developed an agricultural charter that set 5 major challenges:

- to act on land and property;
- to affirm agriculture as an economic and food activity for the inhabitants (and not only as a producer for export);
- to give priority to market gardening, local products and organic products;
- to diversify production (essentially cereal production);
- to develop quality and innovative approaches.



Source: IGN-Insee site, <https://statistiques-locales.insee.fr/>

**Figure 12 Population density around Toulouse in 2018**

One of the fundamentals of this strategic vision is the inversion of the view on territories: **Instead of considering urban sprawl as inevitable and a priority, the attention is first focused on agricultural land to think about how land is used.**

"It is necessary to control urban development through the development of natural and agricultural capital" (Terre en Villes, 2017, 2).

In 2017 the socio-economic diagnosis of the PLUi-H (Intercommunity Local Urbanism Plan - Habitat) produces a precise location of cultivated areas (Toulouse Métropole, 2019). The objective is to ascertain short distances to necessary services and to move towards food self-sufficiency. Currently only 33% of the food demand is covered by the territory (Solagro, 2016, 8; Terre en Villes, 2017). The analyses are driving the development of a TFP to be signed in 2018. It provides for the stabilization of the UAA and the development of 1,000 ha of urban agriculture areas, the creation of a 135 ha "green belt" for market gardening, and a natural area with an educational farm. These land objectives are achievable thanks to the mobilization of the land and urban planning departments of the Metropolis to ensure that the TFP is consistent with urban planning documents. The help of Terre de liens is requested to put together the candidates files for new farmers so that the SAFER can trust them when allocating land that has become free. It is also asked to think about a long-term land strategy.

Despite its efforts, the metropolis (which expects to have 950,000 inhabitants in 2050) will never be self-sufficient from a food point of view, since it has only 11,000 ha of UAA left. This is why the TFP is associated with a "city-countryside reciprocity contract" (Gouvernement.fr, 2015) with a very rural neighboring territory, the Pays des portes de Gascogne (an inter-municipal organisation of predominantly rural municipalities). The latter encourages its farmers to develop their production towards organic market gardening to meet the needs of the Metropolis, which provides services in exchange (including, health, training, waste treatment, logistics of short chains, guaranteed supply of collective catering). One of the most important means to develop cooperation between the two territories is the national market (MIN) managed by the Metropolis, which is the main operator for supplying the local population.

Although **the direct impacts of this strategy are relatively small, the medium term indirect impacts can be significant** (Box 7). The TFP is therefore one of the tools of a local political body that is aware of food risks and is preparing to face a strong demographic expansion. The Metropolis plays a leading role and relies on influential partners in the field of marketing and short chains. To compensate for its agricultural weakness, it has built a positive cooperation with a producing territory. The city-countryside cooperation takes the form of a relationship between farmers and consumers. In the case of the Toulouse metropolis, the TFP becomes the means by which an urbanized area where only a few cereal crops remain intervenes in the subsistence farming of the neighboring rural territory.

**Direct impacts:**

- 10,840 hectare classified as protected agricultural land,
- 39 organic farms on 1,380 hectare (12.7% of the area versus a national average of 8.5%).
- 13 new market gardeners
- 220 hectare are organically cultivated at the Toulouse Agricultural Management (*Régie Agricole de la Ville de Toulouse*): field crops and vineyards + orchards open to residents.

**Medium-term indirect impacts:**

- The neighboring agricultural territory that signs the reciprocity contract can engage in an ecological transition by being assured of having outlets. Farmers in the metropolitan area are also encouraged to develop their production and are certain to keep their land. The decrease of agricultural land is stopped by the land and housing policy.
- The demand for food is encouraged to evolve towards organic products and animal proteins, both by the menus of collective catering and by educational actions.
- The access of consumers to this type of food is made easy by the organization of short food chains

**Box 7 Direct versus indirect impacts**

## 9.4 Discussion

### 9.4.1 Contribution of TFPs as a legal arrangement to access to land and generational renewal

While the SAFERs and CDOAs have their limits in the current agricultural land market, because of the many ways in which the rules are circumvented, the cases studied show that the local level has certain possibilities for action in favour of maintaining land in agriculture and farmers' establishment.

These actions are no longer exclusively based on national laws and constraints aimed directly at the land market, but on the creation of a new balance of power between a 'general interest' organized around the food issue and the functioning of the land market as it exists in the territory. This general interest is legitimized by the State, which favors local initiatives, which provides advocacy through its orientations, and which helps financially to start the process. It uses a **method of seeking agreement** between the representatives of local authorities, and a **local contract allows the implementation of the orientations**. It balances the industrial and land lobbies by the presence of new actors carried by the public opinion and by the alliance of several fields (i.e., health, environment, town planning). It convinces by creating experimental examples. Everything happens as if the national and imperious direct action gave way to a process using the complexity of the agri-food system to make it evolve. While this system is blocked at the national level, it is possible to organize it in a new way at the local level, notably by facilitating coalitions of actors who were previously dispersed and without means of action. In Toulouse, where the risk of food insecurity is the greatest, land-related actions are the clearest. In Redon, it is the place given to civil society and activism that allows for awareness in a less-degraded context.

The result in the two territories studied (Table 4), although different, is the promotion of small or medium-sized areas for crops with high local added value that allow for a decent

agricultural income thanks to short chains, income from public deliveries and the promotion of organic products. Land and profitability are accessible at lower cost.

Theme objectives	National level	Toulouse Metropolis TFP	Redon agglomeration TFP
Land	-maintenance of agricultural land: SAFER + CDOA + SDRE -preservation of the environment: zoning -housing/urbanism: a full stop on artificialization	- Land reserve (less than 200 ha) -SCOT and PLUi-H: protected areas (200ha) - relies on Terre de liens to set up new farm start-ups with the SAFER	-Experimental farm for new entrants in farming -organic food
Agricultural regeneration	-rural newcomers -rural/urban migration balance: relocation of services + mobility + telework	-Retention of farmers in the neighbouring rural territory (reciprocity contract) -setting up of market gardening on part of the land reserve: 4 -maintenance of 8 farms	-2 new market gardeners and a beekeeper
Farming activity	-conversion of existing farms (to increase income); -new farmers: CDOA and SDREA	-conversion (organic + short chains) encouraged in the PPG: 39 farms in conversion (12% of UAA) + 13 in the metropolis -Little direct influence on new farmers	-Organizing local channels for collective food and individuals
Rural life	health, education, trade, jobs, culture, liveliness, territorial equality	-with the PPG in the reciprocity contract (3 axes implemented out of the 7 planned)	-the consortium wants to maintain a family agriculture
Economy and food		-TFP and MIN and reciprocity contract - food distribution to precarious urban dwellers	-TFP : educational action

**Table 4 The 2 TFPs in a national context**

#### 9.4.2 Can TFPs be transferred to other national contexts? What are the conditions for their effectiveness?

Firstly, TFPs imply and generate important changes in political thinking in order to value an agroecological and human-sized production mode.

In the Redon agglomeration, political awareness is carried by motivated activists and elected officials and comes up against the established powers and speculators. The activists are tired of running up against a kind of "glass ceiling" of what is tolerable by the agri-food industry: a few short chains reserved for conscious consumers. **The TFP gives them an opportunity to better defend their vision of the agricultural and rural world by relying on arguments related to food autonomy, environment and health. It is by going beyond the strictly agricultural "framework" that they find points of support supported by the populations and by national legislations** in order to change the balance of power.

In Toulouse, it took ten years of warnings from farmers in the area for the city to realize that farmland was disappearing. It was then a diagnosis of food autonomy that triggered the

decision to develop an action plan to restore a market garden belt of 135 ha and a supply circuit from a neighbouring agricultural territory. **The problems of urban development lead the community to a voluntary commitment to food production methods and to the preservation of agricultural land, even if it is outside its own jurisdiction.**

What is observed in these two types of territories is that the diversity of possible interventions within the TFP allows for actions in favour of agricultural land: food is no longer the privileged domain of agri-food professionals, it concerns the entire population and an important part of economic dynamism. Agricultural land is not only to be preserved for family farming, it is also precious to fight against soil sealing, to maintain biodiversity, to allow young people to carry out their projects, to improve the carbon balance and food autonomy. It is a general interest issue that makes agricultural policy more complex and closer to the representations of the individuals who live in the French "territories".

The last few decades have been devoted to the race towards enlargement, thought to be the main factor of economic soundness, profitability and viability, both in industry and in agriculture. However, the conclusions of the dialogues, diagnoses and reflections carried out in preparation for the TFP tend to call this postulate into question. Are we in the process of changing our criteria in favour of a company size that favours employment and cultivation methods that require more labour?

Secondly, TFPs help to overcome the usual professional and economic conflicts by linking the role of farmers in the territory to issues that concern many actors. One of the keys to the innovative function of TFPs is the building of new coalitions to access decision-making in order to balance the weight of lobbies. The mixing of new actors is important, including consumers, environmental associations and peasant farming movements. The goal is to obtain an acceptable arrangement that gives development possibilities to the two levers of land change: short chains and organic farming. Short chains are the most promising factor for human-scale agriculture. Indeed, organic agriculture can be produced industrially on large farms, therefore cannot prevent the concentration of land alone. On the other hand, local sales allow a better family income. The responsibility for finding an agreement between these interests is given to the local level. There can therefore be several types of arrangement depending on the place and the power relations that are expressed there. The effectiveness of the TFPs lies in this capacity to organize the interests involved. In Toulouse, a powerful metropolis has the capacity to modify marketing channels, to reorganize the sectors so that they serve the local population and not the raw material markets. In Redon, it is above all the vitality of the local agricultural fabric that can obtain results.

Thirdly, TFPs mobilize various local government competencies to act on land. The partnership approach gives local authorities the role of 'designer', of conductor. And it is at the local level that previously marginalized actors (consumers, farmers, craftsmen, shopkeepers, etc.) can participate. This is also where we can try to encourage inter-professional agreements based on concrete actions, which is difficult at the national level.

The issue of food autonomy and ecological transition quickly becomes apparent during the reflections and diagnoses: they are mandatory and make the changes and needs visible. The field competences of local authority take into account what was underestimated until then

and their sectoral policies function as relays between food and ecological issues and agricultural land: the objectives of urban planning, housing, school canteens, supply, carbon footprint, etc. have a retroactive effect on agricultural land. Thus, within local governance, it is no longer only the elected official in charge of food that is concerned, but several elected officials and several professions that contribute to the territorial "system" that is being built, a system that **integrates the land and its uses as an important factor of the general interest.**

This positions agricultural land as a common good whose value does not depend on a market dominated by urban pressure but on its capacity to provide functions that the inhabitants need. Access to local food and the preservation of biodiversity and climate are functions that Toulouse considers to be essential to urban sprawl. Urban planning and housing on the one hand, and food production on the other, are the two sides of the same resource: the soil. The TFP allows local authorities to treat them in relation to each other. The municipalities are committed to this logic with the help of the State to begin with (35 to 40,000 €), then by modifying the allocation of some of their credits, and finally by using national or European calls for projects: the TFP label has, for the investors, an image of seriousness and makes it easier to access the funds of the post-Covid stimulus plan.

## 9.5 Conclusion

Soil is threatened by various pressures and risks. Its uses as agricultural land are closely linked to choices of allocation, production practices and the content of property rights. Demographic, economic and ecological changes place it at the center of important issues. The national land policies conducted until recently sought to act directly on the market for sales and the establishment of new farmers by laws and regulations. Their effects are limited by circumventions and speculation. TFPs appear to be an attempt to act in a systemic and territorialized manner by activating a system of local actors and mobilizing multidimensional levers of action. They do not lead to regulation (which is why an association can carry out a TFP) but to criteria of choice concerning the decisions that a local authority can take according to the needs of the territory. Nowadays, these needs lead to favoring uses intended for healthy and local food, and consequently they go in the direction of allocating agricultural land to farmers in agrobiography, practicing artisanal transformation and direct sales, on relatively small farm areas.

In conclusion, we observe that the TFPs induce important changes and that they spread throughout the territory, taking different forms depending on local diagnoses. They do not **directly** respond to the needs of access to land for the younger generations, but only in a marginal way. On the other hand, they actively create **favourable conditions** for this access:

- Despite the strength of private property rights, we can observe the mobilization of land by the community in the name of the general interest, whether it be food, environmental or heritage.
- The contractual dimension between territories (Toulouse) or within the same territory (Redon) secures production methods that do not require significant investments but rather labour (organic and short chains). The profitability of a starting farmer is accessible to newcomers on small farm areas.

- The integration of new actors in local governance coalitions gives a voice to innovators who can rely on consumer demand.

In light of the powerful interests at stake in access to land for the younger generations, we believe that the legal arrangement of TFPs can have an essential role in a process towards a genuine renewal of the way land issues are perceived and managed.