



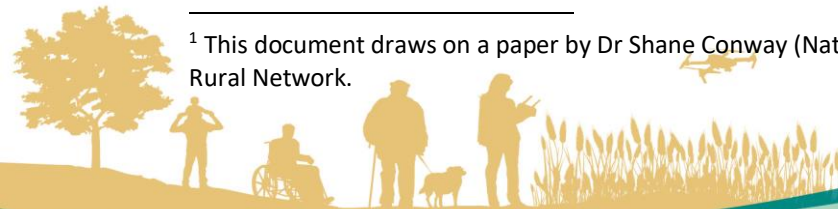
ENRD Workshop on Generational Renewal: Attracting Young Farmers and Entrepreneurs in Rural Areas

Background paper:
Policy initiatives and farmers' projects¹ - Land mobility
examples from various EU MSs

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¹ This document draws on a paper by Dr Shane Conway (National University of Ireland, Galway/Irish National Rural Network.



Introduction

Agriculture is the main land user in the European Union, accounting for more than 47% of the total land area. Agriculture and food related industries and services provide over 44 million jobs in the EU, and regular farming work for over 20 million people within the agricultural sector. To meet growing demands for food production, the EU must tackle issues including climate change, soil and water quality and shifting practices in global markets.

Family farms dominate the structure of European agriculture in terms of their numbers and their contribution to agricultural employment. There were 10.8 million farms in the EU-28 in 2013, with the vast majority of these (96.2%) classified as family farms (Eurostat, 2018). In spite of the inherent desire to keep the family farm in the family however, research indicates that older farmers often experience difficulty transferring managerial control and ownership of the family farm, even to their own children (Conway et al, 2017).

Gaining **access to land** is widely reported to be the single largest barrier facing young people attempting to enter the agricultural sector in Europe. Part of the challenge in gaining access to land is the result of an increasingly intensive process of **land concentration**. Between 2005 and 2015 the number of farms in the EU decreased by approximately 3.8 million and the average size of the farms increased by about 36%.

Generational renewal in agriculture is viewed as crucial for survival, continuity and future prosperity of the European farming industry and the broader sustainability of rural communities. In 2017, the EU Commission estimated that only 5.6% of all European farms were run by farmers under the age of 35 and over 31% of all farmers in the EU are older than 65. The number of people engaged in agriculture declined by 11.5% from 2010 to 2013. A lack of young, progressive farmers raises concerns about realising EU agricultural innovation policies or increased food demands. According to a recent European Innovation Partnership for Agriculture (EIP-AGRI) Focus Group report access to land; capital, labour and markets are fundamental issues preventing new entrants into farming.

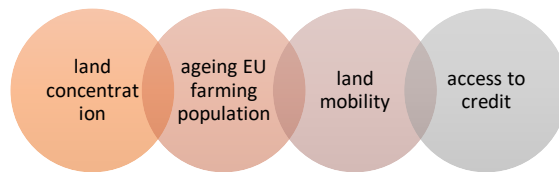


Figure 1: Some issues affecting access to land in the EU

Land mobility in agriculture (i.e. transfer of land from one farmer to another, or from one generation to the next) has emerged as one of the important issues in the course of the ongoing CAP discussions. Gaining access to land is widely reported to be the single largest barrier facing young people attempting to enter the agricultural sector in Europe however (EIP-AGRI, 2016; CEJA and DeLaval, 2017; Zagata et al., 2017). Various factors have created the current land access issues for prospective farmers. These barriers range from the older generation's reluctance to step aside, land concentration and the low supply of land for sale or rent in many regions combined with the prevailing high price of available land. Whilst land mobility is given homogenous importance throughout Europe (CEJA and DeLaval, 2017), policies and regulations relating to land differ considerably across EU Member States (Zagata et al., 2017). This can be explained partly by the differing land use patterns which have emerged from the history, the prevailing physical conditions (such as size, climatic, geographic and demographic circumstances) and the economic incentives available for particular types of activity (OECD, 1996). The European Commission therefore regards land policy as a competency of each Member State of the European Union on a national level, i.e. each country is solely responsible for their own land sales and rental markets.

Current EU agricultural and rural development policies endeavour to improve agricultural competitiveness through innovative practices, while also protecting the environment and promoting the diversification of the rural economy. To achieve this, issues such as young farmers and new entrants into farming need serious consideration with national policies facilitating access to land, finance and credit and providing knowledge and advice to young farmers and new entrants.



The following pages present examples of various policy initiatives and farmers' projects that are successfully addressing challenges in generational renewal and farming in various EU Member States.

Initiatives and schemes

Austria

In Austria, **NEL, a non-profit Austrian association** supporting new entrants into farming and raising awareness on farm succession by means of adult education, information, advice and research have been providing a matching programme called Perspective Agriculture (Perspektive Landwirtschaft) since December 2017. This farm start-up platform connects farmers without a successor to prospective, aspiring farmers. The programme's website provides information on extra-familial farm succession and farm start-ups and collects contacts legal consultants by region for example. More information can be found at: <https://www.perspektive-landwirtschaft.at/>

France²

In France, the **Répertoire Départ Installation (RDI)** is a national farm transmission tool led by experienced advisers within the French Chambers of Agriculture. This system allows farmers seeking to sell their farm or wishing to find a new partner to connect and be put in contact with candidates looking to farm. It publishes over 6,400 offers annually on its directory. The RDI also provides essential information on farm transfer and organises transmission meetings. More information can be found at: <https://www.repertoireinstallation.com/>.

Germany

Hof sucht Bauer is social enterprise in Germany that offers advice and information on farm succession and business start-up in agriculture. It aims to help preserve existing agricultural businesses and ensure the future survival of farming in Germany by facilitating the successful intergenerational transfer of farms from both inside and outside the family, depending on the circumstances. The organisation's internet portal (hofsuchtbauer.de) offers a useful online matchmaking platform called 'Hofbörse' to connect and support farm owners with young, well-trained people who want to get established in agriculture throughout Germany. Hof sucht Bauer's specialized advisory service also offers support to both sides involved in the consultation and handover process in a personal, yet professional manner to enable a successful transfer of the farm to occur. Hof sucht Bauer also organise nationwide information events that focus on domestic and non-family farm handover. Their seminars also include contributions and reports on successful succession from specialists such as tax consultants or lawyers and practitioners. More information can be found at: <https://www.hofsuchtbauer.de/>

Ireland³

The **Irish Land Mobility service** was established in 2013. It is a dedicated, proactive support service for farmers and farm families who are contemplating expansion, changing enterprise, or stepping back from farming. It provides a confidential and independent match-making service to introduce older farmers and/or land owners with young people who want to develop their own career in farming in order to establish sustainable and mutually beneficial business arrangements. The main aim of the service is to facilitate access to land through various forms of collaborative farming arrangements or Joint Farming Ventures (JFVs). Collaborative farming arrangements supported by the Land Mobility Service such as farm partnership, share farming and contract rearing have actively been promoted within Irish policy discourses as ideal stepping stones to help overcome obstacles to land access.

² more policy schemes in France are described in the relevant country report

³ more policy schemes in Ireland are described in the relevant country report

Italy

In **Italy**, **Banca delle Terre Agricole**, hereinafter referred to as 'Banca' effectively allocates farmland to new farmers. It is managed by ISMEA (Istituto di Servizi per il Mercato Agricolo Alimentare) and operates at a national level since its establishment in 2016. Banca provides a complete inventory of the supply and demand of agricultural land that become available in Italy as a result of abandonment of production activity and early retirement or land operations carried out by ISMEA. Banca is a freely accessible tool that provides open information on the natural, structural and infrastructural characteristics of the land on offer, as well as on the terms and conditions of sale and purchase of the same. More information can be found at: <http://www.ismea.it/flex/FixedPages/IT/BancaDelleTerreAgricole.php/L/IT>

The Netherlands

Landgilde is a Dutch initiative established by Land & Co that aims to match young and old farmers in order to facilitate extra-familial farm succession. The model is based on the idea of a guild, making it possible for beginning farmers of different levels of experience and skills to connect and meet with each other, and find working and learning opportunities with older farmers. Landgilde also offers information, guidance and training on farm succession and farm continuity. More information can be found at: <http://www.landgilde.nl/home/>. **Toekomstboeren** is a young and growing association of Dutch farmers for the future. Members consist of both established and experienced farmers, as well as new entrants. Besides network building, knowledge exchange and inspiration, access to land is one of their key topics. More information can be found at: <http://toekomstboeren.nl/>. **Boer zoekt Boer** 'Farmer seeks farmer' is an online platform created by the Dutch Agricultural Young People Contact (NAJK) that brings retiring farmers without a successor together with young people who would like to take over a farm. The programme then guides both parties towards a successful intergenerational farm transfer process outside of the family. More information can be found at: <https://www.najk.nl/voor-bedrijfsopvolgers/boer-zoekt-boer/>

The European Access to Land Network



The European Access to Land network brings together various civic organisations – mostly community or farmer-led initiatives - from across Europe to share experiences, practical ways of assisting farmers in accessing land and promote the significance of land mobility for agroecological transition and generational renewal. Established in 2012, it functions as an informal network of about 20 organisations from Belgium, Spain, Italy, France, U.K., Lithuania, Germany and Romania. The network aims at reconsidering land as a common good where citizens, farmers and public authorities collaborate. The main objectives are to consolidate and disseminate initiatives on access to land, and to put land issues in the spotlight

Examples of civic initiatives operating in EU MS level are presented below.

France: *Terre de Liens* was founded in 2003 and can be regarded a major actor in the field of access to land for ecological agriculture. Terre de Liens directly acquires farmland, which it holds in perpetuity for current and future generations. Terre de Liens' land is let to farmers, the majority of whom are organic and small scale. To acquire such land, Terre de Liens has created two financial tools: la Foncière, a solidarity investment company; and le Fonds, an Endowment Trust which collects investment or donations in cash or kind.

Belgium: *Terre-en-Vue* is a cooperative similar to Terre de Liens founded in 2012. Its mission is to facilitate access to land for sustainable agriculture. *De Landgenoten* is active in Flanders, Belgium. It was established in 2014, De Landgenoten helps people find land to farm, connects them with landowners and involves citizens in the funding of farms.



Spain: Terra Franca is a volunteer-run association in Catalonia working on access to land by connecting farmers or shepherds with landowners.

Germany: The German cooperative *Kulturland eG* was founded in 2013 in order to provide a larger scale structure for buying and securing land for farmers. *BioBoden* is a German land cooperative established in April 2015. It aims to preserve and develop regional, organic and diverse agriculture in Germany. It does so by buying land and renting it out to existing and new farmers at a fair price. They only buy land that is already managed organically. *Regionalwert AG* is a citizen shareholder corporation founded in 2006, that enables people to invest in small and medium enterprises that follow agroecological principals in the Freiburg region of Germany. As part of its operation, Regionalwert AG supports the development of organic agriculture and local food production, marketing and distribution. It also facilitates access to land for new entrants to farming and lends extensive support to extra-familial farm succession.

