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Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# **Identifying the “family farm”**

## **An informal discussion of the concepts and definitions**

Elizabeth Garner and Ana Paula de la O Campos

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# *Identifying the Family Farm: A Discussion of the Concepts and Definitions*

## *Background Paper for The State of Food and Agriculture 2014*

*Elisabeth Garner and Ana Paula de la O Campos<sup>1</sup>*

### **Abstract**

The definition of family farm varies across countries and contexts. We reviewed 36 definitions and uses of the term “family farm” by academics, government and civil society organisations that describe the characteristics that make family farms unique. After reviewing these concepts we conclude that the majority of definitions recognize the role of family labour and the role of the family in managing the farm operation. However, the notion of family farming seems to go beyond farming capacity, size and orientation. The term is sometimes also used to capture ecological, social, cultural and environmental objectives and therefore has close ties to the local culture and the rural community. This paper concludes that a uniform definition of the term “family farm” is difficult because the term is not applicable to all contexts. Instead of a definition we propose a concept of the term that highlights the most defining characteristic of family farms - the reliance on family labour - and that recognizes the linkages between its agricultural functions and its economic, environmental, reproductive, social and cultural functions. The role of family farms in food security and rural development needs to be looked at from these perspectives. This definition is the following: “Family Farming is a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family labour, both women’s and men’s. The family and the farm are linked, coevolve and combine economic, environmental, reproductive, social and cultural functions.”

**Key words:** family farm, family farming, small-holder farming, agricultural farm labour, farm size

**JEL codes:** D10, D13, Q10, Q18

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# 1. Introduction

The last decades have seen great changes in the agricultural landscape, which has affected family farms in several ways, particularly in their access to resources. First, as explained by Deininger (2011), agriculture does not merely bear the traditional objective of food production as more crops for biofuels are being produced in a wide range of countries. Second, there has been a renewed interest in agricultural production with a national food security focus, notably following the food crisis in 2007/08. This event increased concerns of some countries to secure food in a globalized price market, which led to higher pressures on fertile lands. Third, there has been an increase in the demand of land for environmental services as a result of growing concerns for the environment and climate change.

Adding to the challenge, food chains have become increasingly global. Family farmers tend to face greater difficulties in joining global markets and value chains, as food processing, technology development, and marketing are dominated by a handful of international actors who set the rules of the game.

We often hear about these and other problems faced by family farms. But despite the common use of the term *family farm* in the literature, authors seldom define or locate them within well-defined categories of agricultural production systems. The definitions of *family farming* vary widely depending on country, context, author, and political motivation.

With the purpose of better understanding the concept of family farms, we reviewed 36 definitions and uses of the term by academics, governments and nongovernmental organizations.<sup>2</sup> The motivations of this review were to: understand the differences between the terms “smallholder farming” and “family farming”; identify the aspects that make “family farming” different from other agricultural production systems; and finally, to assess whether or not the existing definitions address the current realities in agriculture and rural transformations.

The definitions we explored make reference to several aspects of *family farming*, especially in terms of context and purpose. However, notions of size, family labour use and management, remain defining characteristics. Berdegúe and Fuentealba (2011) have observed that actors and authors as diverse as CEPAL (1982), Lipton (2005), and the World Bank (2007), have forged a strong consensus that family farming is characterized by small farms that are family-operated, and make no or limited use of non-family hired labour. Figure 1 summarizes the aspects of family farms found in this literature review.<sup>3</sup> Among the 36 definitions and “uses of the term” reviewed:

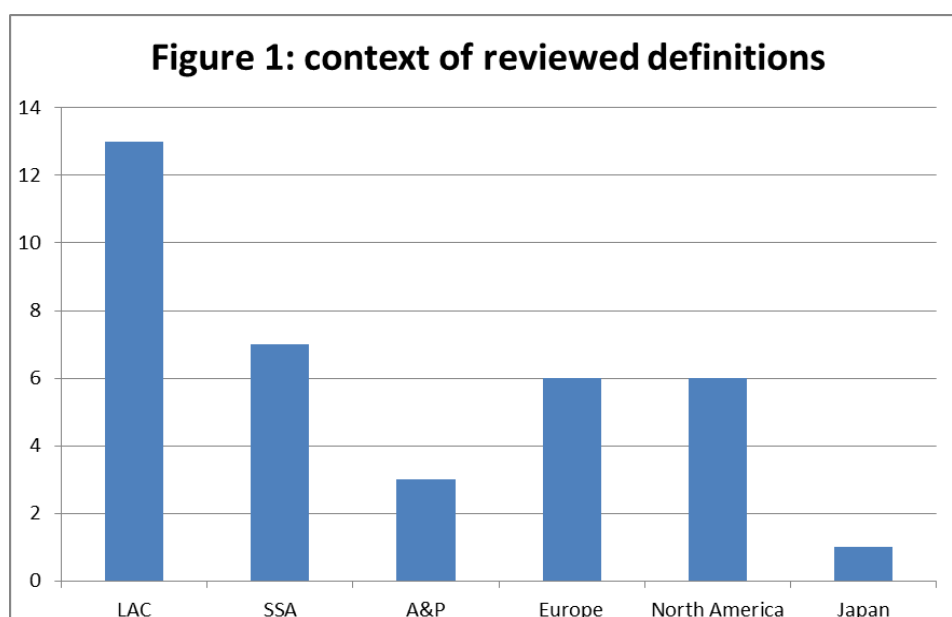
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<sup>2</sup> We searched the terms “family farming”, “family farm”, family agriculture” in three languages (English, Spanish and French) in the following databases: google scholar, ScienceDirect, the UN Common Database, FAO, EconPapers, among others. We also searched for documents from research institutions, NGOs and government agencies that investigate, promote or support family farming. We did not look at the term “agricultura campesina” or “peasant agriculture” although we recognize the overlapping similarities between this term and that of family farming.

<sup>3</sup> In the review we included sources from both developed and developing countries. We recognize that the realities and challenges of family farms vary widely according to context, which is confirmed by the literature. Academic definitions of family farming in more developed agricultural systems tend to focus on the relationship between the farm and the household, as well as the relationship between the farm and individuals within the household. Studies about these farms discussed the context of farmers deciding to exit agriculture, as well as identification of who in the family would inherit the farm, particularly on gender lines. There were articles discussing the experience of current family farmers as children and their decisions to continue the family farm. The approach of the literature was about the family farm as a business and a choice rather than a means for subsistence or survival. The literature contrasted with that on family farmers in the developing world, which focused more on the family farm limitations and barriers to competitive participation in markets. This leaves us



- 23 refer to farming systems in the developing world. From these, 13 make reference to Latin American family farms; 7 make reference to Sub-Saharan family farms; and 3 to Asia and the Pacific.
- 13 definitions refer to farming systems in developed countries: 6 refer to farms in Europe; 6 describe farming systems in the United States of America and Canada; and 1 describes the family farms in Japan.
- 19 definitions came from academic research; 10 from government laws, policies or programmes; and 7 from international organizations.



There are common aspects used for defining the family farm. We observed 14 different aspects or characteristics used for determining family farms. The average definition had 3 to 4 aspects with a minimum of one and a maximum of 6.

The definitions reviewed included the following:

- **Labour:** Family farms rely on family members to provide labour with some definitions also stipulating a share or number of individuals as hired labour, or the duration of employment. Twenty-three out of the total 36 definitions refer to this aspect.
- **Management:** The family is responsible for the management of farm production. This aspect is found as a stand-alone characteristic or in conjunction with the premise of family labour. Twenty-two definitions refer to this aspect.
- **Size:** Definitions make reference or stipulations for farm size, either in terms of land extension and/or in terms of agricultural production. Seventeen of the references discuss size.

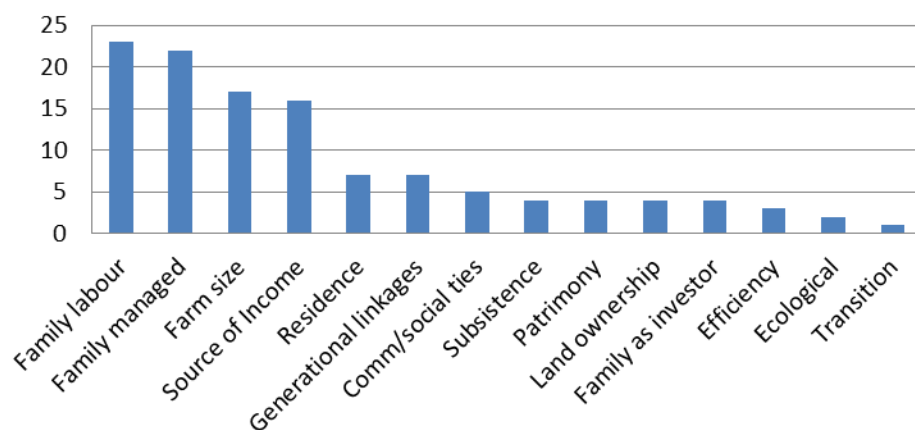
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with the impression that, in developing countries, the family farmer is seen as someone who needs assistance and support; in developed countries, the family farm is more of an institution to protect or preserve.

- **Provision of a sufficient source of livelihood:** Reference to the farm as a source of family livelihood. Some definitions defined family farms as subsistence-oriented; others as market-oriented in order to generate sufficient income and be considered as a sustainable source of living. Sixteen of the references discuss this aspect.
- **Residence:** The premise that the farm is the place of residency of the family. Some definitions stipulate a minimum distance between the farm and the family dwelling. Seven of the definitions include this aspect.
- **Family ties and generational aspects of family farms:** Some definitions refer to generational or family linkages. For example, conceiving the farm as a unit of succession or as a source of inheritance within the family; and/or stipulating the requirement of marriage or blood among farm owners/managers. These aspects are mentioned in seven of the total reviewed definitions.
- **Community and social networks:** Family farming as a link to the community or the social implications of farming is mentioned in five of the definitions.
- **Subsistence oriented:** premises of subsistence-level production or primary goal of food production for family consumption, was explicitly included in four of the definitions.
- **Patrimony:** Definitions view the family farm as a family asset (*patrimonio*) for land, capital or skills/knowledge. Four definitions mention this.
- **Land ownership:** Premises requiring the family to own the land on which they farm is included in four of the 36 definitions reviewed.
- **The family as the main investor:** The family as the primary source of investment for the farm was an aspect included in four of the definitions.
- **Efficiency and capacity:** References to difficulties of the family farm to adopt new farming technologies, efficiency issues, as well as the capacity of farming families to operate the farm were found in three of the definitions.
- **Ecological sustainability:** The family farm is viewed as a source for ecological or sustainable agriculture in two of the definitions.
- **Transition:** Only one of the definitions referred to the transition of the family farm beyond the family labour and management capacity.

Because of the great diversity in family farms across regions, no uniform categorization can yield a global and unique definition of family farming. Nevertheless, a concept of family farming exists and its important role in rural development and in the agricultural sector has been and continues to be recognized across all regions in the world. In the next part, we review the different aspects of family farms in more detail.

**Figure 2: characteristics defining the family farm  
(36 definitions)**



## 2. Definitions of Family Farms

In this section we discuss some of the most cited aspects of family farms in the reviewed definitions and concepts of family farming.

### 2.1 The role of Family Labour in Family Farms

One of the earliest definitions that refer to the concept of the “family farm” comes from the United States. In an article that dates back to 1944, Johnson describes the threat experienced by family farms in the Corn Belt region from large agri-businesses. He argued that the future of family farms was not as certain as it had been in the past. This definition makes a distinction between subsistence farms and highly-commercialized farms and emphasizes the role of family labour and management:

“First, unlike the subsistence farm, it provides for the family a satisfactory living and in addition a chance to accumulate savings for old age; and second, unlike the highly commercialized farm, the family farm depends very largely on the labour and management of the farm family with some exchange help from neighbors to carry on its productive activities. Family farm operation does not depend on hired labour.” (pp. 530)

Another article from the United States published a few years later by Scoville (1947) evaluated three definitions present in the United States at the time. These definitions refer to management, family labour and size:

1. "A family farm is one on which the farm operator makes most of the managerial decisions, participates regularly in farm work, and on which his role as employer of labour is minor relative to his other functions."
2. "A family size farm is one which, operated by a family of average size and managerial ability, will permit reasonably efficient use of labour-saving equipment and of the family labour force over the life cycle of the family."
3. "The desirable size of farm for the family of average managerial ability would be a farm that would permit the reasonably efficient use of labour-saving equipment and of the family labour force over the life cycle of the family and provide with average management a labour and management return adequate to maintain a socially acceptable level of living." (pp 518-19)

Among the literature reviewed, the most commonly cited definition of family farming was that by Gasson and Errington (1993).<sup>4</sup> The authors focused on six elements regarding the relationship between the farm and the household, highlighting family and territory ties in addition to family labour and management:

1. Business ownership is combined with managerial control in the hands of business principals.
2. These principals are related by kinship or marriage.
3. Family members (including these business principals) provide capital to the business.
4. Family members including business principals do farm work.
5. Business ownership and managerial control are transferred between the generations with the passage of time.
6. The family lives on the farm.

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<sup>4</sup> According to "Google Scholar" Gasson and Errington (1993) has been cited 311 times.

In response to the criticism that Gasson and Errington's definition was too broad and placed too much emphasis on land ownership, management and the intergenerational transfer and too little on labour, Djurfeldt (1996) offered the following two-part definition of the "notional family farm":

"(1) The notional family farm is characterized by an overlapping between three functional units: (a) the unit of production (i.e., the farm), (b) the unit of consumption (i.e., the household) and (c) the unit of kinship (i.e., the family).

(2) For its reproduction, the notional family farm requires family labour, i.e., labour performed by members of the family/household, (and here we are not referring mainly to managerial work). This implies that, if the farm no longer requires family labour for its reproduction, it is no longer a notional family farm, although it may still be a farm family business." (p.52)

Kasimis and Papadopoulos (1997) argued that Djurfeldt's definition relied heavily on his research experience in the developing world and over-emphasized the requirement of family labour for the classification of a family farm. The authors therefore suggested that the family labour characteristic be weighed less in terms of more advanced agriculture systems and offered a new definition for the "Greek case" where the large inflow of low-paid migrant workers had decreased the importance of family labour:

"the family farm constitutes that form of production in which the ownership of the means of production and labour power co-exist in the same production unit, without a discrete division between capital and labour with family members."(p. 103)

This debate exemplifies that while the role of family labour is the most common aspect of the definitions reviewed, the specifics on the amount of family labour used vary in the literature. Definitions either refer to the amount of labour hired - mainly in comparison to the number of family members actually working on the farm - and the duration of employment. Some definitions specifically outline the ratio of hired labour to family members and the amount of time per year hired labour works on the farm (Breinmyer and Frederick, 1993). Other definitions are as vague as simply stating that "hired labour [is] to be seasonal", or "reasonable", or simply that family farms have "limited employment of hired labour" (Márquez and Ramos, 2009).

We found several proportions of family labour to hired labour in the definitions: "primarily" (NEF/OXFAM, 2006; Márquez and Ramos, 2009); "substantial" (USDA, 2005); "most" (Breinmyer and Frederick, 1993; Thapa, 2009), and; "largely" (Berdegué and Fuentealba)". The definition of Sanches Peraci (2011) allows for the "use of contract or wage labour as a complementary resource". For Scoveille, farm labour is the primary responsibility of the household, and the "role of employer of labour is minor" (1947).

Also, family labour is viewed either as a positive or negative aspect in family farming systems. While it is often cited that family labour is a critical resource for family farms (Toulmin and Guèye, 2003), and that they offer a "competitive advantage" (Poulton et al., 2010), others suggest that the primary use of family labour is an indication of the family farmers' inability to hire paid labour for agriculture production (Angemi, 2002). Paris et al. (2005) also argues that this aspect reflects the insufficient labour supply in some rural areas, possibly due to outmigration and as such not a possibility even if the family could hire labour (Paris et al., 2005).

Djurfeldt's is the only definition that we found recognizing that a family farm can still be a family farm or business even when it no longer "requires" family labour (1996). For example, a family may still be operating the farm with hired labour to fill the gaps left during times of outmigration, particularly by *de jure* female headed households when male family members migrate (Paris et al., 2005; Radel et al., 2012).

## 2.2 Farms Managed by the Head of Household or the Family

Some definitions give more weight to the managerial role of the family (USDA, 2005; Márquez and Ramos, 2009; Bélières et al., 2002; Toulmin and Guèye, 2003; Iwamoto, 2006). Management of the family farm includes decision-making over crop choice and overall production (Bélières, et al., 2002), as well as all the associated assets and allocation of labour (Toulmin and Guèye, 2003).

Some definitions were as specific as to identify the manager as the “head of household” or “landowner” (Sanches Peraci, 2011) or as vague as to refer to this person as the “non-hired operator” (USDA, 2005). In Brazil, “administration of the establishment” is one criterion to access public policies directed to family farming (Berdegúe and Fuentealba, 2011). The same principle applies in Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay (Márquez and Ramos, 2009).

Bélières et al. (2002) also make a distinction between the managerial role of the family farmer and that of the head of a company “who may be absent himself from the scene of production and who is concerned mainly (possibly having delegated management responsibility) with the return on his assets and invested capital” (p.18). This aspect further differentiates the operations of a family farm and a non-family managed business in agricultural market systems. In Japan, Iwamoto (2006) views the family as an investor, owner and manager of a farm.

## 2.3 Farm Size

In the literature about developing countries, the term “family farming” is often used interchangeably with that of “smallholder farms”. In this context, references to size often mean either the size of landholdings or its market position with respect to larger commercial farms.

Summarized by Dixon et al. (2004), the term ‘smallholder’ refers to the limited resource endowments of farmers compared to those of other farmers in the sector. For them, smallholder farmers can cultivate as little as one hectare or as much as ten hectares or more, depending on population density and agro-ecological zones:

“Often, no sharp distinction between smallholders and other larger farms is necessary. Smallholders represent a large number of holdings in many developing countries and their numbers have increased...”<sup>5</sup>

However, other authors propose a size limit to smallholders and family farms in certain regions or contexts. For example, Thapa (2009) states that the most common measure of a smallholder farm in Asia and the Pacific is one or two hectares or less of cropland:

“Small farms, also known as family farms, have been defined in a variety of ways. The most common measure is farm size: many sources define small farms as those with less than 2 hectares of cropland.” (p. 6)

Berdegúe and Fuentealba (2011) reviewed the use of the definition of the smallholder sector as that comprised by farms of less than 2 hectares. They found that while a limit of 2 hectares perhaps fits the distribution of landholdings in Asia, it certainly did not in the Latin American context. They argue that “this procedure distorts our understanding of smallholder agriculture, and misguides the design of public strategies and policies, as it reduces the smallholder to a fraction of its real size, particularly if measured in terms of economic and social contributions” (pp.5-6).

They reacted by offering the following simplification for the purpose of designing and implementing different development strategies, policies and programmes among smallholders (2011):

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<sup>5</sup> On-line document, available at <http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5784e/y5784e02.htm>.

- “• Asset-poor smallholders in territorial and regional contexts that are not conducive to economic growth and social development;
- Smallholder agriculture with some limitations of assets in territorial and regional contexts where there is a measure of economic growth and social development;
- Asset-rich smallholders in territorial and regional contexts that are very conducive to economic growth and social development.”(p. 10)

As an alternative to farm size, Breinmyer and Frederick (1993) offer the following definition that suggests that size is not as relevant as labour capacity:

“Family farms are implicitly of modest size, but size is defined in terms of what family labour can care for. Acreage<sup>6</sup>, investment or volume of sales figures are less applicable.”<sup>7</sup>

This was earlier supported by Scoville (1947), who also argued that the desirable size of the farm is one that “would permit the reasonably efficient use of labour-saving equipment and of the family labour force over the life cycle of the family and provide with average management a labour and management return adequate to maintain a socially acceptable level of living.” (p. 512).

Scoville also argued that, “no size of farm is large enough to ensure profit” and that incomes will vary even between different farms of the same size. The farm must then result in an “adequate income”, or “return adequate to maintain a socially acceptable level of living”.

## 2.4 Family Inter-Generational Considerations

Of the social aspects of family farming, the generational component is one of the most prevalent in the definitions. Making reference to the Gasson and Errington (1993) definition presented above, Riley (2009) defines family farms as those with more than one generation of the same family involved in the farm enterprise. In his opinion, this is one of the most important aspects in distinguishing family farms from other farming practices and suggests that there are longer-term impacts of the farming operations and production. This means that the success of the family farm at a given time may not only impact the current operators’ (manager or head of household, the family members) income and food security, but also the sustainability of family farming as a livelihood for the future generation.

Issues of inheritance were the most explicit reference to the generational linkages that family farms create. Gasson and Errington (1993) and Iwamoto (2006) distinctly include inheritance in their definitions of family farms. The former state that business ownership and managerial control are transferred between the generations with the passage of time (1993); Iwamoto (2006), refers to the “family as a main unit of farm succession and inheritance”

## 2.5 Social and Family Ties in Family Farms

Some definitions explicitly referred to the territorial and social aspects of family farming. Ahearn et al. (2009) state that “family farms usually provide the family a place of residence, with intergenerational links, and a variety of nonmarket social and natural amenities”. Toulmin and Guèye (2003) also affirm that a “socio-cultural dimension” is one of three broad dimensions to consider when discussing family farms:

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<sup>6</sup> Acreage is an area of land measured in acres, which is used in a number of different systems, including the imperial and U.S. customary systems. One acre equals approximately 0.405 hectares.

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G820>

“... this form of agriculture is mainly reliant on the human resource base of the family, strongly anchored in a particular community, through a web of relationships and strategies, both individual and collective, and reinforced by values of solidarity and long-term commitment.” (p 8)

In terms of family ties, Toulmin and Guèye (2003) discuss the “contractual” rewards and reciprocity that family members get from contributing to the family farm. While farm production relies on the contributions of family members, they receive food and shelter in return; support in times of illness and old age; and help with costs of marriage, tax payments, and so on, including right to the family property when a division of the estate occurs (Toulmin and Guèye, 2003).

This view is supported by the discussion of Jervell (1999) in the context of Norway, who sees the family farm as a form of retirement security, especially on farms where several generations lived. This shared labour responsibility allowed younger generations in Norway to take off-farm employment. As the older generations cared for the farm, younger farm household members could take positions in other occupations, the income of which came back as an investment in the farm (Jervell, 1999).

The family farm is also seen as the unit of broader connections with the community and the territory. Iwamoto (2006) defines the family as a “tie to society for farm”, and similarly the Brazilian Government recognizes the connection between agriculture and more traditional rural communities.

## **2.6 Subsistence or Profitable Business but Trapped in Transition**

Several definitions imply that family farming equals smallholder farming and some state that the family farm is mainly subsistence-oriented. As referenced in Thapa (2009) in Hazell et al., 2007:

“Small farms, also known as family farms... where the primary aim of the farm is to produce the bulk of the household’s consumption of staple foods.” (p.6)

Also, Toulmin and Guèye (2003) state that the priority of family farm production is subsistence in West Africa:

“The principal objective of the family farm is first to provide its members with food and shelter, second, to sell whatever is needed to gain cash for satisfying the range of other needs of the household, such as clothing, medicines, school fees, investment in new equipment, and tax payments.” (p.7)

Conversely, another branch of the literature states that in a family farm income from farming should go beyond subsistence: that farming is the principal source of the family livelihood or income and/or that the production of the farm must be at a level that it participates in the market. For example, both the United States Department of Agriculture and the Brazilian Government require that the income of the family farm come predominantly from the farm in order to access public services directed towards them (Márquez and Ramos, 2009).

Similarly, for Breinmyer and Frederick (1993) in the USA, a family farm does not mean an unprofitable small farm. Rather, it is one where efficient production methods enable farmers to earn acceptable incomes in line with their personal abilities. This notion is also supported in Latin America by Diaz Osorio (2007) who argues that among Latin American countries there is a significant number of family farmers who are not subsistence farmers but that either asset endowment or the context is constraining their transition into commercial farming.

Other definitions refer to the farm as a source of livelihood for the family, but do not determine a percentage of household income deriving from agriculture to be considered a family farm. NEF and OXFAM, in attempt to have an inclusive definition and reference point for rural farming households, refer to “... ‘family farmers’, ‘family farms’ and ‘family farming’ [as] the highly heterogeneous



population of rural people whose livelihoods depend to some degree on farming...”(NEF/OXFAM, 2006).

While the transition of a family farm into larger production is rarely included in the analyses that we reviewed, the growth of the family’s operations is often cited as an economic development goal and necessity for family farms to survive. For example, Dumas (1995) states that a family farm often cannot provide for the next generation without expansion. Also, Djurfeldt’s (1996) definition is one of the few that mention that family farms can be in transition; the ability to move beyond reliance on unpaid family labour implies that farming households can increase their agricultural production and, that in doing so, they do not revoke their status as a family business.

Berdegúe and Escobar (2002) propose a framework to categorize family farms in three broad groups, based on land, labour and/or capital asset endowment, and a favourable/unfavourable environment in the market. Based on this framework, Schejtman (2008) with data of 12 countries from Latin America calculates that there are 14 million family farms, of which 60% correspond to subsistence smallholders (10 million), 28% are small farmers in transition (4 million), and 12% are consolidated family farms (1 million). Similarly, Diaz Osorio (2007) discusses a typology of family farm composition, rather than a narrow definition. In his typology of family farms in Chile, Osorio allows for different size of farms based on the number of people they employ (family and/or hired) and the existing sources of income (agricultural and non-agricultural). The Berdegúe and Fuentealba (2011) review, as well as certain descriptions of the family farmer by USDA, support a typology form of definition based on the notions of market integration.

### 3. The Unique Aspects of Family Farms

One of the main purposes of this review is to identify the unique aspects of family farms vis-à-vis the concept of smallholders. While both concepts highlight limitations in terms of farm size and labour capacity, as well as the barriers these farms face in market participation, this review has already pointed to some distinct characteristics of family farms.

More specifically these include the family and community aspects, as well as the generational implications. The family as a unit of the community, in the context of family dynamics, local knowledge, social connections, and community identity, are essential for understanding and supporting rural development. The family farm can be an important entry point for broadening this understanding.

The question of maintaining and supporting family farming as an agriculture production system is important for rural development. It is often stated that smallholders are considered the backbone of agricultural development because of the great number of such farms; however, the concept of family farming involving linkages to broader rural socio-economic aspects, could more meaningfully be considered the backbone of rural development and environmental sustainability. We do not mean to say that the demographic overlap between smallholders and family farmers is considerable, but that the political and conceptual discourse of family farms encourages us to look at their needs more broadly beyond land size and production.

For family farmers, agricultural production is a livelihood strategy and ensures food security directly for the family and household. It is also a way of life. In Jervell's words (1999) the concept encapsulates the importance of not only the land, but also the tradition of family farming, in the context of Norway:

"Agricultural land was scarce but traditionally highly valued by the inhabitants, who brought home money from work outside the area and invested it locally. Owning land was also seen as an insurance strategy. Family histories, which are kept alive by passing on farms across generations, included periods of unemployment, war and severe hunger, where families without land were always worse off." (p. 111)

Below we discuss several unique aspects of the concept of family farms, based on the literature that we reviewed and try to put these definitions into the context of the current agricultural landscape and rural transformations.

#### 3.1 Demographic changes: Family Composition and Intra-Household Dynamics

Family relationships in the farm have important implications on production decisions, such as the choice of crops, the organization of family labour and its allocation to different tasks, management of farm land and other assets, and questions of inheritance (Toulmin and Guèye, 2003). Therefore, the nature of the farm business cannot be understood without reference to the family that operates it (Gasson and Errington, 1993). Factors such as number, age and gender composition of the household play an important role in labour divisions and management decisions.

The traditional rural household has changed because of the phenomenon of migration and other cultural transformations. For example, women's autonomy and economic empowerment play a role in intra-household dynamics that affect the way in which decisions on production, family labour and asset allocation are made.

Production can be complicated by family composition and gender roles. There may be complex gender relations that characterize agricultural production in many areas. For example, a husband and wife may simultaneously pursue both independent and joint farming activities (Udry et al., 1995) or spouses may not be able to always bring on board the spouse's labour in the farm. In West

Africa, Alukoi and Alfa (1985, cited by Angemi, 2002) found that women could not hire their husbands, and there were significant transaction costs for men hiring wives:

“There is conflict within the household concerning the extent of the contribution by the wife to her husband’s activities; indeed there is evidence that these conflicts resulted in violence within the household ... Moreover, there are no reports of compensation from a wife to a husband for his labour on her plots: his labour is claimed to be voluntary assistance”. (p.21)

More traditional views of family farming consider that family farmers benefit from motivated family labour (Poulton et al., 2010). Though family labour is free, the motivation of labour comes with a sense of entitlement to family earnings and/or return on the investment with inheritance of the family farm or other assets in the longer term. However, this view has been challenged by other authors who look at intra-household dynamics. For example, in Mali, the concentration of farm income in the hands of the household head, and the way it is distributed among the family workforce, is giving rise to conflict, particularly in the context of scarce resources (Bélières et al., 2002). Young farmers in Mali were responding to the increased pressure on land by increasingly relocating to farmland outside the irrigated zone; the reduction in farm size resulted in more individualistic management methods (Bélières et al., 2002). As Bélières et al (2002) describe:

“Where land is abundant, the amount of available land per person tends to remain constant in the transition from one generation to the next but in this situation, where land is scarce, the establishment of a new household as a result of family splits inevitably leads to plots being divided up... Younger sons who feel they have been unfairly treated in the allocation of family land may ask instead for their share of farm equipment and go and work on their own account.” (p. 18)

### **3.2 Generational Aspects of Family Farming**

Living and working together in family farms, the generations overlap and share income. For older generations, the maintenance of the family farm can also provide security in retirement by passing on the farm to younger generations. The parents give up an asset by passing on the farm for the promise of provision for retirement. The successor receives productive assets, and operating business, and often also a house, in exchange for the obligation to care for elderly parents (Pesquin et al., 1999). For example, a study based in Israel reveals that the livelihood of retirees can be assured in an (often implicit) contractual insurance arrangement with the younger generation of the family farm (Kimhi and Nachlieli, 2001).

This arrangement can also free younger generations to seek off-farm employment until they are able to take on the family farm. As seen in Norway, three-generation family farming households allowed the youngest generation to seek employment in another profession as the older generations managed the farm (Jervell, 1999). In this light, the off-farm employment allowed for greater income generation - and investments in the farm - and retirement security for the younger generation who could return to the farm later in age (Jervell, 1999).

### **3.3 Succession and Inheritance of Family Farms**

Another aspect often discussed in developed countries is the future of family farming. This is often in the context of decisions of farming households to “exit” the farm (Kimhi and Bollman, 1999); issues around choosing a successor (Kimhi and Nachlieli, 2001) and the desire of the next generation to take over the farm (Dumas, et al., 1995); as well as a more broad questioning of the future of family farming as a practice (Breinmyer, 1993; Johnson, 1944).

However, the option to continue the family farm is just as important for the developing world as urbanization and migration from rural to urban areas continues, and the population becomes more educated. Many farmers, today and in the future, are faced with the question of whether or not to

continue farming. In order to do so, farming must be a viable and attractive livelihood option for the younger generation.

The family farm sector relies heavily on intergenerational succession (Pesquin et al. 1999), though the patterns of inheritance may cause issues, and transfer may not succeed. In Canada and Israel, it was found that farm exits decrease with the extent of off-farm work, and that age for “exiting” farm work is younger in Canada than in Israel (Kimhi and Bollman, 1999). Potential successors will most likely refrain from joining a failing business. Hence, the existence or absence of successors on family farms could be an indication of the longer-run prospects for survival of those farms, as farms without successors will most likely gradually fade away (Kimhi and Nachlieli, 2001).

In Israel, the succession of farms can be tied to modernization and the continued development, but are nevertheless linked to the status of the farm at the time of succession since it is less likely to pass on to future generations if business is in a state of decay (Kimhi and Nachlieli, 2001). In Norway, households with single farmers were less certain of succession, while a majority of households with grown-up children living on the farm expected the next generation to take over (Jervell, 1999).

Inheritance may also involve fragmenting land holdings, probably most problematic in rural areas where nonfarm employment, social mobility and/or land are limited. This can also become an issue for the future of the family farm, as fragmentation means smaller landholdings. Family farms that combine labour and assets of several family members, rather than relying on succession between individuals, may benefit from certain economies of scale (Toulmin and Guèye, 2003). As they observe in West African family farms (2003):

“While it is not always the rule, the death of the household head often leads to the break-up of the family into two or more separate units, with a division of the land and other assets. This fragmentation can lead to them becoming more vulnerable to risk and less able to maintain the livestock and equipment needed to run the farm.” (p.10)

Regulation and land policy can also influence inheritance patterns and decision-making. In Israel, institutional regulations state that farm transfer must be as one unit to one child only (Kimhi and Nachlieli, 2001). In Norway, one of the characteristics of the family farm is that it is transferred within the family, most often from parent to child (father to son) (Jervell, 1999). This is frequently a traditional pattern and to some extent protected by law (Jervell, 1999). In this sense, women would marry into farms. Jervell notes that this is still true today, as women in Norway are seldom farm successors, though due to off-farm opportunities women are not married to farming to the same degree as before (Jervell, 1999).

There are many advantages to within-family farm transfer: smooth transition, reduction in transfer costs, benefits from the comparative advantages farm children have in running the enterprise they are familiar with and, in some instances, lower transfer taxes (Pesquin et al., 1999). Inheritance also lowers entry cost to farming (Breinmyer and Frederick, 1993). The family farm as a unit of inheritance also roots families in communities and places. These generational linkages can create important socio-cultural dynamics that can profoundly impact production and market decisions.

### **3.4 Transfer of generational knowledge**

Within the family, the younger generation is intensely exposed to the family business. According to Dumas et al.’s observations in Canada, this increases their interest in farming and the likelihood that they will continue farming (1995). This exposure also makes it likely that the next generation will have the necessary skills to farm (Dumas et al., 1995). In the UK, Butlet et al. (2006) found that understanding knowledge transfer provides valuable insights into the patterns of information sharing within a business, particularly within small land-based businesses:

“Farmers combine training with their tacit knowledge and through discussions with their family, and in some cases with professional contacts, new knowledge initiates various degrees of change within businesses. The familial, social and emotion attributes of business relations may determine the extent that knowledge is transferred in to practice.” (p. 627).

Agricultural knowledge transfer seems to be gendered (Zobolo and Mkabela, 2006; Leckie, 1996; Müller, 2006) and with different patterns of interactions among members of the family. Müller (2006) found that in Ghana, until the 1960s, grandfathers were responsible for the education of grandsons, and grandmothers for the female granddaughters. Knowledge about agriculture, the storage of goods, or herbal medicine was transmitted between “the next-but-one generations”, and adopted through daily interactions, copied, or transmitted orally, on the way to the farm or during farm work (Müller, 2006).

These interactions are also exposed to changes according to demographic phenomena such as migration. Today in Ghana, mothers are the primary source for informal education to both daughters and sons, as fathers seldom take the responsibility regardless of being present in the village or absent due to migration (Müller, 2006). Müller summarizes:

“Knowledge is still transmitted orally and through daily practices. Formal education in school is of less importance in terms of mediating new elements of knowledge. In short, knowledge needed by the younger generation for daily survival is acquired outside school, not inside. Acquired knowledge is no longer socially secured, but depends on individual experiences, successes and failures.” (p.177)

In Canada, a study analyzed how the gender relations of family farming influenced the transfer of agricultural information and knowledge resources to farm girls (Leckie, 1996). Leckie found that farm girls faced constraints on the information they received since they were not fully involved in the “occupational inheritance of agriculture” and were “frequently excluded or marginalized from important agricultural resources, including information” (1996).

### **3.5 Local Knowledge and Sustainable Practices**

Some literature points to family farming as a mechanism to preserve the cultural values of historical importance (Sanches Peraci, 2011). Experts and non-experts in local communities maintain traditional knowledge. Written, oral and non-verbal means transfer knowledge among and within cultures, generations, population groups, communities, households and individuals (FAO, 2009a). Thus, the role of family farming for preserving this knowledge could be fundamental. Koochafkan and Altieri (2011) state that traditional systems of agriculture are under threat by modern agriculture and should be preserved:

“Because of their ecological and cultural significance and their wealth and breadth of accumulated knowledge and experience in the management and use of resources that these [traditional] systems represent, it is imperative that they be considered globally significant resources to be protected and conserved, as well as allowed to evolve.” (p. 15)

Traditional practices are related to cultural traditions and biocultural dynamics. These systems can regenerate local food systems while increasing socio-environmental sustainability and resilience (FAO, 2009a). Generational, community and/or indigenous knowledge could give family agriculture a comparative advantage in adaptation strategies, particularly in the absence of other constraints that generate opposite effects, including scarce access to resources and population density.

Some family farms, particularly those that use traditional practices, have greater familiarity with the historical management of natural resources. This gives these family farms the potential to assume a major role in protecting the environment, as long as there is an enabling environment for the continuation of these practices. Some countries have begun to adopt public policies that support styles of agriculture practiced by “family farmers who are guardians of nature”, “family farmers who

protect freshwater”, “rural producers of indigenous seeds”, and so on (Sanches-Peraci, 2011). Such practices could also be applied in innovative ways to help tackle today’s problems (FAO, 2009a).

### **3.6 Household Food Security and Livelihood**

The family farm is also seen as a safeguard for food security. Toulmin and Guèye (2003), based on their work in West Africa, concluded that,

“The principal objective of the family farm is first to provide its members with food and shelter.” (p.10)

Family farming is also seen as providing food security for the community and potentially beyond. According to Sanches Peraci (2011),

“There is now also recognition that family agriculture has the potential to produce basic foods... thus, many countries have reformulated programmes and institutions for family agriculture in order to improve the frequency and regularity, and increase the volume of the national food output, as a means of seeking both greater food and nutritional security and a more stable economy.” (p.4)

The major global food price increases in 2007/08, and the subsequent increase in unpredictability in the global food markets, increased concern about food security at national levels. According to Compton et al. (2011), households with access to productive land were more resilient to the food price shocks than the rural landless poor. Given access to adequate infrastructure and technology, family farms can both store their own food to buffer against shocks, as well as provide food to the market in order to stabilize food supply.

## 4. Family Farming: A Concept

Taking stock of the different definitions of family farms in the literature, there seems to be a common understanding in terms of the important role of family labour in production, as well as the role of the family in the management of the farm. However, the extent of its reliance in family labour varies across seasons and according to socio-economic contexts; therefore, establishing a precise share of family labour could be problematic.

The literature also recognizes family farms' family ties and their influence the decision-making on agricultural production, inheritance of the farm and its assets, and the transmission of knowledge to different members of the family. The literature also suggests that the sustainability of family farms is linked to the family composition itself.

The linkages between family farming and the community and/or territory is also recognized, meaning that the concept of family farming implies something more than agricultural production but also a way of life for the rural population; potential preservation and transmission of local knowledge, and – when a viable and profitable exercise – a means to preserve the environment and foster food security.

Finally, farm size, either in terms of land or production may be a secondary, and less important, dimension for defining the family farm. The land size aspect is difficult to contextualize given the family farms' diverse production in terms of crops and their engagement in other agricultural activities (livestock rearing, fishery, forestry, etc.). Farm size also depends on local agro-ecological and socio-economic conditions. Therefore, defining clear cut-off points in terms of size is difficult. These arguments make clear to distinguish between the concepts of family farming and smallholder farming.

Therefore, we may conclude that defining family farming in ways that will have the same meaning in every context is so difficult. Yet, some aspects are common among some regions of the world, particularly the reliance on family labour to perform agricultural work and the management of the farm, as well as the recognition of the linkages between the farm's agricultural functions with its economic, environmental, reproductive, social and cultural functions. These notions of family farming – beyond smallholders – invite us to look at its role in food security and rural development.

What is important now is to contextualize the concept of family farming in the current agricultural and rural landscape. Traditional ways of production are not only affected by increasing competition for natural resources (land and water), climate change and a globalized food production system. They are also affected by demographic changes in the rural population caused by a rise in migration; changes in cultural perceptions of urban living and its increased accessibility; an increase in formal education and also women's empowerment and autonomy.

Also, off-farm employment and other income-generating activities have become increasingly important revenue sources for rural households and family farms' investments in both the developed and developing worlds. While this contextualization is beyond this exercise, it should be noted that this reflection should continue in the years to come.

A definition of family farming should therefore be one that not only recognizes the role of the family in production and management of the farm, but that also:

- Includes forestry, fisheries, pastoral, and aquaculture activities besides crop production;
- Recognizes that all the above-mentioned agricultural activities make important contributions to household income and food consumption;

- Recognizes family farms' diversity in terms of land size, amount of production, share of family labour utilized, degree of market integration, and policy needs, varying across countries, agro-ecological zones, and social contexts;
- Considers that family farmers may or may not own land;
- Recognizes that family farmers often operate on farms or plots that are units of inheritance or succession within the family or household;
- Recognizes that family farming goes beyond agricultural production and combines ecological, social, cultural and environmental objectives and therefore has a close tie to the local culture and the rural community;
- Recognizes that family farms' sustainability depends not only upon economic factors and environmental management, but also on the intergenerational transfer of local knowledge and traditional practices, resources, and social identity;
- Considers that roles and responsibilities in family farming may not be evenly distributed within family members or the household and that interests and constraints vary across them.

Our proposal for such a definition<sup>8</sup> is the following:

"Family Farming (also Family Agriculture) is a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family labour, both women's and men's. The family and the farm are linked, coevolve and combine economic, environmental, reproductive, social and cultural functions."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This definition was developed by Eve Crowley, Martha Osorio and Ana Paula De la O Campos with inputs from 11 FAO technical divisions (AGP, ESA, ESS, EST, ESW, FIP, FOE, NRL, OEK, TCI, TCS), five decentralized offices (RAP, REU, RLC, RNE, SLM), CIRAD, the World Rural Forum, ASIA DHRRRA, Contag-Coprofam, Bioveristy International, and IFAD.

<sup>9</sup> Economic functions include production and employment. Environmental functions include soil enrichment, carbon sequestration, water purification, pest control, pollination and biodiversity enhancement. Reproductive and social functions include childcare, nutrition, water and energy provisioning, education, health, social security, insurance and risk management. Cultural functions include transmission of identity, symbolic and religious values of resources and territories, knowledge and technologies.



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## Annex 1: Definitions and Characteristics of the Family Farm

| SOURCE                                  | DEFINITIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILY FARMS  |
|---|--|
| Johnson, O. R. (1944)                   | In the USA: "First, unlike the subsistence farm, it provides for the family a satisfactory living and in addition a chance to accumulate savings for old age; and second, unlike the highly commercialized farm, the family farm depends very largely on the labour and management of the farm family with some exchange help from neighbors to carry on its productive activities. Family farm operation does not depend on hired labour."  |
| USDA (1945)                             | Immediately prior to the implementation of the current definition all farms were family farms unless they were: organized as cooperatives, organized as corporations with the majority of shareholders not related (by blood, marriage, or adoption) or operated by a hired manager. (For exact language, see 7 U.S.C. 1941.4, 1943.4).  |
| Scoville, O. J. (1947)                  | In order to summarize this discussion, three definitions are offered.<br>(1) "A family farm is one on which the farm operator makes most of the managerial decisions, participates regularly in farm work, and on which his role as employer of labour is minor relative to his other functions."<br>(2) "A family size farm is one which, operated by a family of average size and managerial ability, will permit reasonably efficient use of labour-saving equipment and of the family labour force over the life cycle of the family."<br>(3) "The desirable size of farm for the family of average managerial ability would be a farm that would permit the reasonably efficient use of labour-saving equipment and of the family labour force over the life cycle of the family and provide with average management a labour and management return adequate to maintain a socially acceptable level of living."  |
| Breinmyer, H. and A.L. Frederick (1993) | (US) family farms are implicitly of modest size, but size is defined in terms of what family labour can care for. Acreage, investment or volume of sales figures are less applicable. Most labour on a family farm is provided by the family. Thus, hired labour cannot exceed labour provided by the farmer and family. The maximum amount of hired labour is often put at either 1-1/2 or 2 man years. The key feature is that family labour dominates. All land need not be owned by the farm operator, but most family farmers will own at least part of the land they farm. A few may temporarily be full tenants, but neither widespread nor life-long tenancy is considered to be family farming. Management may be vested in individual proprietors or family partnerships, but the right to make independent production and marketing decisions is crucial, even though family farms are not defined here by volume of sales or assets, a system dominated by a relative handful of very large farms would not be considered a family farming system, regardless of who owns, works on, or manages individual farms. On the other hand, a family farm does not mean an unprofitable small farm. It is one where efficient production methods enable farmers to earn acceptable incomes in line with their personal abilities. |
| Gasson, R., and A. Errington (1993)     | Family farming is defined in connection with aspects of ownership and labour input... family ownership and managerial control especially, but also, farm transfer (succession) within family and living on the farm have been seen as important characteristics of the 'family farm'.  |

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| Hill, B. (1993)   | A definition is adopted, based on the share of the labour provided by the family, to group farms into family, intermediate or non-family types. However, the non-family group did not consist solely of larger farms operated by family labour supplemented by hired labour; at least in some countries the group contained smaller farms operated on a part-time basis and where there is substitution by hired labour for family labour. These subgroups point to alternative ways of structural adjustment to achieve higher incomes from farming.  |
| Djurfeldt (1996)  | The notional family farm is characterized by (1) an overlapping between three functional units: (a) the unit of production (i.e., the farm), (b) the unit of consumption (i.e., the household) and (c) the unit of kinship (i.e., the family). (2) For its reproduction, the notional family farm requires family labour, i.e., labour performed by members of the family/household, (and here we are not referring mainly to managerial work). This implies that, if the farm no longer requires family labour for its reproduction, it is no longer a notional family farm, although it may still be a farm family business.               |
| Charalambos K., and A. G. Papadopoulos (1997)                           | Farm household which comprises a type of agricultural holding characterized by both a family and an entrepreneurial organization of production. We refer here to that form of production within capitalism which is widely known as the family farm unit of production defined as the unity of property relations and the labour process.  |
| Charalambos K., and A. G. Papadopoulos (1997)                           | In the Greek case, family ownership and control over land, together with family labour, constitute central elements of the definition. In other words, the family farm constitutes that form of production in which the ownership of the means of production and labour power co-exist in the same production unit, without a discrete division between capital and labour, with family members often supplying the bulk of labour necessary for agricultural production.  |
| Belières, J.-F., P.-M. Bosc, G. Gaure, S. Fournier, and B. Losch (2002) | <p>"To do justice to the diversity of forms of social organization and local situations in Africa, it is necessary to use the plural; we will therefore refer here to "family-based farming systems" or family farming (p. 4)."</p> <p>"The term [rural producer] fails to take into account the distinction between the head of a family farm who is directly engaged with his household in crop production and the head of a company who may absent himself from the scene of production and who is concerned mainly (possibly having delegated management responsibility) with the return on his assets and invested capital. (p. 4)"</p> |
| Toulmin C, and B. Gueye (2003)  | Following Belières et al (2002), they identify key features which characterize family farming, in particular, the connection between the structure and composition of the household, which is associated to farm assets and activities. They argue that this relationship has important implications for how decisions are made regarding the choice of crops, the organization of family labour and its allocation to different tasks, management of farm land and other assets, and questions of inheritance.  |



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| Toulmin, C. and B. Guèye (2003)                   | Family farms thus are made up of three broad dimensions:<br>(1) a socio-cultural dimension, since this form of agriculture is mainly reliant on the human resource base of the family, strongly anchored in a particular community, through a web of relationships and strategies, both individual and collective, and reinforced by values of solidarity and long-term commitment. (2) An economic dimension characterized by an integration of diverse activities in household production, given the various opportunities available in immediate and more distant areas, and operating according to the following priorities: consume, store, sell. (3) A technical dimension characterized by a desire to maintain and improve the land and resources on which they rely, and combining activities in ways which reduce exposure to risk.  |
| Toulmin, C. and B. Guèye (2003)                   | The family farm, its land and associated assets (equipment, livestock, trees, etc.) are under the authority of the household head who is responsible for the collective management of these assets, the allocation of labour between different activities, management of grain stores, and deciding on new strategies and directions to be pursued. In practice, the household head will often delegate day-to-day management of fields and animals to a younger brother, while monitoring activities closely. The principal objective of the family farm is first to provide its members with food and shelter, second, to sell whatever is needed to gain cash for satisfying the range of other needs of the household, such as clothing, medicines, school fees, investment in new equipment, and tax payments. Surplus crops may be stored to protect against future harvest failure, or sold and reinvested in livestock, other assets or social networks. |
| World Bank (2003, 2007)                           | The World Bank's Rural Development Strategy defines smallholders as those with a low asset base, operating less than 2 hectares of cropland.   |
| Dixon, J., K. Taniguchi, and H. Wattenbach (2003) | They refer to the FAO definition of smallholders: farmers with limited resource endowments, relative to other farmers in the sector.   |
| Brazilian Government (Act 11.326/2006)            | Family Farms:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Recognition and segment characterization</li> <li>–Small and medium farms, agrarian reform's settlements and traditional rural communities (extractivists, riverine populations among others)</li> <li>–Allows the development of specific public (focalization) policies to the segment</li> </ul> Define criteria to access public policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Administration of the establishment</li> <li>–Labour force predominantly from the family</li> <li>–Income predominantly from the establishments</li> <li>–Limit of area accordingly to the sub-regions realities</li> </ul>  |
| Iwamoto, I. (2006)                                | "... we define the role of "family" for farm management according to five points: (1) Family as investor, owner and manager of a farm; (2) The importance that the pooling function of the family plays for farm management; (3) Family as a main unit of farm succession and inheritance; (4) Family as a tie to society for a farm; (5) Family as a goal for farm management."   |

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| NEF/OXFAM (2006)   | They use the terms 'family farmers', 'family farms' and 'family farming' to refer to the highly heterogeneous population of rural people whose livelihoods depend to some degree on farming and who pursue their farming primarily with their own and/or their family's labour. They recognize the limitation of this term, particularly in that it hides the complex gender relations that characterize agriculture production in many areas, such that, for example, a husband and wife may simultaneously pursue both independent and joint farming activities. In choosing this term they do not assume any innate superiority to the organization of farming around family units, but simply recognize that for many poor rural residents throughout the developing world this organizational model reflects an important aspect of the reality of their daily lives.                          |
| Diaz Osorio, J. (2007)                                       | <p>"Based on the 2003 CASEN survey of households, the existence of 26,383 (100%) was determined for the Maule Region, (only those designated as Family Farms), which were associated to farming use. At the same time, these were divided into six categories:</p> <p>a) Farms comprising one person, with only agricultural income (38,31%); b) Farms comprising one person, with non-agricultural income sources (28,1%); c) Farms comprising two to five farm workers, without family workers and with only agricultural income (9,2%); d) Farms comprising two to five farm workers, without family workers and with non-agricultural income sources (8,4%); e) Farms comprising two to five farm workers, with family workers and with only agricultural income (9%); f) Farms comprising two to five farm workers, with family workers and non-agricultural income sources (7%)." (p. 24)</p> |
| Brown, S. and C. Getz (2008)                                 | Does not provide a definition of family farming though does refer to the complications of the term during negotiations, as well as refers more often to "family-scale" farming, small farming and that it is connected to "ecological sustainable" practices.   |
| Ahearn, M., K. Poppe, C. Salvioni, K. Boone, A. Roest (2009) | "Family farms usually provide the family a place of residence, with intergenerational links, and a variety of nonmarket social and natural amenities." (p.2)  |
| Márquez, S. and A. Ramos (2009)                              | <b>Look at Annex 2 in this paper</b>  |
| Ministry of Agriculture of Chile (2009)                      | Described by Berdegú and Fuentealba (2011): the operational criteria used by the Ministry of Agriculture of Chile, with an upper limit of 12 "basic irrigated hectares" (BIH). The study concludes that those below 2 BIH derive most of their income from non-farm sources, so that the relevant group are those families that farm between 2 and 12 BIH.  |
| Thapa, G. (2009)   | Small farms, also known as family farms, have been defined in a variety of ways. The most common measure is farm size: many sources define small farms as those with less than 2 hectares of crop land. Others describe small farms as those depending on household members for most of the labour or those with a subsistence orientation, where the primary aim of the farm is to produce the bulk of the household's consumption of staple foods (based on Hazell et al., 2007).   |

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|---|---|
| Riley, M. (2009)                            | ‘Family Farm’ is defined within this paper as those with more than one generation of the same family involved in the farm enterprise (based on Gasson and Errington’s definition, 1993).  |
| Poulton, C., A. Dorward, and J. Kydd (2010) | “Family farmers benefit from motivated family labour in keeping down transaction costs and also benefit “from intensive local knowledge”  |
| Berdegú, J. A. and R. Fuentealba (2011)     | “More recently, authors as diverse as CEPAL (1982), Lipton (2005), or the World Bank (2007), have forged a strong consensus that the definitional characteristics of this type of agriculture include : (a) small farms, (b) family-operated, (c) no or limited non-family hired labour. There is less agreement on whether other factors ought to be included in the definition, the most important of which (for both analytical and for policy and even political purposes) is the ability of the household or family to sustain its livelihood on the basis of its self-employment in its own farm. But regardless of the ongoing debates, the above-mentioned characteristics are the crux of the matter.”(p.8)  |
| Berdegú, J. A. and R. Fuentealba (2011)     | <p>“The smallholder or family-based agriculture sector in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is defined as a sector made up of farms that are operated by farm families, using largely their own labour.</p> <p>A detailed analysis of recent data for several countries allows us to approximate that there are 15 million family farms in LAC, controlling about 400 million hectares. The family farming sector can be classified in three large groups: (a) Almost 10 million subsistence farms, with 100 million hectares, where households derive a large proportion of their income from non-farm jobs, remittances and/or social subsidies; (b) an intermediate group of 4 million farms with 200 million hectares, that are integrated in agricultural markets but face significant constraints derived both from their asset endowment and from the proximate contexts in which they operate; (c) about 1 million family farms that hire some permanent labour and that manage about 100 million highly productive hectares.”(p.5)</p> |
| Berdegú, J. A. and R. Fuentealba (2011)     | <p>“In Brazil a family farm is defined by the Family Farming Law (Law 11,326), based on four criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does not have under any tenure regime an area of more than four fiscal modules;</li> <li>2. Predominantly relies on its own family labour;</li> <li>3. The household income predominantly originates in the family farm; and</li> <li>4. The family operates the farm.” (p.14)</li> </ol>  |
| Sanches Peraci, A. (2011).                  | The family production model contains certain characteristic variables that can be helpful in defining legal criteria for formulating and targeting public programmes and policies. These include: (i) the close relationship between work and management; (ii) the need for landowners to direct production; (iii) emphasis on productive diversification and on preserving natural resources; (iv) use of contract or wage labour as a complementary resource; (v) the need for expeditious decision-making to foster a high degree of predictability in the productive process; (vi) profits originating primarily from rural activities that take place on the property itself; and (vii) the need to establish criteria based on land area (hectares).  |

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| FAO (2012)  | <p>FAO (2012) defines the term ‘family farming’ to include crop, livestock, forestry, fishery and aquaculture production by producers who, despite their great heterogeneity among countries and within countries, have the following key characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limited access to land and capital resources;</li> <li>- Predominantly family labour is used with the head of the household participating directly in the production process; therefore; even when there is some division of labour, the head of the household does not just perform management responsibilities but is also a worker in the family unit;</li> <li>- Agricultural/forestry/aquaculture/ fishery activity is the main source of income for the family nucleus, which may be complemented with other non-farming activities undertaken inside or outside the family unit (services related to rural tourism, environmental benefits, small-scale production, small agribusinesses, casual jobs, etc.)</li> </ul> |
| USDA (2005) | <p>As defined by USDA regulations to farm loan programs (e.g. those administered by the Farm Service Agency), a family farm is a farm that: produces agricultural commodities for sale in such quantities so as to be recognized in the community as a farm and not a rural residence; produces enough income (including off-farm employment) to pay family and farm operating expenses, pay debts, and maintain the property; is managed by the operator; has a substantial amount of labour provided by the operator and the operator’s family; and may use seasonal labour during peak periods and a reasonable amount of full-time hired labour.</p>   |

## Annex 2: MERCOSUR Definitions (Márquez and Ramos, 2009)

| Table 1: Parameters used by MERCOSUR countries to determine eligibility of family farmers for the National Registry (based on criteria established by GMC Res. 25/07) |  |  |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|--|--|---|
| Parameters  | Countries  |  |  |  |   |
|   | Argentina  | Brazil   | Paraguay   | Uruguay  | Chile   |
| Non-family labour hired (employees)   | Max. 2 people permanently  | Max. 2 people permanently  | Not specified  | Max. 2 people permanently or 500 days' wages                                     | Not specified   |
| Responsible for farm command/management   | Family rural producers (any of the farm holders)                                       | Family rural producers (holder) + other members of the family                      | Family rural producers (any of the farm holders)       | Family rural producers (holder) devoted >50% of their working time to working on | Family rural producers (holder)                             |
| Family's place of residence (max. distance in km. to place of residence)  | On farm or nearby site (no specifications on distance)                                 | On farm or nearby site (no specifications on distance)                             | On farm or nearby site (no specifications on distance) | On farm or nearby site   | Not specified   |
| Max. size of farm (hectares)  | 500 hectares   | 4 Fiscal modules (may reach up to 480 ha in total)                                 | 50 hectares.   | 500 hectares with I.C. 100 (i) (may reach up to 1,000 hectares in total)         | 12 BRU (i) (may reach up to 750 ha in total)                |
| Source of farm income/earnings (%)  | >50 derived from on-farm activities (with a cap value of non-farm income equivalent to | >70 derived from on-farm activities (with a cap value of income equivalent to US\$ | >50 derived from on-farm activities (no cap)           | >50 derived from on-farm activities (no cap)                                     | >50 derived from on-farm activities (no cap)                |
| Family's capitalization   | -  | -  | -  | -  | Maximum capital 3,500 U.F. (i) (equivalent to US\$ 120,000) |
| (1) IC 100: County's Average Productivity Index for Meat  |  |  |  |  |   |
| (2) BRU: Basic Irrigation Unit.   |  |  |  |  |   |
| (3) U.F: Financial Unit.  |  |  |  |  |   |

Source: Márquez, Susana and Alvaro Ramos (Feb 2009). Differential Policies for Family Farming in MERCOSUR: Contribution of Political Dialogue in the Design of Public Policies and Institutionalization. Discussion Paper prepared for the side event organized during the thirty-third session of FAO's Governing Council, 18 February 2009, Rome: International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), pp. 4-5.

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