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Family farming in Latin America and the Caribbean: looking for new paths of rural development and food security

Sergio Schneider,
Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)

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**Family farming in Latin America and the Caribbean:
looking for new paths of rural development and food security**

By Sergio Schneider

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International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG)
United Nations Development Programme

SBS, Quadra 1, Bloco J, Ed. BNDES, 13º andar
70076-900 Brasília, DF - Brazil
Telephone: +55 61 2105 5000

ipc@ipc-undp.org ▪ www.ipc-undp.org

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FAMILY FARMING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:

LOOKING FOR NEW PATHS OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD SECURITY

Sergio Schneider[1]

1 INTRODUCTION

At the present moment in history, humanity is faced with several major challenges, one of them being that of feeding an increasingly populous and urbanised planet. The challenge is even greater as it becomes clearer that it is not just a matter of producing enough fibres and primary products that can be processed into food to feed everyone. It is also worth noting that huge numbers of people still live under conditions of food insecurity, having restricted or scarce access to an appropriate supply of food. Generally speaking, people are increasingly more reflective, demanding and vigilant. As there are claims for sufficient food supply to feed everyone, there is also a growing awareness that food should be produced using renewable energy, with decreasing use of chemical additives (pesticides). Food security and sustainable development are not opposites but, rather, complementary concepts.

How will agriculture produce, through environmentally sustainable ways, healthier food to supply the urban population of the planet? Who will produce these foods, and which farmers and which production systems are the most appropriate to meet this challenge? Obviously there is no ultimate answer to these questions yet, but this is undoubtedly one of this millennium's greatest issues (Pretty 2010; IFPRI 2010; HLPE 2012; IAASTD 2009; The Economist 2011).

1. Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). I would like to thank the Director-General of FAO, Professor José Graziano da Silva, for the invitation to undertake this work and the confidence in my coordination of regional studies on the state of family farming and public policies in the five regions of FAO. The completion of the work was possible thanks to the support of Dr. Francesco Maria Pierri and technical support of Danielle Napolitano and Rita Tripaldi, from FAO. I am also grateful to the colleagues who worked with me on other reports, Jan Douwe van der Ploeg (Europe and Central Asia), Ye Jingzhong and Pan Lu (Asia and Pacific), Ray Bush (North Africa and Near East), Sam Moyo (Subsaharan Africa) and John E. Ikerd (North America), with whom I could interact and learn a lot about the family farm in the world. I also thank Abel Cassol for help in gathering and formatting the data for this text, as well as Eduardo Baumeister and colleagues of the Research Group on Family Agriculture (GEPAD) of my university for their suggestions. Last but not least, my special thanks to Regina Vargas for the excellent translation of the document and editing service. To all, my gratitude for the help. The opinions and any remaining errors are my exclusive responsibility.

One certainty, however, arises: small farmers worldwide—those who have small plots of land or handle limited amounts of productive resources (water, forests, grasslands and other ecosystems)—will undoubtedly be part of the solution to this problem. The works of Wiggins (2009), Pretty et al. (2011), Larson et al. (2012) and Schutter (2009; 2014) analyse the conditions and possibilities for the role of small-scale farming in the context of agriculture post modernisation and post green revolution, and suggest a process of sustainable intensification to enable increased labour productivity and economic surplus.

There is a growing consensus about the inadequacy of production scale indicators (productivity and income) for understanding the development possibilities for small-scale agriculture (Hazell and Rahman 2014; Conway 2014; Lipton 2005; Hayami 2002; 1996). It is becoming increasingly clear that small-scale farmers will not disappear from rural areas, even if their contribution to production may decrease over time. A recent study (2014) by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on Latin America showed that the social reproduction of family farming no longer relies solely on agricultural production, but also on the interaction with urban economies, non-agricultural activities and international remittances, among other incomes.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has just published a study (Lowder et al. 2014) indicating that 500 million out of the total of 570 million farms that exist in the world belong to smallholders, also called family farmers.[2] The report by IFAD (2010) on rural poverty in the world also highlights the key roles of agriculture and rural development in reducing both the vulnerability of smallholders and their exposure to systemic risks. Likewise, a study (2011) by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) suggests that family farming can play a decisive role in generating resilience in space and more sustainable ways of life that allow people to cope with environmental changes. Finally, the IFAD/UNEP report (2013) seeks to demonstrate the strategic role of smallholders in food security and environmental protection.

Therefore, the multifaceted relevance of smallholders in addressing some of the most pressing challenges faced by humanity is evident. This has several repercussions, the most evident being the recognition by organisations in the United Nations (UN) system of the importance of this social category, a recognition particularly reflected in the celebration of the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) in 2014.

This celebration of the IYFF is especially significant because it promotes a sector that had until recently been considered of minor importance and often considered one of those accountable for poverty and pressure on natural resources and for producing social and gender inequalities. The occasion to celebrate is an opportunity to afford recognition and visibility to family farmers, but it is also a chance to expose the problems and difficulties that affect their everyday life and hinder their future, and which must be overcome.

Therefore, the time has come to no longer consider smallholders as synonymous with poor and backward people who are doomed to disappear. A new terminology has been established to refer to these smallholders—'family farmers' or 'family production units'. This is not just a matter of changing nomenclature, since this shift carries conceptual and theoretical implications, but above all it is about signalling that this social category can play an active and strategic role in processes of rural social change.

Family farming is a particular form of work and production organisation that exists and reproduces within the social and economic context in which it is embedded. Its increasing reproduction or its crises do not stem only from voluntary acts such as a public policies or even from a utopian desire. As a social form of labour and production, its social reproduction is conditioned by internal factors that are related to the specific way families manage their productive resources (land, capital, technology etc.), make investment and expenditure decisions, allocate their members to work, and adhere to the cultural values of the group to which they belong.

However, family farmers cannot elude the social and economic context in which they live and by which they are conditioned and sometimes subject to. Among these determinants are the increasing urban demands for both healthy foods and the preservation of landscapes, soil, water and biodiversity. Technological innovations are also determinants that can reduce the role of both the land and the labour force in the production processes; thus, they can be decisive for greater competitiveness of the productive units. In summary, the reproduction of family farming stems from broader social and economic processes and depends on multiple factors, both endogenous and external, that constitute a socio-political construction.

Family farming has assumed a central role in the social and economic development of Latin America and the Caribbean. Family farming creates jobs and income in rural areas, and also accounts for a significant share of food supply, especially at local and regional levels. In most countries of the region, family farming provides a major contribution to agri-food production, both in the domestic market and in the export of commodities and other products.

According to Leporati et al. (2014, 35), family farming accounts for about 81 per cent of agricultural activities in Latin America and the Caribbean; at the country level, it supplies between 27 per cent and 67 per cent of the total national production of food; it comprises between 12 per cent and 67 per cent of agricultural land and creates between 57 per cent and 77 per cent of agricultural jobs in the region (IDB-FAO 2007; FAO 2012). Although these data lack statistical accuracy, they indicate that family farming plays an unquestionable role in primary production, food security and more generally in the economic development of the region.

Even so, the contribution of family farming is not only economic. With regard to social and demographic factors, family farming also contributes decisively to keep families in rural areas. Rural communities that count on family farming feature an active social life, which is often reflected in virtuous local dynamics. Moreover, family farming is also important for women and young people, as access to land and productive assets are key resources to guarantee their livelihoods when men migrate to work in non-agricultural activities.

The contributions of family farming to development in rural areas of Latin America and the Caribbean could certainly be expanded (as will be discussed further). However, as an introduction, suffice to say that without the recognition and strengthening of the strategic role of family farming, it will not be possible to eradicate rural poverty in the region. In this regard, we may claim that rural development will not happen in Latin America and the Caribbean without improvements in the conditions of existence and reproduction of family farming.

This paper presents an analysis of the characteristics of family farming in Latin America and the Caribbean and discusses what might be its role in overcoming some of the major challenges to the development of this region. Therefore, the main objective of the study is to analyse the evolving process that places the concept of family farming as a crucial part of the

political and institutional agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as to depict its diversity in the region. Furthermore, it examines the contribution of family farming to agricultural and rural development, and to food and nutrition security. The paper also presents some key recommendations and discusses a potentially enabling policy environment that could be built and deployed to overcome the challenges faced by family farmers, highlighting the relevant policies and best practices that are being implemented in the region. This includes the socio-economic importance of family farming in the agrarian structure in Latin America, and underlines the importance of family farming with regard to food security, nutrition, its economic contribution etc.

The methodology used to prepare this paper combines documentary and statistical analyses with the author's cognitive and analytical interpretations. Desk review comprised the examination of a set of available references, including documents and studies produced by international agencies, scholars and researchers. Likewise, a careful examination of the documents produced by the Regional Dialogues organised by FAO was undertaken. The synthesis documents resulting from these will be a key input both to evaluate the understanding of the subject among the participants as well as to identify potential political agreements around issues that are of strategic importance for family farming.

In addition to the documentary analysis, a statistical description will be carried out of the available data on the characteristics and size of family farming in different countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The analysis of statistical data will focus on access to assets (land), integration to markets and social indicators related to living conditions. This data description will be particularly useful for a section of the paper devoted to presenting a profile of family farming in the region.

Apart from the analysis and systematisation of secondary data, the study also includes a cognitive and analytical discussion, in which the author will present syntheses of the discussions on the evolution of the concept of family faming and current controversies surrounding the topic. To develop this section, the author will review the classical references on agrarian and peasant studies in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the current state-of-the-art concepts of family farming in the region.

Analysis and discussion of the major family farming-related policies of the region will comprise the final section of this paper. Suggestions put forth by organisations such as the Specialised Meeting on Family Farming (REAF)—a working group of MERCOSUR—will be analysed.

The research will make use of various secondary data sources, although the studies and information provided by FAO—particularly the documents that resulted from Regional Dialogues—will be the main references.

2 THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL LEGITIMACY OF FAMILY FARMING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Over the past two decades, Latin America and the Caribbean have undergone significant changes in economic, social and political terms, which have made the region significantly different from what it was in the 1980s. Scholars, international institutions and policymakers agree that the region has intensively experienced the effects of international economic

globalisation, whose implications range from greater trade liberalisation of national economies, to increased financial flows and appreciation of primary resources such as agri-food and mining production (PIADAL 2013). Such changes also have social and environmental impacts reflected in intense inter- and intra-regional migration as well as changes in the environment and natural resources in general.

A process of discussion and analysis of the role and place of family farming in the social and economic development of countries has recently been established in Latin America and the Caribbean. It started in the mid-1990s in Brazil, and has evolved to be disseminated, from the early 2000s, to other countries in the region. Regional initiatives such as the creation of REAF in 2004 among MERCOSUR member countries and, more recently, initiatives taken in Central America, with an emphasis on the Family Farming Plan (FAP) of El Salvador, have been important for the dissemination of the concept of family farming and the understanding of its meaning.

Poverty reduction and improvement of economic and social indicators resulting from public policies in support of smallholders are among contributing factors that can be highlighted (Silva, Gómez, and Castañeda 2009). It is worth noting that Latin America stands out as a region that has achieved a significant reduction in hunger and poverty while meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The combination of economic growth, political and institutional stability and incentives for agriculture and rural development were recognised in the recent report by FAO, IFAD and WFP (2013) on the state of food security, as contributing factors to these achievements.

There are still other elements that should be mentioned, such as the fact that, following the end of dictatorships in Latin America, social actors and civil society organisations were able to resume their activities and mobilisation. This contributed towards family farmers becoming organised into movements, unions, associations, cooperatives etc. (Berdegué et al. 2012). These organisations have come to play an important role in social mobilisation and in demanding policies in support of family farming in the region. Public policies constitute a third key factor in expanding the recognition and legitimacy of family farming in Latin America and the Caribbean. Despite the wide diversity and different degrees of policies that benefit family farmers to varying degrees, according to different country contexts, state intervention has been decisive in supporting family farming.

In addition to these factors, it is also worth mentioning the work of international organisations and the contribution of scholars and researchers. FAO, IFAD and other public- and private-sector organisations have been particularly important for promoting progress and disseminating a new concept of family farming in the region. FAO's definition of family farming has gained recognition and is also gradually expanding its influence. FAO defines family farming (including all family-based agricultural activities) as "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, including both women's and men's" (FAO 2013). The family and the farm are linked, co-evolve and combine economic, environmental, social and cultural functions (Salcedo et al. 2014). Similarly, the number of studies, projects and pieces of academic research on family farming are increasing, and the training of human resources in this area is rapidly expanding.

Despite such advancements, some gaps and limitations remain, which must be overcome. Continuing effort is required to improve both the definition and the political and theoretical understanding of the concept of family farming, to clarify the implications of either using typologies or working with generic definitions in policymaking. Another limiting factor is related to the availability of data and information on family farming, since census updating is poor in many Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Another issue is related to gender and generation in family farming. The contribution of women to agricultural development is often misunderstood due to the lack of data, and problems in accurately measuring women's involvement in agricultural production activities. FAO estimates indicate that women workers contribute between 60 per cent and 80 per cent of agriculture in the countries of the global South. On the other hand, there is a growing importance of women in agriculture because of changes in family dynamics. Research conducted in Brazil (Simões and Matos 2010) shows that from 1995 to 2005 the proportion of households headed by women increased from 22.9 per cent to 30.6 per cent. In Latin America, studies from the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) have shown that the situation between men and women concerning domestic work is far from equal; surveys conducted in 12 countries of Latin America show that women spend more time on house work than men and have a higher total workload (ECLAC 2010, 35–36). According to FAO (2011; Paulilo 2013), if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by about 20 per cent to 30 per cent, increasing total production by 2.5 per cent to 4 per cent in developing countries.

There is wide recognition of the need for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women to overcome gender inequalities in development (Brumer 2012; Castro 2009; Spanevello 2012). It is already well understood that women are often put at a disadvantage due to social norms and legal institutions, and this may be reflected in reduced access to literacy, educational opportunities, participation in the labour market, and the allocation of work on the family farm. FAO and various scholars recommend that important steps towards better understanding and presenting global evidence of this situation should be to improve agricultural censuses by providing gender data related to agriculture and studying the social and cultural patterns of agricultural and rural development as they relate to women, the distribution of agricultural work within households, and the interactions between different members of households in the management and operation of agricultural holdings.

Some of these challenges have already been identified during the Regional Dialogues on Family Farming, held in December 2013 in Santiago, Chile, and then ratified at the 33rd Session of FAO's Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean; they will be described in the next section.

3 CONCEPTUAL EVOLUTION OF FAMILY FARMING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: THEORETICAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES

3.1 FROM PEASANTRY, SMALL-SCALE FARMING TO FAMILY FARMING

Few controversies have been so enduring and difficult to overcome as the theoretical status of farmers who currently define themselves as 'family farmers'. At the centre of this controversy is the terminology itself. When terms like 'small-scale farmers/agricultural producers', 'peasants'

or 'family farmers' are mentioned, they immediately call to mind an economic enterprise that is conducted by a family which both performs most of the farming activities and tasks and appropriates the results of this work.

However, nothing could be farther from the truth, and both theoretically and politically inaccurate, than thinking that small-scale production, peasantry and family farming are all the same thing. These three terms generally refer to the same social category that can be found in the rural areas of the various countries and sub-national regions of Latin America and the Caribbean. However, each country and/or region has its own designation to identify people and families who might be small-scale farmers/agricultural producers, peasants or family farmers. Here lies a first distinction between these three terms: they refer to a social category that varies according to countries and regions and that can have other specific regional designations.[3]

The term 'family farming' is very recent compared to 'smallholding' and 'peasantry', but it has gained strength and international prominence, especially after the launch of the IYFF in 2014.

What is, after all, the fundamental distinction between family farming and the other two terms, small-scale production and peasantry? Although this controversy has already yielded a significant amount of literature, in the interest of brevity it can be said that the difference between family farming and smallholding lies in the fact that the former refers to a productive activity (farming) that is performed by a social group (family) connected by ties of consanguinity and kinship, whereas the latter refers to the scale of production related to a particular agricultural producer (since a small-scale producer will not necessarily either be an agricultural producer or live in a rural area). Very often the small scale is linked to the size of the available land (owned or not) or even just to the area that is usable for farming, but it can also refer to the intensity of use of other factors, especially technology and capital.

The size of farmed land became an internationally accepted unit of measurement to define a small-scale producer, one that allows for both the comparison between countries and, above all, a quantitative categorisation (Nagayets 2005; Garner and De La O Campos 2014). As pointed out by Hazell and Rahman (2014), this criterion has become decisive for the development of comparative international statistics. FAO (Lowder, Skoet, and Singh 2014) and the World Bank, for example, adopt the maximum size of 2 hectares to define a small-scale producer. According to this recent study, 500 million out of a total of 580 million existing farming units in the world were considered small-scale farms.

Despite the statistical advantages of using the concept of small-scale production, this term has become questionable, since land size says very little about the conditions of production and reproduction of farmers. A small-scale producer with up to 2 hectares of land can be considered as either not economically viable or as appropriate, depending on how the land is used, the type of cultivation, technology, access to non-agricultural income etc. It was often based on these criteria that, for a long time, small-scale production was associated with rural poverty and, therefore, economic non-viability.

To overcome these limitations, scholars, policymakers and international agencies have been using the term 'family farming'. Every family farmer holds a small plot of land, but this does not mean they are inefficient or poor. Efficiency and economic performance are criteria relative to a particular mode of use of the factors of production. Poverty—especially

rural poverty—although often present in contexts where smallholders are found, is not only explained by the small size of the available land. The factors that explain rural poverty are multivariate.

The use of the term 'family farming' instead of 'small-scale production' allows the concept to be broadened by overcoming the quantitative criterion of land size and adding the labour variable. Thus, the family farmer is every agricultural/rural producer who uses predominantly the labour of their family to run the activities of the enterprise. This definition broadens the scope of the category by removing the bias of small scale and the association with inefficiency and poverty. This allows family farmers to be considered as not always small-scale producers, much less poor.

3.2 BRIEF EVOLUTION OF FAMILY FARMING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The current debate on family farming in Latin America is heir to the reflections on peasantry (1960s and 1970s) and small-scale farming (1980s). In most Latin American countries, the peasantry category remains present and is used to characterise agricultural establishments and units that more recently have been referred to as family farming. Similarly, many organisations and national governments continue to use the definition of small-sale production/smallholders as reference in developing public policies targeted at this social group (Bengoa 2003; Camagnani 2008).

There is a great diversity of family farms in Latin America and the Caribbean, which vary according to the forms of access to land and its occupation, comprising quite heterogeneous farming styles and agrarian systems. Nevertheless, maybe the main characteristic of family farming diversity in Latin America is neither its agrarian basis nor does it pertain to the enormous variability of its agricultural production and livestock systems. The ethnic and cultural diversity of rural populations and the impacts of miscegenation resulting from the encounter of pre-Columbian civilisations (Incas, Aztecs, Guaraní, among others) with the European settlers led to distinct ways of life, each with their specific form of sociability and strategies of production and interaction with the ecosystems that characterise peasants and family farmers in Latin America.

It must be noted, however, that there is an important theoretical and political shift underway, which is leading to a distinction between the current definition of family farming and the categories of the past such as peasantry and small-scale farming. The key element of this shift is a change in indicators, replacing land size (either owned or available for use) with family labour. As mentioned before, until recently the indicator *par excellence* that defined a peasant or a small farmer was the size of the productive land—usually up to 2 hectares, according to the criteria of the World Bank and FAO (Lowder, Skoet, and Singh 2014). Thus, a peasant was necessarily a small farmer and *vice versa*, and, as such, both of them were considered smallholders. As scholars and policymakers began to use the origin of the labour force (family or hired) as the paradigm to categorise the type of farmer, the size of the land unit lost relevance in defining the economic performance or the production scale of a farm. A producer who has a small area, a family farmer, can achieve high technological performance and high productivity, sometimes even higher than that of a producer with large land areas. The same applies in relation to income, because non-agricultural income and pluriactivity become essential elements for the reproduction of the family, and farm units no longer rely solely on agriculture.

This conceptual shift has been crucial in changing the ideas and conceptions of policymakers and scholars on family farming. Such change not only has theoretical and conceptual effects, but also political and ideological. It is increasingly evident that family farming is not necessarily synonymous with small-scale farming. For a long time—and still today—small-scale farming has been considered poor, marginal and inept, and thus was always on the verge of disappearing. Lots of papers have been written, making the case that peasants and all kinds of smallholders were poor because they were small and, thus, could not achieve significant economic performance. Fortunately, the current discussions on family farming are overcoming this bias. Family farming is considered less and less as synonymous with poverty or diametrically opposite to markets and technology.

Table 1 illustrates some definitions of the family farming category in select countries of Latin America, according to the following variables: land size and capital, labour, management or activity, income and place of residence.

TABLE 1

Designation and criteria for the category 'family farming' in select countries (FAO 2012)

Country	Designation	Land size and capital	Labour	Management or activity	Income	Residence
Argentina	Small-scale agricultural producer	Regional upper limit	Without salaried employees	Direct work on the farm	Not reported	Not reported
Brazil	Family farmer	Up to 4 fiscal modules[4]	Up to 1 or 2 salaried employees	Family management	Family income predominantly from farming	Living in the farm or nearby
Chile	Peasant family farmer	Up to 12 ha. of irrigable land and assets < USD96,000	Direct family labour	Direct work on the farm	Main income comes from the farm	Not reported
Colombia	Family agricultural unit	Family agricultural unit with family patrimony	Family labour and eligible to external employees	Agriculture, aquaculture and forestry	No limit	Not reported
Paraguay	Peasant family farmer	No limits	Family labour and up to 20 temporary workers	Family management	No limit	Living in the farm or nearby
Uruguay	Family producer	Up to 500 ha. (Coneat 100 index)	Family labour and up to 2 salaried employees or 500 working days/year	Family or head of household management	Main income comes from the farm or working days on farms	Up to 50 km from the farm

Sources: Sabourin, Samper and Sotomayor 2014, compiled from FAO 2012b, ECLAC et al. 2013; Salcedo and Guzman 2014 and from Argentina SAGPyA 1998 and Proinder 2004; Brazil: Law 11.326, 2006; Chile: Instituto de Desarrollo Agropecuario (INDAP); Colombia: Ley160, 1994; Paraguay: Ley No. 2419, *Instituto* Nacional de Desarrollo Rural y Tierra 2004; Uruguay: Ministerio Ganadería Agrícola y Pesca (MGAP) 2008, *Registro de Productor Familiar* 2009.

There are, however, other aspects to be considered in this conceptual evolution, which also represent novelties in relation to past debates and understandings. It is worth noting that the current debate on family farming in Latin America and the Caribbean does not emphasise the political and ideological aspects that marked the discussions on peasants and their revolutionary potential in the 1960s and 1970s. Likewise, the current analyses on family farming go further

regarding the discussion on the efficiency and/or effectiveness of small-scale farming or, in other words, about the persistence of small farms within the capitalist dynamics of agribusiness chains, which was a major issue during the 1980s and part of the 1990s.

The historical evolution of the categories that currently refer to family farmers comprises a process that started with the debates on peasantry and indigenous communities, dating from the 1940s to the 1960s (Bengoa 2003; Warman 1985; 2001; Schneider and Escher 2012). In the 1960s and 1970s, debates were particularly incisive on the inclusion of peasantry in the processes of social change, whether from the perspective of technological change via agricultural modernisation (Schultz 1964; Prebish1962; ECLAC 1984) or of its role in the revolutionary processes, such as of the agrarian reform that occurred in several countries (Acosta and Rodriguez 2006; Chiriboga 2002; Kay 2002; Gómez 1992; CIDA 1966).[5]

It is essential to mention the more recent effort represented by REAF as a successful initiative towards a consensus on a common definition for family farming in MERCOSUR member countries. REAF was a political initiative of the Brazilian government that was included in a broader context of foreign policy reorientation, aimed at regional integration and strengthening ties with developing countries.

In 2004, the Brazilian Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) and the Ministry of External Relations (MRE) presented a proposal to the Common Market Group (GMC) for the creation of REAF, aiming to include family farming in the process of regional integration, through coordination and strengthening of public policies at the national level—such as tax equalisation, exchange rate policy, public investment, agricultural policies, phytosanitary measures, technology generation and transfer, regulation of supply and prices, credit and insurance, access to land and to production inputs etc. The purpose was to reduce asymmetries and promote income generation by facilitating the commercialisation of family farming products. Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay are the MERCOSUR member states that participate in REAF as full members, and Bolivia, Chile and Venezuela participate as associate members while waiting for their full membership.

REAF's perspective on family farming, as expressed in its official documents (REAF 2011, for example), is that public policies for this farming segment should be conceived as a counterweight to the unwanted effects of free trade, building mechanisms to promote a new pattern of development consistent with social inclusion, sustainability and citizenship. For REAF, 'family farming' is understood as a "bearer of diversity, expressed in their production systems, ways of life and cultural density. It is a sector with high potential and capability to balance contrasts between producing regions, to develop economic confidence and to generate political stability, which requires distinct policies comprising an integral part of the economic policy" (REAF 2006).

It is from this process of developing and adapting some existing concepts that emerges the broader view about family farming in Latin America and the Caribbean. This definition is based on the notion that family farming refers to the exercise of an economic activity by a social group that is united by kinship and constitutes a family. Furthermore, the economic activity and the production of goods, products and services is also a way of life that involves all members of a family.

3.3 DEFINING FAMILY FARMING

Family farming, as we generally understand it, refers to an economic activity—agriculture[6]—carried out by a social group united by ties of kinship and blood—a family. That is, it is related to a household group that works and produces commodities, goods and services. So, family farming implies a social form of labour and production involved in an activity (agriculture) performed by a social group characterised by family ties (Chayanov 1974; Shanin 1973; 2009; ECLAC 1984; Ellis 1988).

Family farming constitutes a particular form of organisation of labour and production that exists and is reproduced within the social and economic contexts in which it is embedded. Its reproduction is determined by internal factors related to the way of managing productive resources (land, capital, technology etc.), making investment and expenditure decisions, allocating the work of family members and adhering to the cultural values of the group to which they belong. Yet, family farmers cannot elude the social and economic context in which they live and by which they are conditioned, and sometimes subject to. Among these determinants, there are the increasing urban demands for both healthy foods and the preservation of landscapes, soil, water and biodiversity. Technological innovations are also determinants that can reduce the role of both the land and the labour force in the production processes; thus, they can be decisive for greater competitiveness of the productive units.[7]

This definition has several implications. The first is that in family units, work and production are done by the household group; thus, there is no individual or private ownership of the results, as these are intended primarily to meet the needs of the whole family, including the members who do not work, such as children and the elderly. Among the members who constitute the household there are also hierarchies and a very particular division of labour, with distinct tasks ascribed to men and women, youth and adults.

The second implication of such a definition is that a family economic enterprise is inscribed in the dynamics of family life; therefore, decisions regarding production and technology are subject to the cultural, symbolic and religious norms and values that inform them. This is particularly demonstrated by the practices involving inheritance of land, selection of successors and formation of new families. This means, for example, that in some situations a technical or economic decision (to sow, harvest, store, consume etc.) is not always based on a rationale or logic of maximisation of scale or monetary gain.

There is yet a third implication, involving the kind of relationship established by family farmers with other types of enterprises and society as a whole. Markets and other social institutions (the State, the Church and others) have influence over family farmers and may determine their social reproduction, depending on their degree of involvement or interaction with these institutions. Regarding the ways and intensity that mark the integration of family farmers within the economy and society, these are characterised by a gradient ranging from subsistence to full commercial insertion, which can be measured by indicators of the extent and degree of external links (purchase and sale of inputs, seeds, products etc.). In their *sui generis* arrangement, family farmers relate to the outside, receiving stimuli and influences that they assimilate either in whole or in part, whence it follows their relative autonomy and different styles of doing agriculture (Ploeg 2008; 2013).

Still with regard to the conceptualisation of family farming, Garner and De La O Campos (2014) found 36 different definitions and meanings for the term. Thus, it seems there is no consensus among scholars about the scope and the meaning of family farming. From the theoretical and conceptual perspective, family farming encompasses a scattered notion, very difficult to define. Even so, the International Steering Committee for the IYFF 2014, developed the following conceptual definition:

> "Family Farming (which includes all family-based agricultural activities) 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, including both women's and men's. The family and the farm are linked, co-evolve and combine economic, environmental, social and cultural functions" (Garner and De La O Campos 2014, 21).[8]

Further clarification is necessary regarding the size and scale of family farming. A run through any rural area is enough to easily verify that family farms can vary in relation to their size and production scale. One may find properties ranging from small farms that show high production volumes and intensive use of the factors of production, to properties with reasonable land size but managed only by the owner and their family members, which sporadically hire one or two workers.

Lipton (2005, 1–2) observes that:

> "family farms are operated units in which most labor and enterprise come from the farm family, which puts much of its working time into the farm. Family farms, many now quite large, have proved resilient even in the rich world. […] Family farms have advantages that enable them to dominate. Small farms have lower labor-related transaction costs and more family workers per hectare, each motivated to work and to find, screen, and supervise hired workers. Large farms have lower capital- and land- related transaction costs, allowing owners to more readily finance equipment, which they can use over many hectares. So small farms have advantages in early-developing countries, which have low capital per unskilled worker and scarce land per person, while large farms win out in developed countries, with more savings, capital, and (usually) good rural land per unit of unskilled rural labor."

Nevertheless, an image or representation has been created that associates family farming with small farms or small-scale production. This leads to the notion that small farmers are also poor. There is confusion, in this representation, between size (quantity) and scale (quality). The size of the farm—small, medium or large—can be both a quantitative matter (the actual size of the land, the number of family members etc.) and one of scale (the outcomes of the use of factors of production, according to a particular technical-economic jargon).[9] In this sense, we can find family enterprises that are small in size but feature large-scale production (family producers of flowers, horticultural enterprises or even poultry farms often use little land but operate with large-scale production techniques). Conversely, we can also fairly easily find (e.g. in Brazil) large farms (land area of above 5,000 or 10,000 hectares) that operate with a reduced or small-scale production due to low intensity of technical-productive use of factors of production.

Labelling family farming as small-scale agriculture is a mistake, because even in small areas enterprises can reach high technical and productive scales. There is a vast literature on the inverse relationship between size and productivity in agriculture (Ellis 1988; Woodhouse 2010), which would explain the persistence of economic family units in agriculture. However, it is important to recognise that the factors that contribute to the endurance and reproduction of the farming units go far beyond technology and the way of use and optimal allocation of factors. Since Chayanov (1974), we know that the optimal size of establishments depends on economic and demographic variables, related to both the management of the units and their relationship with social and economic contexts. More recently, many scholars have pointed out that family farmers are able to overcome size limitations and scale disadvantages through collective action and the organisation of cooperatives, as well as through political mobilisation towards more favourable public policies.

Finally, a last clarification that must be taken into account in the discussion of family farming refers to its relationships and to how it is integrated into the economy and capitalist society.[10] To avoid falling into a conceptual trap, it is best to consider the criterion of the use of workforce instead of land size or production volume to categorise farm units. Thus, we can find family farmers either focused on on-farm consumption and/or subsistence (when very little of the production is sold) or devoted to commercial aspects (when a significant part of the production is for sale). We may find both family farmers whose production is based solely on the labour of family members and who do not commercialise their production—characterising family farming for on-farm consumption—and specialised family farming units, fully integrated into markets. Neither the use of family labour nor the final destination of the production—on-farm consumption or sale—allow for the identification of peasants or family farmers *per se* with this or that model of society and economic system. Both social forms can be found and achieve their social reproduction in different societies and economies, including the capitalist mode of production.

Contemporary family farmers still keep their peasant roots and operate their economic farming activities according to the family economy system.[11] Nevertheless, they are no longer peasants or small-scale producers, insofar as their social and economic reproduction is no longer restricted to the small rural communities or to isolated villages. They are now exposed to external influences (whether technological, cultural, informational, commercial etc.), which they appropriate, redefine and sometimes re-signify, so that even living in remote rural areas, there are no limits to their interaction with society and markets.

This does not mean that all family farmers are exempt from the same problems and limitations that affected peasants and smallholders. Poverty, income deprivation and social vulnerability continue to affect many of these farmers and their families, just as in the past. Therefore, it must be emphasised that a new name or the adoption of new terminology, *per se*, does not change the real living conditions of these families, much less their identity. Many *campesinos*, *colonos*, *sitiantes, indígenas* and smallholders will not cease to be and define themselves as such, despite scholars and policymakers beginning to call them family farmers or whatever other term. As Shanin (1980) put it, the definition or even the revocation of a concept such as 'peasantry' or 'family farmer' cannot be the work of theorists or policymakers alone, because the social actors involved have their own definitions with which they identify themselves.

The distinct elements and implications described so far emphasise the roles of production, labour and management in the enterprises conducted, managed and reproduced by the hands, hearts and minds of a family. These are the elements that are responsible for the great diversity of family farmers or families of farmers. This diversity can be classified, and a typology can be created based on criteria such as the size of available land, the proportion of family labour *vis-à-vis* non-family labour, the value of production per unit of measure, and economic performance, among others (Schneider, 2014).

Thus, the diversity of family farming as an economic sector or a social group and the heterogeneity of family farmers (as individual members of a household) also result from territorial contexts and broader societal transformations in which these units are embedded (Berdegué and Fuentealba 2011; de Janvry and Sadoulet 2001). The World Bank report on agriculture and development corroborates this view by claiming that "the heterogeneity defines the rural world. The economic and social heterogeneity is a defining characteristic of rural areas" (World Bank 2007, 5).

4 SIZE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILY FARMING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN[12]

In Latin America and the Caribbean, family farming has acquired a central role in the social and economic development of the region. Due to its characteristics, family farming remains the main reservoir of labour force in the agricultural sector and the rural areas of many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in other parts of the developing world.

The latest report by ECLAC/FAO/Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) (2013) estimates that the family farming sector in Latin America amounts to almost 17 million units, comprising a population of about 60 million people. Around 57 per cent of these units are located in South America. Although precise figures are not available for every country, family farming is considered to represent 75 per cent of all production units in almost all Latin American countries, exceeding 90 per cent in many of those (ECLAC/ FAO/IICA 2013, 47).[13]

There is a great diversity of family farms in Latin America and the Caribbean, which vary according to the forms of access to land and its occupation and comprise quite heterogeneous farming styles and agrarian systems. Nevertheless, maybe the main characteristic of the diversity of family farming in Latin America is neither its agrarian basis nor the enormous variability of its agricultural production and livestock systems. The ethnic and cultural diversity of rural populations and the impacts of miscegenation resulting from the encounter of pre-Columbian civilisations (Incas, Aztecs, Guaraní, among others) with the European settlers have eventually led to distinct ways of life, each with their specific form of sociability and strategies of production and interaction with ecosystems that characterise peasants and family farmers in Latin America.

Figures and statistics are certainly not able to depict this major heritage of Latin American society, which is responsible for very specific social formations that sometimes coexist with and are integrated into the social division of labour, and sometimes are excluded and marginalised. Added to these main features—the diversity and heterogeneity of family farming in the region—there is also inequality and vulnerability of this social group.

A significant part of the rural population still lives and reproduces itself under conditions of poverty and insecurity, sometimes suffering violence and threats by groups that use the rural space for non-agricultural interests.

Based on the most recent studies available (FAO 2012b; Salcedo, De La O Campos and Guzmán 2014) family farming comprises a quite heterogeneous social group in Latin America and the Caribbean, which varies according to the social and historical trajectories of each country. A survey by Garner and De La O Campos (2012) points that there are at least 36 different definitions for family farming, 12 of them originating in the region. Despite this significant figure and the inherent diversity in these classifications, the authors identified some common elements that can be found in most definitions of family farming. These common elements include: (a) the predominance of family labour on the farm; (b) the administration of the economic unit by the head of the household; and (c) the size of the property and/or production is a determining factor for the designation of family farming.

Different relative weights are given to these common elements, according to the definition adopted by each country, while a number of other variables are introduced to classify agricultural units as family farming.

It is not within the scope of this paper to describe and analyse each of the different definitions proposed by each country, or to elect the one that could be considered most representative of the universe of family farming. However, it is intended to draw attention to the fact that the definitions and classifications of family farming gathered from several studies have been based on these three common elements for quantifying and analysing family farming in Latin America and the Caribbean (FAO 2012b; 2014).

In this sense, the term 'family farming' has been used from the 2000s onwards, as a concept able to characterise and measure the small agricultural production of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, which contributes to its generalisation (Salcedo et al. 2014). This concept has been reinforced after the creation of REAF in 2004, during which the MERCOSUR countries have produced a common definition for classifying family farming in Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil for the first time (ibid., 20).

Since then, FAO has been working with a definition of family farming that allows it, as much as possible, to identify and classify this social universe in all different countries of the region.

Thus, for FAO, family farming means agricultural production, including crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture that, despite its great heterogeneity between countries and within each country, is characterised by: (a) limited access to land and capital resources; (b) predominant use of family labour, with the head of the household working directly in the production process—i.e. even if there is a division of labour, the head the of household does not only assume the managerial functions but works just like the other family members; and (c) agricultural activity (including forestry, fisheries, aquaculture) being the main source of income of the household, which can be supplemented with other non-agricultural activities that are performed either within or outside the family farm (FAO 2012b, 6).

Therefore, this was the definition adopted in the compilation of data for this research. Although some studies categorise family farming according to their degree of integration into markets,[14] in the present study we focused on presenting aggregate data of the whole

universe of family farming in Latin America and the Caribbean. The objective was to quantify family farming units and to analyse their socio-economic relevance in different sub-regions of Latin America and the Caribbean.

4.1 FAMILY FARMING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Estimates suggest that the family farming sector in Latin America amounts to between 16.5 million and 17 million units (Leporati et al. 2014; FAO/ECLAC/IICA 2013). These units comprise an estimated population of about 60 million people.

Regarding the spatial location of these units, 9 per cent (1,507,757) are located in the Caribbean region, 35 per cent (5,883,205) are in Central America and Mexico, and the remaining 56 per cent (9,205,875) are found in South America (Leporati et al. 2014).

The total number of family farms, in turn, represents 81.3 per cent of all farms in the region, which account for—with variations between countries—between 27 per cent and 67 per cent of the total national food production, and occupy between 12 per cent and 67 per cent of the agricultural area of the region. Furthermore, these approximately 17 million productive units generate between 57 per cent and 77 per cent of agricultural employment (FAO 2012b).

TABLE 2

Family farming units as a proportion of the total number of agricultural establishments in Latin America and the Caribbean, by sub-regions

Sub-region	Total number of establishments	Number of family units	Family units as a proportion of total number of establishments
Caribbean islands	1,704,651	1,507,757	88.4%
Central America and Mexico	7,486,831	5,883,205	78.6%
Andean countries	5,078,283	4,051,342	79.8%
Southern Cone	6,144,774	5,154,533	83.9%
Total	20,414,539	16,596,837	81.3%

Source: Produced by the author, based on Leporati et al. (2014).

Table 2 shows that family farming is extremely important in all the sub-regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the percentage of family farming units in relation to the total number of agricultural units varies from 78.6 per cent in Central America and Mexico to 88.4 per cent in the Caribbean.

Table 3 shows that farmers in the region hold, on average, a land area of just 13.64 hectares to develop their activities. The larger land areas are found in Southern Cone countries (47.02 ha), followed by Central American countries (3.13 ha) and the Andean countries (3.09 ha). It is worth noting the limited access to land for farmers in the Caribbean, which have, on average, only 1.33 hectares to work with.

In most Latin American countries, the statistics that quantify family farming derive from census data and are based only on the stratification of land area data for the universe of establishments surveyed. Few countries count on studies that consider other variables such as the gross value of production (FAO/ECLAC/IICA 2013). Nevertheless, despite imprecise data,

estimates indicate that family farming accounts for 75 per cent of the total number of farming units in all countries of the region, in some of them exceeding 90 per cent of the units (FAO/ECLAC/IICA 2013, 175).

TABLE 3

Area and average size of establishments in the agricultural sector and family farming in Latin America and the Caribbean, by sub-region

Sub-region	Agricultural sector (ha.)		Family farming (ha.)	
	Area	Average/establishment	Area	Average/establishment
Caribbean islands	403,435	2.59	93,578	1.33
Central America and Mexico	8,014,679	13.85	1,137,100	3.13
Andean countries	101,803,749	19.08	11,855,572	3.09
Southern Cone	558,759,298	195.07	143,618,362	47.02
Total	668,981,161	57.65	156,704,412	13.64

Source: Produced by the author, based on Leporati et al. (2014).

4.2 FAMILY FARMING IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Despite the differences in the definition of the existing family agricultural establishments in each country of the region, data presented in this section follow the methodology used in a previous study (FAO/ECLAC/IICA 2013) that took family farming as the productive unit (and domicile/rural home) which is run by a farmer on his/her own and does not hire employees on a permanent basis, or an agricultural enterprise that, including the employer and his/her unpaid family members, had no more than five working people. This common definition allowed the use of household survey data (*encuestas de hogares*), population censuses and agricultural censuses of some countries in the region to measure the characteristics of family farming (ibid., 182).

Central America and Mexico has over 7.4 million agricultural establishments, and 5.8 million (78.6 per cent) of this total can be considered family farming. As shown in Table 4, Mexico is the country with the largest number of family farms (4,104,505), followed by Guatemala (830,684) and El Salvador (397,433). It is worth emphasising that in all Central American countries the proportion of family farms in relation to total agricultural establishments is lower than 80 per cent only in Mexico, which has the largest land area and the largest number of establishments. In the other countries, family farming represents over 80 per cent of total establishments; in Honduras almost all the establishments are family-owned (97.2 per cent).

According to a study by FAO/ECLAC/IICA (2013, 182), family farming in Central America, excluding Mexico, accounts for over 2.4 million families of farmers, most of them in Guatemala (just over 1 million), and the rest in Costa Rica (73,000).

Available data show that the average size of family farms in the region is 3.13 hectares, while in Mexico this average rises to 6.83 hectares, and in Panama it drops to 1.35 hectares.

TABLE 4

Family farming units as a proportion of the total number of agricultural establishments in Central America and Mexico, by country

Country	Total number of establishments	Number of family units	Family units as a proportion of the total number of establishments
El Salvador	397,433	325,895	82.0%
Guatemala	830,684	718,585	86.5%
Honduras	317,199	308,347	97.2%
Mexico	5,424,428	4,104,505	75.7%
Nicaragua	268,527	223,374	83.2%
Panama	248,560	202,499	81.5%
Total	7,486,831	5,883,205	78.6%

Source: Author's elaboration, based on Leporati et al. (2014).

In many countries in the region, most family farms operate using only the workforce of family members, without hiring salaried labour. In recent years, however, the number of salaried workers with agriculture as a secondary activity is increasing, as well as the number of establishments that hire a small number of employees.

TABLE 5

Area and average size of establishments in the agricultural sector and family farming in Central America and Mexico, by country

Country	Agricultural sector (ha.)		Family farming (ha.)	
	Area	Average/ establishment	Area	Average/ establishment
Guatemala	5,315,838	6.40	864,165	1.20
Mexico	-	24.30	-	6.83
Panama	2,698,841	10.86	272,935	1.35
Total	8,014,679	13.85	1,137,100	3.13

Source: produced by the author, based on Leporati et al. (2014).

According to a study by FAO (2012a), in El Salvador and Guatemala 45 per cent of workers are involved in agriculture as a secondary activity, comprising the second largest group of family farmers in these countries. In Costa Rica, the number of establishments that hire up to five workers is the second largest group, accounting for over a quarter of family farming. On the other hand, in the region as a whole, family farm employers represent just 5 per cent of total number of family farms (FAO/ECLAC/IICA 2013, 183).

TABLE 6

Number of family farmers in Central America, by category (millions of people)

Country	Self-employed	Small employers	Other	Total
Guatemala	564	20	478	1.062
Honduras	366	11	107	484
Nicaragua	226	17	91	334
El Salvador	115	19	96	230
Panama	109	11	44	164
Costa Rica	55	21	3	79

Source: Produced by the author, based on FAO/ECLAC/IICA (2013).

In general, 61 per cent of the total number of family farmers in Central America belong to the category of self-employed farmers who have agriculture as their main activity. Family farmers that rely on up to five workers (including unpaid family members) represent 4 per cent of the total. The remaining 35 per cent are either salaried (agricultural and non-agricultural) workers or autonomous non-agricultural workers who have agriculture as a secondary activity.

Table 7 shows that women represent an extremely low proportion (9.3 per cent) of heads of households, and that the average age of the head of household is nearly the same in all countries.

It is worth noting that most farmers in the region (66.0 per cent) own the land they farm, and almost all of them reside in rural areas (86.6 per cent) and own their home (90.0 per cent). On the other hand, the average land area held by these farmers for agricultural production is only 3.29 hectares.

TABLE 7

Socio-economic indicators of family farming in Central America, selected countries

Variable	Guatemala	El Salvador	Honduras	Nicaragua	Costa Rica	Panama	Region
Literacy (%)	54.40	62.10	67.40	69.00	90.70	76.80	68.20
Average age (years)	47.00	49.00	46.00	46.00	48.00	50.00	48.00
Women head of household (%)	11.00	6.10	12.00	7.00	6.80	11.00	9.30
Education (years)	1.90	2.60	2.70	2.40	5.70	4.10	3.20
Average area (ha)	1.02	2.17	N/a	6.72	n.a.	4.13	3.29
Own land (%)	77.00	39.60	N/a	67.80	n.a.	81.80	66.00
Rural residents (%)	83.40	82.40	90.00	88.00	81.60	92.80	86.60
Urban residents (%)	16.60	17.60	10.00	12.00	18.40	7.20	13.40
Non-agricultural activity in total income (%)	33.20	30.20	22.40	28.80	36.60	30.00	30.10
Number of members in the household	5.90	5.10	5.30	5.90	4.10	4.80	5.20
House with earth floor (%)	55.80	38.10	47.20	64.70	3.00	35.80	41.00
Own house (%)	94.40	86.40	89.70	88.70	87.30	95.20	90.00
Access to electric power (%)	64.60	68.90	33.60	36.30	71.30	41.70	52.00
Poor (%)	69.00	53.00	84.60	68.00	33.00	64.00	63.00

Source: FAO/ECLAC/IICA (2013, 184).

Despite recent growth, the participation of non-agricultural activities in the overall income of family farmers still remains small in the region, accounting, on average, for just 30.10 per cent of total income (Baumeister 2012).[15]

Finally, of particular note are the high poverty rates associated with family farming in the region; 63.0 per cent of family farmers are living in poverty.

4.3 THE SITUATION OF FAMILY FARMING IN THE CARIBBEAN

Within the whole region studied, the Caribbean sub-region is the one with the scarcest information regarding family farming. This is due to both the small number of countries that provide data on the characteristics of agriculture and the fact that many do not disaggregate family farming from other sectors (FAO/ECLAC/IICA 2013).

Furthermore, the categories of agricultural activities are quite diverse in this sub-region, and the definition of minimum requirements for qualifying an activity as agricultural shows a great variability between the countries, making it difficult to standardise data and analyse information (ibid., 192).

Despite these limitations, which prevent us from weighing the actual relevance of the sector in the overall development process of the countries, some efforts have been undertaken to characterise and quantify family farmers in this sub-region (Graham 2012).

As shown in Table 8, the Caribbean region (data from Cuba are not included) has a total of 1,507,757 family farming units, which represent 88.4 per cent of the total number of agricultural units in the region. This is quite a high proportion, appearing as the most representative figure among all sub-regions that comprise Latin America and the Caribbean.

Among Caribbean countries, Haiti stands out, with nearly 1 million family farms, which represent 93.9 per cent of the farming units in the country, followed by the Dominican Republic, with 281,526 family farming units (comprising 81.0 per cent of all farming units). Albeit exhibiting much smaller absolute figures, in countries such as Suriname family farming units constitute almost the totality of faming units (99.6 per cent).

TABLE 8

Family farming units as a proportion of the total number of agricultural establishments in the Caribbean, by country

Country	Total number of establishments	Number of family units	Family units as a proportion of the total number of establishments
Antigua and Barbuda	1,226	1,118	91.2%
Belize	13,882	10,272	74.0%
Granada	55,029	49,246	89.5%
Haiti	1,018,951	956,892	93.9%
Jamaica	228,683	179,999	78.7%
Dominican Rep.	347,563	281,526	81.0%
Santa Lucia	9,972	8,287	83.1%
Suriname	10,234	10,189	99.6%
Trinidad and Tobago	19,111	10,228	53.5%
Total	1,704,651	1,507,757	88.4%

Source Author's elaboration, based on Leporati et al. (2014).

The data presented in Table 9 reveal that family farmers in the region have extremely limited access to land, working on land areas that, on average, are of less than 1 hectare. Only in Suriname is the average land area of family farms over 1 hectare, reaching 4.10 hectares and notably exceeding the other countries. These data indicate a sharp fragmentation of land ownership in the region, what contributes to amplify heterogeneity within the small-farming sector, insofar as there are important differences in agricultural structures (ranging from landless peasants to those who own up to 5 hectares of land), and in the capabilities and potentialities of their productive resources and associated agricultural practices (FAO/ECLAC/IICA 2013, 192).

It is estimated that 89.6 per cent of farming units in the region are of less than 2 hectares. Combined, they represent 55.2 per cent of the total area of agricultural land (Graham 2012).

TABLE 9

Area and average size of establishments in the agricultural sector and family farming in the Caribbean

Country	Agricultural sector (ha.)		Family farming (ha.)	
	Area	Average/ establishment	Area	Average/ establishment
Antigua and Barbuda	1,313	1.18	n.a.	0.44
Jamaica	325,810	1.60	47,712	0.30
Saint Lucia	12,223	1.29	3,958	0.48
Suriname	64,090	6.30	41,908	4.10

Source: produced by the author based on Leporati et al. (2014).

Broadly speaking, production systems are traditional, with an emphasis on the cultivation of food and, to a lesser extent, breeding of small livestock, poultry and farmed fish. In recent years, an increase has been observed in activities related to agritourism and agroforestry.

Land in the region tends to be predominantly family-owned, with 56 per cent of farms being owned by the holder, 26 per cent by the family, about 10 per cent constituting leased land, and the remainder operating under various regimes of rights, whether private or public (FAO/ECLAC/IICA 2013). The information available also reveals a trend in family farming towards being established in small-sized properties (less than 2 hectares in Saint Lucia and less than 1 hectare in Jamaica), indicating a process of land fragmentation in the region.

Despite the lack of specific data on family farming, the characteristics of producers in the region follow those found in the agricultural sector as a whole. In this sense, it is observed that the age structure of farmers predominantly comprises people in middle and old age. According to Graham (2012), 71.2 per cent of Caribbean farmers are over 40 years old, an age group that exhibited a growth of 3.2 per cent between 1999 and 2010. In turn, the proportion of women heads of households remains low (around 30 per cent) in the region, although in some countries it has shown a significant increase (in Saint Lucia, for example, there was an increase from 26 per cent to 30 per cent in the number of female heads of households in the agricultural sector between 1996 and 2007) (FAO/ECLAC/IICA 2013).

Finally, a decrease has been observed in recent years in Central America in the overall income from agricultural activities. Between 1996 and 2007, the proportion of the agricultural population whose income from farming activities is less than 25 per cent of their total income increased by over 50 per cent. Conversely, in the same period, the number of farming units with over 75 per cent of their income originating from farming activities decreased. This decrease was sharper for small farms, among which nearly 70 per cent earn less than 25 per cent of their income from agriculture, and even sharper if we consider the age stratum of young people between 15 and 35 years old, in which 88 per cent earn less than 25 per cent of their total income from farming activities. As a consequence, over the past few years the Central America region has become an importer of staple foods from abroad (ibid., 193).

4.4 FAMILY FARMING IN SOUTH AMERICA

As in the case of the Caribbean, the South America region is characterised by a significant heterogeneity among family farming establishments. Table 10 shows that the family farming sector in the region represents between 46.9 per cent and 93.1 per cent of agricultural productive units. On average, family farming units in the region account for 78 per cent of total agricultural establishments.

Table 10 also shows that Paraguay has the highest proportion (93.1 per cent) of family farming units relative to total agricultural establishments, followed by Chile (92 per cent), Ecuador (84.5 per cent) and Brazil (84.4 per cent). Only in Uruguay does family farming account for less than half of the total number of farming establishments, at 46.9 per cent.

TABLE 10

Family farming units as a proportion of the total number of agricultural establishments in South America, by country

Country	Total number of establishments	Number of family units	Family units as a proportion of the total number of establishments
Colombia	2,021,895	1,584,892	78.4%
Ecuador	842,882	712,035	84.5%
Peru	2,213,506	1,754,415	79.3%
Argentina	333,477	218,868	65.6%
Brazil	5,175,489	4,367,902	84.4%
Chile	301,269	277,166	92.0%
Paraguay	289,649	269,559	93.1%
Uruguay	44,890	21,038	46.9%
Total	11,223,057	9,205,875	78.0%

Source: Author's elaboration, based on Leporati et al. (2014).

Regarding the land area occupied by family farming in this region, Table 11 illustrates that South American family farming units comprise 28.9 hectares on average. At the country level, Argentina has the largest average family farming units (107.45 ha), followed by Chile (46.00 ha) and Brazil (24.17 ha). The countries with the smallest average family farming units are Peru (1.29 ha), Ecuador (3.48 ha) and Colombia (4.48 ha).

TABLE 11

Area and average size of establishments in the agricultural sector and family farming in South America

Country	Agricultural sector (ha)		Family farming (ha)	
	Area	Average/ establishment	Area	Average/ establishment
Colombia	50,705,453	25.08	7,105,601	4.48
Ecuador	12,355,831	14.70	2,481,019	3.48
Peru	38,742,465	17.50	2,268,752	1.29
Argentina	174,807,257	524.20	23,516,942	107.45
Brazil	329,941,393	63.75	105,581,246	24.17
Chile	22,923,754	85.00	11,703,562	46.00
Paraguay	31,086,894	107.33	2,816,612	10.45
Total	660,563,047	119.65	155,473,734	28.19

Source: Author's elaboration, based on Leporati et al. (2014).

As to the total area occupied by this segment in the region, countries can be divided into at least two groups: a first group in which family farming occupies less than a quarter of agricultural area (Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil), and a second group in which family farming represents half or more of the agricultural area (Ecuador, Chile and Colombia).

Regarding the characteristics of the producers, similarly to other sub-regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, South American farmers are on average over middle age (55 years old). A particular feature of the South American sub-region is the significant number of farmers that come from indigenous ethnic backgrounds. According to a study by FAO/ECLAC/IICA (2013), 25 per cent of Ecuadorian farming families who own less than 5 hectares of land are headed by indigenous people. This also occurs in Chile, where 23 per cent of families farming for subsistence are headed by indigenous people. Similar characteristics would probably also be found in countries such as Peru and Bolivia, in which, although data on family farming are lacking, 43 per cent and 73 per cent, respectively, of the rural population are indigenous people.

TABLE 12

Socio-economic indicators of family farming in South America, selected countries

Variable	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Ecuador
Average age of the head of the farm (years)	53	-	44	49.15
Schooling (years)	4.8	6.0	4.9	-
Women as head of the farm (%)	13.75	-	12.7	12.3
Average area (ha)	18.35	46.00	4.48	3.48
Own land/house (%)	97.27	-	63.00	-
Rural residence (%)	-	30	22.67	-
Urban residence (%)	-	70	77.33	-
Non-agricultural activity in total income (%)	40.68	-	13.44	60.2

Source: Author's elaboration, based on FIDA (2014) and Leporati et al. (2014).

* Data refer to the group of specialised farmers (with agricultural income over 50 per cent of total income).

Finally, data in Table 12 present some socio-economic indicators for South American countries. As can be observed, some characteristics regarding the profiles of families are very similar in all countries, such as: the average age of the head of household, ranging from 53 years old in Brazil to 44 years old in Colombia; the average years of schooling, which are higher in Chile (6.0) and almost the same in Brazil and Colombia (4.8 and 4.9, respectively). The proportion of family farms headed by women is also virtually the same across the region, with an average of 12 per cent.

In contrast, data on the characteristics of the production units vary considerably among the countries presented in the table. As can be observed, the average land area of family agricultural establishments is higher in Chile (46.00 ha), followed by Brazil (18.35 ha), Colombia (4.48 ha) and Ecuador (3.48 ha). Another variable worth noting is the proportion of non-agricultural activities in the composition of total income of family farms. In Ecuador, it corresponds to 60.2 per cent of farmers' income, while in Brazil it is 40.68 per cent, and in Colombia it is only 13.44 per cent.

In conclusion, it is worth noting the significant number of family farming units that are located in the urban areas of Chile (70 per cent) and Colombia (77.33 per cent), which is extremely significant.

5 OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR FAMILY FARMING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: TOWARDS A NEW PATH OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD SECURITY

The IYFF represents an unprecedented opportunity to reaffirm the importance of family farming in the process of rural development in Latin America and the Caribbean. This opportunity was highlighted in the Regional Dialogues and in the 33rd session of the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Family farming is part of the rural landscape of the region and carries the cultural and ethnic identities that mark its social diversity. Family farming has played a crucial role in the historical development of the region, since family arrangements were decisive in shaping the agrarian structure. Considering the massive presence of family farming in Latin American and Caribbean societies, we may claim that the economic and social development of these societies depends on the strategic role to be ascribed to this sector. In some countries, most notably in Central America, family farming represents more than 90 per cent of all rural agricultural establishments.

Among the potentialities of family farming that were identified in the Regional Dialogues is its fundamental role in food production. In many countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, the agricultural sector remains the main engine of economic development and the crucial factor for macroeconomic stabilisation (FIDA 2014). Even in such large and industrialised economies as Brazil, Mexico and Argentina, the agricultural sector, within which family farming carries significant weight, remains essential. In countries of intermediary economies such as Chile, Colombia and Uruguay, agriculture also plays a central role. In the least industrialised countries, family farming is the very basis on which a development strategy could be built. Therefore, there is an economic and productive potential that fully justifies the recognition of the role of family farming in Latin America and the Caribbean and the need for its support.

It is not surprising that, in many countries, governments, organisations and different stakeholders are interested in designing programmes and policies to support and strengthen family farming. Despite predictions of the impending demise of family farming, facts show that it still exists in most countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.[16]

5.1 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILY FARMING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Family farming makes distinct contributions to rural development, which can be observed at different levels. In the past, the demographic surplus in the rural sector was seen as a problem to be overcome because it hindered industrialisation (Lipton 1992). However, following the period of structural adjustment in the 1990s, a new vision and perspective on the role of agriculture in economic development emerged, leading to the current understanding about the key role of family farming in keeping people in rural areas. This new demographic equation is not homogeneous and has different dynamics according to countries and regions. In some

rural regions where family farming is predominant, this sector continues to provide either a temporary or a permanent workforce for the service sector and even for migration. In other regions, the permanence of part of the family in the farm and the maintenance of land ownership has proved to be an important defence mechanism against the crisis that has been affecting migrants since 2008 in countries in the global North.

A second contribution of family farming to economic development pertains to the diversification of local economies. This happens as a consequence of both pluriactivity and value added to agricultural products. It is worth noting that the existence of surplus workforce in the family units, which is not fully absorbed by agricultural activities, encourages the development of other occupations, both within and outside the farm. It explains the fact that many farming families have become pluriactive and have multiple sources of income (de Janvry and Sadoulet 2000; Reardon et al. 2001; Schneider 2009).

The third contribution of family farming is the preservation of cultural heritage, as pertaining to both intangible cultural aspects and language, cuisine and folklore. This is, indeed, about the main heritage of peasant societies that is preserved by family farming, since the peasant way of life, culture and values confer social identity to many rural communities and villages. Nowadays, much of this heritage and these values are reoriented and integrated into market dynamics, which tends to create economic opportunities related to rural tourism, regional cuisine and rural festivals and events. Many small towns or rural communities of peasants and family farmers could redefine their portfolio of activities and strategies to occupy the workforce and attract tourists and even small businesses. The most interesting studies on innovative territorial dynamics of rural development that have been conducted in Latin America over the past 15 years show abundant evidence of this process of social and economic reformulation of the rural environment, based on the families of small farmers and their interaction with other, also family, enterprises (Berdegué et al. 2012; Berdegué and Benito 2012).

The fourth role of family farming in rural development relates to food security. In this regard, the most important aspects refer to production for on-farm consumption and, secondarily, to supply the small local markets such as fairs, and even government purchases by providing food to schools. The strengthening of family farming may represent an increase in available food surplus, either by improving the production for on-farm consumption or by increasing local or regional circulation of this surplus. In addition, the improvement in feeding conditions may boost other dimensions of quality of life, such as health, education and the environment itself. It is worth emphasising that although no restrictions or limitations are in place to prevent family farmers from producing for the export market (as it indeed occurs with coffee in the Andean countries, soybeans, poultry and pigs in southern Brazil, fruits and vegetables in Mexico etc.), domestic and local markets are always the first and most important option for family farming products.

It is not only the shorter distances and the small quantities of products that make family farmers more competitive in these local markets. Other reasons such as the quality of the products and the social relations between the producers and the consumers are important too.

The fifth contribution relates to food security through a focus on the social and cultural aspects that make traditions and local diets an important element of identity and cohesion of social life in rural communities. These are examples of how the relationship between local production and consumption not only strengthens access to food but may also activate a

number of other elements that ultimately strengthen the reproduction of family farming. It is needless to stress the positive effects of improved food security and nutrition on health and education; however, it is worth noting that a less vulnerable and less impoverished rural population can also use natural resources such as water, soil and biodiversity more sustainably.

The sixth contribution of family farming to rural development may occur in the context of more sustainable production strategies, such as the major reduction in external agrochemical inputs and alternative methods of plant and animal management. Again, it must be emphasised that family farming *per se* does not carry a preservationist essence and that non-family farming arrangements are not incapable of supporting organic production. However, these units having plenty of access to labour, and adhering to a production system not guided by a profit-maximising rationality may contribute to the transition of or changes in the technical process of production. In this sense, family farming can become a way to produce healthier foods and, thus, garner greater sympathy from consumers, opening new markets and helping solve some of the problems it faces.

5.2 CHALLENGES FOR FAMILY FARMING IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The document published following the FAO Regional Dialogue on family farming (FAO 2014c) highlights seven challenges currently facing family farming in Latin America and the Caribbean—namely: (a) to improve knowledge about the diversity and heterogeneity of family farming, to better understand the potential of different social groups; (b) to broaden the scope of action of public policies beyond the focus on the agricultural segments, by means of support for infrastructure and services that may encourage the production of public goods; (c) to encourage the participation of farmers and their organisations in policy planning and formulation; (d) to increase access to natural resources, especially to land and water, but also to seeds and genetic resources; (e) to expand financing programmes aimed at family farming; (f) to support initiatives and actions aimed at youth; and (g) to develop public policies aimed at strengthening women's autonomy.

Beyond these challenges, family farming in the region faces strong pressure from agribusiness corporate sectors interested in land acquisition, access to mineral reserves and areas prone to commercial exploitation of services and tourism (Soto Baquero and Gómez 2012a). In some Latin American countries, for example, there is an increasing foreign demand for the purchase of land, which has led to episodes of land grabbing directly affecting family farmers, who end up selling their lands or yielding under coercion (Soto Baquero and Gómez 2012b). Likewise, many family farmers and even whole rural communities have been affected by the expansion of the mining sector, which negatively affects productive lands, generating various constraints. Last but not least, an increasing quest for commercial exploitation of services and tourism has been observed, especially in the Caribbean region, thus limiting the access to fishery sources and other spaces for labour managed by family farmers.

Family farming is also facing the issue of markets. On the one hand, we observe the growing power of large agri-food corporations and their strategies for monopolising markets and marketing channels, through a broad scheme of mergers and acquisitions of companies in the agribusiness sector in Latin America, leading to denationalisation of capital in this segment. The number of both downstream and upstream firms in the agricultural food production chain has decreased in recent years, and several studies have been showing that the ongoing concentration of food distribution in 'super-/hypermarkets' generates a squeeze

that interferes with prices and competition mechanisms, with strong impacts on family farmers. On the other hand, a challenge emerges concerning the creation of new markets for family farmers. Diverse initiatives have emerged and spread out in this respect, many of them arising from public procurement, such as the purchase of food from family farmers to supply school feeding programmes, public stocks and even social welfare policies such as food baskets for vulnerable people and popular restaurants.

The issues related to global warming and climate change are among the most feared challenges. First, this is because of the dearth of studies and research on the impacts and effects of climate change on rural inhabitants. Information on the effects of climate change and modelling on production and agri-food supply is being produced quite often; however, very little is known about the effects of negative climatic impacts on families and rural communities. Second, this is because the family farmers in Latin America, and most especially in the Caribbean, are at their most vulnerable in their relationship with protective mechanisms such as crop insurance or reconstruction of infrastructure, which still are quite limited and even non-existent in some countries.

Another limiting factor for family farming relates to demographic issues, either of gender or generation. Generational aspects, which refer to the succession and formation of new generations to continue the enterprise, depend, in most cases, on rules and regulations that are related to cultural practices, such as the mechanisms to transfer the ownership of the land to the youngest or firstborn—male or female—heir, which may vary according to ethnic origin and religious affiliation. It does not mean, of course, that inheritance mechanisms are always harmful to the reproduction of the enterprise, since in many situations they end up protecting the family and serving as a mechanism of social reproduction. However, in the face of increased specialisation and expansion of market integration, the domestic conflict over access to land or water often ends up splitting the lot between family members and reducing it to such an extent that it no longer allows for reasonable and sufficient gains.

Conversely, also in the face of moral and socially constructed norms and values, it is still common for women to have a disadvantaged position within family farming units. The role of provider delegated to male members, backed by patriarchal values, ends up restricting women's access to leading positions in the hierarchy, which often discourages young women from staying in rural areas. As a result, another related demographic problem emerges, which is the growing number of single males in rural areas. This is due in part—as shown by studies on the topic—to the greater attraction of women to the urban labour markets, but it also stems from the lack of opportunities and recognition of the role of women within the household (Paulilo 2013; FAO 2011; Agarwal 2003; Boserup 1970).

Finally, there is an important challenge that concerns the need to give greater visibility and participation to the social actors linked to family farming, especially strengthening their institutionality. Governments and international organisations could open up opportunities for participation to give voice to farmers, especially to receive suggestions about best practices. This greater openness to social organisations representing family farmers could open traditional political spaces for dialogue and generate new governance mechanisms and interactions, which could help in the advocacy for policies for sustainable rural development and food security.

6 THE STATE AND PUBLIC POLICIES TO ENHANCE FAMILY FARMING

The State and public policies represent powerful mechanisms that can be mobilised in favour of family farmers. State action can both guarantee anticyclical measures for macroeconomic protection as well as create long-lasting mechanisms such as funds and insurance against natural disasters, prices crises and even health problems. It will surely fall on the social and political ability of family farmers to organise and claim support for their goals and demands, as well as the capacity of the national governments to heed them.

Nevertheless, public policies targeting family farming are still limited in Latin America and the Caribbean. In many situations, family farmers are still seen as just another segment amid a larger group of farmers, which results in the lack of public policies able to meet the specificities of the sector. This is the case regarding access to technology and innovation, for they generally continue to be conceived and designed without taking into account the reality and the needs of small family farmers. A notable example is agricultural mechanisation, which is often inappropriate for the technical requirements of small farmers and is priced beyond their means.

6.1 CREATING AN ENABLING POLICY ENVIRONMENT

One of the main barriers to be overcome to create an enabling policy environment to foster family farming is the anachronistic institutional framework that surrounds family farming activities in Latin America and the Caribbean. The exception lies in initiatives such as the PAF (Family Farming Plan) of El Salvador and REAF, which became a successful experience in MERCOSUR countries, aimed at implementing legal frameworks in support of family farming, seeking convergence between public policies and the exchange of learning.

A recent compilation of agricultural and agrarian policies for family farming can be found in the book organised by Sabourin, Samper and Sotomayor (2014), from which we extracted Table 13. In this table (see also Appendix 1), the authors systematise the main public policies for agriculture in selected countries, specific policies for family farming and policies related to rural development and food security, which also affect family farming.

As indicated in the table, in several countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, policies for family farming are still recent, many launched in the mid-1990s, but mainly at the beginning of this millennium. It is worth noting that many of these initiatives still do not properly configure state policies, but only programmes or government initiatives, which means that there are risks to their institutionality and permanence in the face of circumstantial factors.

In addition to these problems, public policies are also often marked by sectoriality and disarticulation. Sectoriality results from the fact that many policies for family farming do not take into account the relationships between farmers and their surroundings or territory. The available diagnoses on successful cases of strengthening family farming show that one determining factor is an adequate connection between the internal dynamics of the property and the family and the social and territorial space where it is located. There is a dialectic and systemic relationship between farmers and territories. However, the policies that have been designed for family farmers are hardly able to focus on the determinants surrounding the category. In practical terms, this might mean both the improvement of infrastructure (roads, communication) and of social organisation, through the constitution of small cooperatives or associations at the regional level.

TABLE 13

Main agrarian policies by country

Country	General agricultural policy	Specific policy for family farming	Sectoral policies	
			Sustainable development or rural territorial development	Food security or poverty reduction
Argentina*	SAGPyA 1988; PROFEDER (INTA) 2003	SDRyAF, MINAGRI PROINDER 2004; Registro Nac. AF 2007	PROFEDER-INTA 2003; PRODERI 2012	PROHUERTA 1990; PERMER, PROPASA 1999; Monotributo Social AF 2009; ferias de la Agric. Familiar
Brazil*	MAARA 1962–1998; MAPA 1999	PRONAF 1995; DAP (Doc Apt. Pronaf) 1996; MDA 1999	PRONAT 2003; PTC 2008	PNAE 1983; Fome Zéro, CONSEA, PAA 2003 PNAE AF 2009
Chile*	MINAGRI 1990	INDAP 2006; Pol. Nac. Des. Rural 2014–2024	DTR Indígenas 2004; Pol. Nac. Des. Rural 2014–2024	PRODESAL 1995; PDTI 2009
Colombia	INCODER, PRONATTA 2003	PRAN 2000; Progr. Agric. Familiar 2014	DRE 2007; DRET 2012	Red Seg. Aliment. e RESA Alianzas Productivas 2012
Costa Rica	Plan del sector agropecuario 2010–2021	Plan Sectorial Agri. Familiar (2010–2014)	PDR 1997; Ley del INDER 2012	Plan Nac. de Alimentos, CEPROMAS 2008
Cuba*	Política del MINAGRI	Regulaciones fiscales p/ cooperativas campesinas	Cultivos s/condiciones + descentralización	Canasta básica otorgada a todo residente cubano
Ecuador	MAGAP/ Plan Agropecuario 2006–2017	PRONERI 2007; ERAs (Escuelas Rev. Agri.)	Prolocal, Proder 2007; Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir 2008	Ley Eco Pop. Solid. 2008; LORSA, Soberanía Alimentaria 2012
México	Alianza Para el Campo	PROCAMPO, PROAGRO, INDESOL 1995	Ley de Desarrollo Rural Sustentable 2001	PROGRESA, Oportunidad PROMAF, Cruzada México Sin Hambre
Nicaragua	MAGFOR, Prorural, agro industria 2005	Dir. AF, MEFCCA 2007; Prorural Incluyente CRISSOL 2007	Proyectos pilotos locales con coop. internacional	Hambre Cero, Bono Product. Alimentar 2007; Ley del MEFCCA 2012
Perú	MINAGRI, Mi Riego	Agro Rural 2008	Plan Estrat. Sectorial 2012/2016; DTR	MIDIS, Agroideas, Foncodes 2011
Uruguay*	MGAP, Ley de Des. Rural 2005	Dir. Des. Rural del MGAP 2008; Reg. Prod. Familiar 2009	Ley de Ordenamiento Territorial 2009	MEVIR (casas) 1967; Uruguay Rural 2001

Source: Sabourin, Samper and Sotomayor (2014).

* Countries with specific policies for family farming for over 10 years.

Another aspect related to sectoriality pertains to the disconnect between policies and programmes for family farmers. Many policies, for example, support and promote increased production, through access to operating credit or production technologies (inputs, machinery etc.). However, these policies are not always connected with policies to promote commercialisation, supply and stock formation. The same can be said of social and environmental aspects. Policies of productive or economic character are not always articulated

with the specific demands of family members such as youth and women, and/or sometimes overlook environmental issues, especially regarding productive technologies that may contribute to environmental resilience (access to and storage of water, for example, especially in semi-arid regions).

6.2 POLICIES TO SUPPORT FAMILY FARMING AND FOSTER RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Indeed, public policies for family farming are inscribed in broader rural development policies. Therefore, specific policies for family farming are, in general terms, rural development policies; each in turn benefits from the other.

In light of the evident and recognised diversity of family farming, it is reasonable to expect that public policies in this area should take such heterogeneity into account. Therefore, the set of actions, programmes and policies should be diversified, seeking to meet the specificities of each situation.

However, there is a guideline that might be applied for devising public policies aimed at family farming. It is based, on the one hand, on the principle of capacity-building and, on the other, on the mitigation of vulnerabilities. In short, good policies for family farming are those that strengthen their livelihoods and are able to generate resilience (UNDP 2014). It is useless to attempt to rank the best or most appropriate policies for family farming, since it always depends on the conditions of local ecosystems and the characteristics of the family farmers themselves.

However, there are some areas in which public policies for family farming have a particularly important role in the current social and economic scenario.

The first area relates to the strengthening of the assets of family farmers. One of the major problems that undermines these productive units lies in the fact of being small and having limited or inadequate access to assets and resources. Obviously this does not mean to be poor or doomed to remain in a vulnerable condition; as a matter of fact, the pessimistic predictions that proclaimed the disappearance of small farmers did not perceive the crucial role of the State in developing public policies for this large social group (which represents a significant proportion of rural voters) or its potential for social and economic organisation through cooperatives. Therefore, overcoming fragmentation and individualism is a necessary condition for adequately structuring family farming to compete and endure in a capitalist society. There is a long roll of assets that could be listed as major elements for family farming—land, water and seeds being the most important. It is not our purpose to make recommendations on which assets should be supported, but it is worth noting that public policies should prioritise the collective use of these resources to promote social capital.

The second refers to mechanisms aiming to reduce farmers' dependence on external resources, especially regarding the use of inputs such as seeds and agrochemicals that could gradually be replaced by organic fertilisation, or less intensive techniques for the management of plants and animals, such as agroecology and direct planting in straw mulch. This is not just about encouraging more sustainable production and cropping systems to reduce costs, but above all it is about increasing the resilience of the production units. In most countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, there is currently a myriad of low-cost resources and technologies that are relatively well known and are disseminated by public agencies and non-governmental organisations. Thus, such options are feasible and practical, but their implementation must

respect the local conditions and lore, so that a true interaction between the tacit knowledge of farmers and the expert/scientific knowledge of mediators can be established without overriding one another, since they are complementary in nature.

The third regards supporting increased production and the generation of surpluses. Many small-scale farmers are poor because they cannot produce enough to feed their own families, often requiring cash transfer policies to supplement their incomes. There are several limiting factors for this, particularly the lack of resources, the lack of adequate knowledge, or even exploitation by other agents. Public policies play a key role in fostering production for on-farm consumption and supply, especially among indigenous and traditional populations, by investing in training and storage. Furthermore, the generation of marketable surpluses by adding value and generating new products, by means of agro-industrialisation, has been highlighted as a viable alternative. Public policies in support of production should not be restricted to increasing scale, but should especially address the transformation, processing and storage of production.

The fourth area could focus on food and nutritional security. Food security policies should be complementary to family farming policies, through the facilitation and promotion of food procurement for public supply, such as school feeding programmes, hospitals and soup kitchens, among others.

The fifth relevant area for public policy intervention relates to markets and commercialisation. In the context of agri-food globalisation, it is essential for family farmers to have access to protection mechanisms against unfair competition. This does not mean to clamour for protectionist policies in relation to global markets but, rather, for public policies able to guarantee food and nutritional security, environmental preservation and actions to keep people in the rural space, and for farmers to be able to access markets and build new sales channels, whether through public procurement, local fairs or short supply chains for direct sales to consumers. Public policies need to focus on the organisation of the suppliers, through either associations, cooperatives or private networks.

The sixth area relates to access to technical training and innovation. The rural areas that exhibit a more accelerated development of family farming are also those that count on the presence of organisations which were able to help farmers to design projects, create collective synergies and mediate their access to information. Therefore, public policies to support agricultural extension remain crucial. Nevertheless, this is not just about reproducing old schemes for the dissemination of homogeneous technologies focused exclusively on production. The technologies required are increasingly associated with the handling of information and communication techniques related to the use of the internet, which can reduce costs and broaden the stage of social interaction.

A seventh area pertains to matters of succession and rural youth. A quick glance at demographic statistics, as well as a tour of rural areas of Latin America and the Caribbean, makes it clear that there are important demographic changes under way, although family farming is still a major reservoir of skilled workers for labour markets.

This scenario, however, is undergoing a clear transformation. Its two most worrying aspects are, on the one hand, that rural regions are losing their population (especially younger and unmarried people) to migration to foreign countries (as is the case in several Central American countries such as El Salvador and Nicaragua) or to urban areas. This leads to problems regarding succession and the maintenance of youth in rural areas.

On the other hand, we are witnessing an aging of the working population, resulting in many production units managed by elderly farmers with no prospect of finding a successor. Affirmative action policies—that is, policies with criteria for positive discrimination—could be put in place, through credit incentives and access to services aimed at younger farmers. Likewise, it must be taken into account that many young farmers do not want to make a living exclusively from primary agricultural production, so it would be important to combine agricultural and non-agricultural policies, to include all members and different interests of a family group, not simply the production.

Combined with this generational issue, another potential area for policies for family farming relates to gender issues. For a long time—and still today—the strong adherence of farmers to traditional values and principles (centrality of the male position in the domestic hierarchy, concentration of money by males, inequalities in the mechanisms of inheritance of land to the detriment of women, among others), which comprise part of the identity of these groups, has placed women at a disadvantage within the family unit. For this reason, in most rural communities in Latin America and the Caribbean, a division of family labour persists that is based on hierarchical gender asymmetries and ascribes lower value to women. In increasingly more reflective societies, inequality and the lack of recognition of women's role in family farming eventually resulted in their accelerated abandonment of the activity and even the rural space, through migration. Public policies and other State-driven initiatives could create mechanisms to promote the recognition of women, such as the creation of credit lines or projects, whether agricultural or not, targeting women.

Finally, a general recommendation is to make family farming more visible. This is a demand from both national policymakers and international organisations, as well as researchers and scholars. It could be accomplished especially through the development of communication strategies to broadcast the potential of this sector, and above all, through the development of an information system able to improve databases, methodologies for data collection and sources of information on family farming. Statistics on family farming in Latin America and the Caribbean are still limited and need to be improved. Few countries feature specific census information on family farming, the categories utilised are not always comparable, and access to the data is restricted and precarious.

APPENDIX 1

TABLE 1

Diversity of policies for family farming and year of implementation, by country

Country//Policy	Argentina	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Cuba	Ecuador	Mexico	Nicaragua	Peru	Uruguay
Land reform/colonisation		INCRA 1964, 1987, 2003	CORA 1962; INRA 1968	Incora 1994; Inat, Edat 2013	ITCO 1961; IDA 1982; INDER 2012	R. Agraria 1959, 1963	Ley DA Dinac 1994; Sig. Tierras	Ref. Agraria 1921; revision 1992	Ley + IAN 1963; INRA, MIDINRA 1981	Inco 1969; Pett 1992	INC1948
Irrigation infrastructure		Dnocs 1950; Codesvasf	Com. Nacional de Riego 1975			Para microempresas		Banco Crédito Ejidal 1936; FIRA 1954	MAGFOR Prorural 2005; Mefcca Agro Industria 2007	Projects esp. regional fund Mi Riego 2008	Plan de Riego
Credit and technical assistance	Proinder 1998, 2004	Pronaf 1995; DAP Pronaf 1996	INDAP 1963	Incoder 2003; Pronatta, PAF, 2014	Banco de Desarrollo	Cooperativas + subsidio ATER: ANAP	Proneri	BANRURAL - FINRURAL 1988	Dir AF Mefcca Crissol Prorural incluyente 2007	Agro Rural 1998	IPA1996; Dir. Desarrollo Rural MGAP 2006
Food security/ purchases	Prohuerta 1990 and 2009	Consea 2003; Fome Zero		Paap 2012; Red S Al	PNA 2008	Canasta básica para todos los cubanos	Lorsa 2008; PAE 2012	CONASUPO 1965–1999; PROMAF; Cruzada México Sin Hambre	Hambre Zero + Bono Prod Alim, 2007		Proyecto Uruguay Rural (FIDA) 2001
DTR/DRI/territories	Profeder 2003; Proderi 2012	Pronat 2003; Territorios Ciudadanía 2008	Política Nacional de Desarrollo Rural 2014–2024	DRE 2009; DRET 2012	IDA, INDER 2013	Experiencias locales	Proder, Plan Nac. Buen Vivir	Conasupo, precios de garantía	Iniciativas locales con coop internacional	Plan Estr. Sectorial/ 2012/2016, DTR	Mesas de Desarrollo Rural 2007; Ley Ord. Territ. 2009

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Country//Policy	Argentina	Brazil	Chile	Colombia	Costa Rica	Cuba	Ecuador	Mexico	Nicaragua	Peru	Uruguay
Environment/PSA		Reed, Bolsa Floresta 2009	Conama 1994; Minist. Medio Ambiente 2010		PSA1997	Gestión integrada		Ley DS 2001; PSA forestal-hídrico 2006	Proyectos coop internacional, Risemp, Casur Psa Hidrico	PSA hídricos con MMA	MVOTMA 1990; RENARE 2006
Markets, fairs and commercial alliances	Ferias Agric. Familiar 2005	PNAE1989; PAA 2003	Alianzas productivas 2009	Alianzas productivas, Red SA 2012	JNFA, Copremas	Agromercado	Mercados campesinos		PSA Risemp 2000	Focondes Mi chacra productiva	
Poverty reduction		Fome Zero; Bolsa Familia	PRODESAL 1996; PDTI 2010			Sistema igualitario.	Ley Eco Pop Solidaria	Progresa – Oportunidades, 1997	Ecofamiliar 2012; Ley MEFCCA 2012	MIDIS 2011	Mevir 1967; Proyecto Fida 2001
Agroecology		Panapo 2013			PFAS, RBA 2007	Campesino a Campesino	Campesino a Campesino	Corredor Biológico Mesoamericano		Agroidea, Alianza Camp./ Cocinero	

Source: Sabourin, Samper and Sotomayor (2014).

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NOTES

2. Based on agricultural census data from FAO, Nagayets (2005) estimates that there are about 525 million farms of all sizes in the world. Hazell, Poulton, Wiggins, and Dorward (2010) used similar data to conclude that there are about 500 million small farms of less than 2 hectares.

3. In southern Brazil, for example, family farmers are termed *colonos* (settlers). In the northeast they are called *sitiantes*. In the Andean regions, where all the smallholders are called *campesinos*, local distinction is ascribed according to the indigenous ethnic group. In Mexico, for example, many are named *hegidos*.

4. In Brazil, a fiscal module (*modulo fiscal*) represents the minimum area that a rural property must encompass for its exploration to be economically viable. It is a unit of area, measured in hectares, varying by municipality according to local characteristics such as: main type of activity in the region; income obtained through such an activity; other types of secondary activities in the region; and the concept of family property.

5. The reports on land distribution and agricultural development made by the Inter-American Committee for Agricultural Development (*Comité Interamericano para el Desarrollo Agrícola*—CIDA), under the leadership of Solon Barraclough, probably represent the first initiative in Latin America to conceptualise what we nowadays call family farming. At the beginning of the 1960s, the Alliance for Progress Initiative supported a set of studies on agrarian structure in Latin America, which came up with the minufundia versus latifundia opposition to identify small- and large-scale farms.

6. In this paper, 'agriculture' is defined in a broad sense, including the production of food and other animal and vegetable products (crops, livestock, fishing, forestry).

7. This definition of family farming shares the insights of a group of authors and academic debates that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s on the subject. Internationally, the main authors who decisively contributed to these discussions were Friedmann (1978; 1986); Ellis (1988); Gasson and Errington (1993); Djurfeld (1996); Kasimis and Papapoulos (1997); Borras (2009); and van der Ploeg (2010). In Brazil this debate has been conducted since the publication of the seminal and pioneering work of Abramovay (1992). In my book (Schneider 2003), I conducted a thorough review of this literature, and in my most recent article (Schneider 2010) I describe my current understanding of the concept.

8. 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.

9. In international literature, especially in the English language, the size and scale criteria seem to be prevalent for defining family farming. This is reflected in the preference for the terms 'small-scale farmer' or 'smallholder agriculture' to qualify the small agricultural production units; also in the criterion of size of the available arable land (World Bank and other agencies used the size of 2 hectares) or some other quantitative indicator (CIRAD 2013; Hazel et al. 2010; Nagayets 2005; Hayami 2002).

10. Two recent studies by FAO deal with the relationship between small farmers and markets (Arias et al. 2013); another one is on technological innovation (2014a). They make a major contribution to the understanding of the mechanisms of interaction of small farmers with markets and technological resources. Beyond the content of these studies, the release of these papers by FAO is significant, being a sign that the era that deemed family farming an anachronism, resulting from scarce development of capitalism, is over.

11. For details on the theoretical contributions regarding peasants and small-scale producers (*campesinos y pequeños productores)* in Latin America, see Wolf (1955); Schultz (1964); ECLAC (1984); Warman (1988); Jordan (1989); Bengoa (2003); Schejtman (2008); and Schneider and Escher (2012).

12. I would like to thank Abel Cassol for his help in summarising the data presented in this section.

13. According to *The State of Food and Agriculture, Investing in Agriculture for a Better Future* (FAO 2012), family farming accounts for 80 per cent of all arable land in Latin America and the Caribbean and occupies 35 per cent of cultivated lands, contributing 40 per cent of the total production and generating 64 per cent of agricultural jobs.

14. These studies classify family farms as: subsistence family farming (when production is primarily designed for on-farm consumption); as family farming in transition (when production is partly intended for on-farm consumption and partly for sale in the market); and as consolidated family farming (when production is almost entirely destined for sale in the market and there is surplus generation for the capitalisation of the unit) (FAO 2012b; Leporati et al. 2014).

15. See also Baumeister (2010).

16. The controversy over the place and the role of family farming in the development process recently arose from two different theoretical perspectives, which seem to arrive at similar conclusions about the limits of family farming within capitalism. On one side are authors such as Collier (2008), Navarro (2010; Navarro and Fields 2013) and Buainain (2014), who largely reproduce the positions of Hill (1993), and the assumptions about the myth of 'small is beautiful'. Collier is particularly emphatic and forceful in his criticism of the possibilities of a strategy of agri-food development of regions such as Africa, which rely on small-scale production. Even under an absolute distinct theoretical perspective, the view of Bernstein (2014; 2006), situated in the field of Marxist political economy, also shares the scepticism about the role of family farming and peasantry in relation to food security and rural development.

International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG)
United Nations Development Programme

SBS, Quadra 1, Bloco J, Ed. BNDES, 13º andar
70076-900 Brasília, DF - Brazil
Telephone: +55 61 2105 5000

ipc@ipc-undp.org ▪ www.ipc-undp.org

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