

Farming dynamics

How can family farms feed senegal?

Rethinking productivity

Better management of space and resources

Reorienting rural economic and social development



Family farms don't need heavy equipment.

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Food security is an important issue for most developing countries, especially for sub-Saharan Africa. However, if since the 2008 food crisis, the deep conviction remains that food security requires promoting agriculture, it should be recognized that important differences remain regarding the type of agriculture to prioritise. The debate focuses on the choice in agricultural policies, between two models: family farming on the one hand and large scale farming as a business, known in West Africa as «agribusiness or agro-industry».

Following the 2008 food crisis, the Federation of Non-Governmental Organisations of Senegal (FONGs, an independent farmers movement created in 1976 which now has over 150,000 active members) felt the need to take stock of the overall agricultural context to better understand the issues, risks and opportunities that farmers' organisations faced.

By mutual agreement with its partners and with a mandate from the National Council for Rural Dialogue and Cooperation (CNCR), FONGS decided to conduct a study on the ability of family farms to feed Senegal. The aim was to assess the issue of productivity of family farms and to outline policies which would enable them to fully play their role, namely to meet the food needs of the Senegalese in a sustainable way and generate income for the actors involved.

Started in October 2008, this research has involved rural stakeholders at different levels (family farms, farmers' associations of different agro-ecological zones of the country, local authorities, regional governments, regional central government services, even NGOs). The results that were obtained provide a broad answer to the question: «How can family farms feed Senegal?»

They show that even if family farming does not currently satisfy Senegal's food needs – forcing the country to import many foodstuffs – it contributes very significantly to feeding the population, especially the rural population.

Rethinking productivity

Family farms have the capacity to feed Senegal. Official statistics show that two-thirds of the Senegalese household shopping basket (cereals, oils, fish, meat, vegetables) is composed of locally produced foods.

Improving the performance of rural family farms (agricultural, pastoral, fishing, etc.) is the most realistic and surest way of building a food sovereignty strategy. These farms have the capacity to increase production in a sustainable manner, both for the rural population and that of the cities, provided certain conditions are met.



Source: ANSD «les déterminants de l'inflation au Sénégal...» – September 2008

The constraints

Economic and institutional constraints

Unfortunately, various economic and institutional constraints limit family farms' room for manoeuvre. To innovate and increase production, both qualitatively and quantitatively, this type of agriculture requires an environment, which is both stable and conducive to these outcomes. Family farms are a vital link in a chain that involves many other stakeholders: government, private traders, even supporting organisations. It is clear that this chain currently has many weaknesses.

Despite much recent effort to improve the situation (tracks, roads, subsidised agricultural inputs and equipment ...), many impediments remain. Family farms still find it difficult to access business services in many places, both for primary production as well as for non-agricultural and off-farm work. Investment is still lacking in terms of infrastructure and equipment. The regulation of prices of agricultural products and of factors of production is very poor and the worsening land situation is worrying.

Internal constraints

Even within some family farms obstacles remain to the smooth development of activities: limited arable land, poor management and decision-making systems (particularly in parts of the Peanut Basin) or difficulty of access of women and youth to economic opportunities.

Proposals

Removing these constraints would allow family farms to increase their productivity and play a full role in the sustainable improvement of the national food situation. For this, we should firstly promote agricultural and rural policies that best enhance growth margins of family farmers, pastoralists and fishermen and, secondly, encourage the modernisation of this type of agriculture.

Promoting agricultural and rural policies

The *Loi d'Orientation Agro-Sylvo-Pastorale* (LOASP) is a very important step forward and it is essential that its provisions are quickly translated into action and effectively coordinated. With regard to food sovereignty, five points are essential:

- Continuing investment in basic infrastructure (roads, trails) and increasing structural facilities (hydro-agricultural equipment and equipment for processing, storage and conservation, etc...). Significant investment is also needed to restore soil fertility.

The most realistic and surest way of building a food sovereignty strategy.

- ✔ Strengthening and improving the effectiveness of essential economic services to family farmers (short and medium term credit, input supply, marketing, processing, etc...), ensuring they are reliable and accessible (cost, proximity) and cover all rural activities. This requires the implementation of balanced and sustainable partnerships between farmers (and their organisations) and private economic operators involved in upstream and downstream production. The role of the latter has been shown to be essential to improving sector and value chain performance.
- ✔ Supporting technological innovation in the field of production and processing, facilitating access to information and training, and, encouraging exchanges between farmers.
- ✔ Establishing mechanisms to stabilise prices of agricultural products and inputs that lead to the development of local food production.
- ✔ Ensuring family farm land tenure through consensual reform that would remove current obstacles and guarantee access to land.

It is worth noting that these measures should be accompanied by a promotion of local food products to consumers.

Encouraging the modernisation of farms

It is essential to encourage the modernisation of farms, including by strengthening their economic efficiency (choice of production, intensification), improving their internal organisation (decision making and management), better taking into account the specific interests of women and youth and the importance of their contribution, and, enhancing the skills of rural people.

This modernisation would ideally preserve the characteristics that are the strength of family farms and seek to improve their overall productivity. This certainly involves improving yields (of land and livestock) but also includes the food autonomy of the farms and control of family expenses.

Better management of space and resources

Improving the performance of family farms assumes in particular an increase in their productivity. This depends in part on the resources of the land, namely the fertility and quality of the land and sea space. Moreover, the size of the operation and access to it and its availability, also play a role, as well as the investment that the



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*Technical innovation should be supported.
Here, a woman makes oil from a harvest of peanuts..*

family agree to. This investment will only be made in an assured space, which implicitly poses the question of land legislation.

Senegal has significant potential for primary production, in other words, of the food needed for food security. This potential leads some to conclude that «there is plenty of space» and «room for everybody.» However, the space available for agro-sylvo-pastoral activities has shrunk and natural resources are experiencing a continuing decline. According to the national census of agriculture for 1998, arable land accounts for 19% of the total area of Senegal, or 3.8 million ha, of which 65% is currently under cultivation. Arable land is unevenly distributed across regions, with almost half of cultivated areas concentrated in the West – which is also the most populated region and the one best connected to major urban and international markets.

Challenges

Family farms face three major challenges with regard to accessing space and managing natural resources.

The first challenge arises from population growth, which creates «pressure» on the land. Between 1960 and 1998, despite an increase of 75% in the total area under cultivation, the area per worker fell by half, from 1.07 ha to 0.54 ha. This situation is particularly evident in the western part of the country, which is experiencing very high population densities, while the rest of the territory is generally under populated.

The second challenge, the degradation of natural resources, takes many forms: desertification of agricultural land (lower rainfall, wind erosion), reduced water resources (shorter rainy season), degradation of forest resources and vegetation cover (decrease of 10% between 1985 and 1995), decline of the pastoral system (extension of cultivated areas, pasture degradation, decline of transhumant cattle ranching and unfavourable public policies) and overfishing (overcapacity in the artisanal fisheries, excessive fishing, drought, ...). The predicted climate changes could further accelerate and worsen these troubling developments.

The last challenge is the increased competition for space and natural resources. This competition may have an ancient origin, which worsens and leads to tensions between farmers and ranchers, loggers and local people or local and foreign fishermen. Moreover, we note the allocation of agro-sylvo-pastoral and sea spaces for other uses, including as a result of rapid urbanisation and competition from other economic sectors (tourism, mining, etc.). The agricultural area on the outskirts of cities such as Dakar is being cut back while facilities for tourism flourish in maritime areas and facilities and infrastructures for industrial or mining are put in place in agricultural areas, including on the Thiès plateau. Farmers understand the need for Senegal to diversify its economy but decisions are usually taken behind closed doors, and to their detriment, and the development of agro-business constitutes a form of competition that is particularly worrisome to family farmers. Until recently, traders have invested primarily in the upstream and downstream of primary production. Family farmers recognise the importance of processing industries (industrial tomato, fish, cotton, peanut, etc.), which stimulate production if they secure markets and prices. Nevertheless, few traders have invested so far in primary

production with the exception of fishing (semi-industrial fishing accounts for a third of the volume harvested), forestry, poultry, etc.

The massive entry of agribusiness in agricultural production is a worry for farmers who are concerned about the large areas involved if current or planned projects materialise. The bio-fuel programme envisages an allocation of 320,000 ha in 2012, the GOANA¹ greatly increases the demand for land leading to situations where some rural communities have distributed more land than available (especially in the rural community of Mbane). The ways in which land may be allocated also pose problems because current allocation procedures are not transparent. They do not fit into the existing legal framework and the environmental and social impact of a proliferation of highly capitalised agricultural enterprises has not been assessed. There are reports of a draft land reform law that could lead to family farmers being excluded in certain areas in favour of foreign companies.



The development of agro-business constitutes a form of competition that is particularly worrisome to family farmers.

Farmers' Proposals

Dialogue between the actors lead to five proposals:

- ☛ Ensure security of tenure for family farmers, who have no formal tenure rights. Land reform is needed in order to update legislation and to regulate in law the land re-parcelling currently underway in local societies («illegal transactions») or that which will be necessary to ensure the economic viability of some family farms.
- ☛ Redefine and clarify the rules for exploiting other resources. The pastoral system is recognized by the LOASP as a mode of development. It should be subject to regulations that protect the rights of breeders (pastures, rangelands) and regulate their practices. Some regulations should be changed in the fisheries sector.
- ☛ Promote collaborative management of natural resources at the local level, taking into account regional specificities. With the decentralisation process, competencies in terms of natural resource management have been transferred to rural commu-

1: Great agricultural offensive for food and abundance - launched by the Senegalese government in 2008 in response to the food crisis, which also served as a pretext to allocate large areas with a vengeance to public officials and businessmen, and to religious leaders.

nities. It is necessary to respect the powers devolved to them and to develop instruments that allow for permanent assessment of the state of natural resources and procedures to ensure a dialogue between elected officials and citizens in order to improve local governance.

- Implement ambitious programmes to improve the sustainable productivity of land and animals. Several avenues can be explored in order to restore soil fertility and promote more sustainable business models: incentives for agro-forestry, integrated agriculture and livestock, a large-scale programme to restore soil fertility.
- Implement rigorous policy planning to achieve better distribution of the population throughout the country by improving living conditions and making peripheral areas more attractive. This means prioritising support for economic development in remote areas and the diversification of rural nonfarm activities.

Reorienting rural economic and social development

Besides food security and sustainable management of space and natural resources, Senegal faces two other challenges: youth employment and sustainable improvement of living conditions and incomes of a significant portion of the population. We must therefore strive to broaden the discussion by addressing the current role and potential of family farms in the construction of a new local and regional economy, which can foster wealth generation, job creation and social and territorial rebalancing.

The challenge of youth employment

According to current projections, the Senegalese workforce will continue to increase until at least 2050. This is an important asset for economic development because this new labour force will increase the wealth that can be produced. However, this can only happen if the economy is able to absorb the growing labour force by creating activities, wage employment and new self-employment.

The challenge of sustainably improving the living conditions and incomes of a significant proportion of the population

In Senegal, poverty is declining overall, but still very present, especially in rural areas where 65% of households are poor. The survey conducted in 2008 as part of

the Ruralstruc study² of a thousand rural households confirms the high incidence of poverty in rural areas: average incomes are all below the national gross domestic product per capita. And, with the exception of the delta, revenues are below the poverty line defined at the regional level.

These two challenges are interrelated and it is imperative to address them for ethical, economic and social stability reasons. The answer is clearly to increase the production of wealth, but also to distribute the wealth produced more equitably and to reduce the imbalances that persist between urban and rural areas, between regions and within each region.

Rural areas have significant assets to help meet these challenges

Senegal is a predominantly rural country

The majority of Senegalese still live in rural areas (51%). Moreover, this official percentage that 49% of Senegalese live in urban areas cannot mask the rural character of the country, because in this last batch, 46% live in secondary «urban» clusters that have emerged and grow between the cities and the countryside. The rural population is still in the majority. And this trend should continue through 2025 at least. Rural areas therefore remain the primary provider of the labour force.

Rural people have a vital role in the economic and social development of the country and regions

They are an important consumer market (87% of households). Regional centres are of growing importance to the national economy (Touba, Diaobé, Dahra, Khombole, etc.), though agro-sylvo-pastoral activities continue to play a pivotal role. The decline in the primary sector's contribution to GDP (on average 14%, over the last five years) should not obscure the significant spill over effects on other sectors of the economy (food industry, transport, trade, etc.).

The potential of the rural population is still undervalued

Significant efforts have been made in favour of rural areas in recent years: social investment on the one hand (access to drinking water in rural areas up from 56% in 2000 to 61% in 2005, elementary education attendance up from 72% in 2002 to over 86% in 2007, access to health care up from 33% in 2002 to 52% in 2005) and productive investment in agriculture on the other, including through the special programmes, plan REVA³ and GOANA.

2: World Bank / ASPRODEB

3: The REVA plan (Back to Agriculture) is a development policy of the Government of Senegal based on agricultural production and the creation of hubs to develop agriculture through horticulture and cereal farms for young people.

Family farms can feed Senegal



Plenary session of the International Forum.

CNCR and FONGS invited a wide variety of stakeholders, partners and government officials from the world of agriculture and rural development to Dakar, between 29th November and 1st December 2010, to discuss the capacity of family farms to feed the people of Senegal. The Forum was attended by 1,037 people representing various structures from some two dozen countries. The exchange confirmed the results of studies conducted by the FONGS farmers' associations. A memorandum was read at the end of the forum in which family farms were recognized as conservationists, managers and users of natural resources such as land, water, forests and biodiversity.

Overall, the forum allowed the farmers' movement in Senegal to display the current and potential place and role of family farms. Sen-

egalese farmers and stakeholders at the forum made commitments within the framework of their activities, and made calls to the state and policy makers to contribute to:

- improve the productivity of family farms
- improve control and management of space and resources,
- stimulate rural economies and societies.

FONGS for its part drew up a new strategic plan for 2011-2015, which will be its primary tool to assist in the implementation of the conclusions of the forum.

Family farms are at the heart of economic and social dynamics

The vast majority of rural households reside on family farms (9/10). In an unfavourable environment, family farms are the foundation for various economic processes related to the diversification of rural activities.

To increase their income, farmers are in fact trying to increase their number of professional activities. A few examples are:

- Para-agricultural activities: processing and selling agricultural products. Many women engage in processing activities (rice in the river valley or peanuts in the peanut basin).

- Non-agricultural activities and «new trades»: rural urbanisation and the flow of people has led to new trades appearing such as masons, painters, carpenters, electricians, heating, even mechanics.

The Ruralstruc survey shows that agriculture remains the cornerstone of rural households' activities. But its share in overall average household income varies by region: 70% in Upper Casamance, 50% in the delta and in central and southern parts of the peanut basin, 30 to 40% in the north of the peanut basin and in the south-east. Thus, multiple activities on family farms is becoming the norm. In the north of the peanut basin, for example, in four out of five households non-farm activities have become their primary source of income. This situation is especially true in areas better connected to the urban labour market.

Proposals

The economic and social fabric of rural areas must be strengthened through the implementation of a vigorous policy of territorial planning. This would promote rebalancing between regions and within regions. By focusing on family farms, 3 objectives are achieved:

- ✔ A more attractive life in rural areas
- ✔ A more efficient rural economy, creating wealth
- ✔ Greater empowerment of rural stakeholders

However, this situation can only be achieved under certain conditions.

- ✔ Put agriculture at the heart of development policies and thus recognise the strength that family farms represent (promote the modernisation of family farms and improve supply chain organisation and ensure equitable distribution of the wealth that is produced);
- ✔ Enhance the vitality of regional economic areas by fostering the emergence and consolidation of regional-secondary urban and rural clusters, and, of a new urban-rural approach, so that rural areas are not continuously held back and confined solely to primary production;
- ✔ Implement a rigorous planning policy;
- ✔ Promote women and men obtaining qualifications and employment with special attention to the rural youth (training);
- ✔ Improve governance at all levels: get local stakeholders to take greater responsibility and encourage initiatives (decentralise the resources which are needed to implement the powers transferred to local governments and establish mechanisms for consultation and tools for defining and implementing local, departmental and regional development plans);
- ✔ Improve the terms of Senegal's participation in international trade by promoting the advantages offered by sub-regional integration and continuing to negotiate the setting of fairer rules (WTO, EPA).

Conclusion

Gaining recognition of family farms as major stakeholders in Senegal's development is a long process. This strategic goal cannot succeed without continuous monitoring of the situation in the field, or consolidating the gains of family farmers, or further research – for instance, pastoral activity is not yet sufficiently taken into account. In addition, considerable research has enabled FONGS to open debate within the farmer movement, both at national and sub-regional levels.

In the end, three main conditions are required if family farms are to feed Senegal in the future:

- ✔ To improve the performance of family farms, firstly **their productivity needs to be reassessed**, taking into account the additional functions that these farms provide: agro-forestry-pastoral production, non-agricultural production, household consumption, land management, transmission of knowledge and social values.
- ✔ Family farms must also **make better use of their space** and renew their natural resource base to produce in a sustainable manner.
- ✔ It is also important that these farms are part of **a regional economic and social fabric which stimulates progress**, and which generates a beneficial impact on the rural economy and living conditions.

Reflection is underpinned by three major questions:

What will become of Senegal's farmers?

What are their chances of thriving through family farming? What, in each region, are the thresholds of farm sustainability which assure farmers and their children a future? What will happen to farmers threatened with losing their land? What future can rural youth count on? What training should they be offered?

What does the future hold for rural Senegal?

What are Senegal's rural sources of economic and social dynamism, which the country can draw on? Will existing disparities of distributed space, which generate instability, intensify or subside? How can the relationship between cities and the countryside evolve? Will rural Senegal suffer or benefit from globalization?

What will become of the family farmer movement?

What vision can the movement offer farmers to restore their hope? What battles should it fight? What strategies of alliance and mobilization will it develop?

This issue of Farming Dynamics was written by Francis Cajot, SOS Faim's Partnership Manager for Senegal, and Papa Assane Diop, of FONGS's technical department.

SOS Faim and the farmers' organisations

For several years, SOS Faim supports different farmers' organisations in Africa and Latin America. SOS Faim publishes *Farming Dynamics* which deals with the challenges faced by agricultural producers' and farmers' organisations in their development.

This publication is available for download in French, English and Spanish on SOS Faim's website: www.sosfaim.org.

Apart from *Farming Dynamics*, SOS Faim publishes another newsletter, **Zoom microfinance**: as with all development tools, we have to analyse the aims, models and implementation conditions of aid to microfinance institutions. It is with this purpose in mind that Sos Faim publishes *Zoom microfinance*.

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