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Editorial: Work in agriculture: New perspectives

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Editorial on the Research Topic

Work in agriculture: New perspectives

The characteristics of work are an important yet under-researched area for the future of agricultural systems, considering there are currently 1.3 billion agricultural workers. Agriculture remains an essential employment sector, accounting for 27% of the world's working population, despite contrasting environments between OECD and non-OECD countries. Changes in agricultural work and employment reflect societal, business, environmental, and social pressures, covering among others agroecological transition of agricultural practices, structural and social changes, new technologies, impacts on value chains and food systems, and demands for decent work by employees and family workers. In this special issue, we present innovative approaches covering some of the major topics considered during the 2nd International Symposium on Work in Agriculture (29 March–1 April 2021, entitled: "Thinking the Future of Work in Agriculture").¹ From a multidisciplinary perspective, different issues were addressed, such as: how to foster agricultural employment notably for youths and women; how do actors along the value chains consider work and its fair remuneration; which new farming models emerge beyond the classical opposition between industrial vs. family farming; and how do women as farm managers transform the working environment.

The first paper, by [Dedieu et al.](#), summarizes trends and drivers of work and employment. The authors defend the idea that the future of work requires consideration of the dynamics of the socio-structural characteristics of farms alongside changes in farming practices and the diverse drivers of these processes. In the second paper, [Losch](#) analyses the perspectives of employment in agriculture and its connections with the rapid structural changes non-OECD countries are facing, notably in Africa. Criticizing the modernization paradigm in countries with limited services/industrial development and the dominant discourse on decent work ([Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2017](#)), the author explores other options, notably

¹ 2nd International Symposium on Work in Agriculture. Available online at: <https://www.workinagriculture.com/Symposium-2021>.

agroecology, to improve youth employment, which is a critical problem for many countries. Based on a scientometric review of the Web of Science, [Malanski et al.](#) highlight in the third paper the understudied role of value chains on employment and working conditions through topics such as governance and social standards, income generation, and gender. While family farming is the dominant model in many rural areas, particularly in developing countries, [Aubron et al.](#) underline in the fourth paper the emergence of a new “patronal” model in India, combining family and hired workers. In the sixth paper, [Lucas and Gasselin](#) show how French farm machinery cooperatives foster agroecological transitions through the exchange of ideas and practices, not only concerning collective arrangements on work but also commercial activities. [Serpossian et al.](#) explore in the seventh paper how a French women-only professional group contributes to the transformation of women’s work by elaborating questions and finding answers to communicational, technical, organizational, and social issues related to agroecological transition and empowerment perspectives. [Ressia et al.](#) debate in the ninth paper the leadership aspirations of Australian farm business’ women within their profession. The authors analyze the resources that target their specific needs in simultaneously meeting their leadership aspirations and managing the mix of farm, family, community obligations, remoteness, and their economic and social contributions to the wider agricultural industry. As a conclusive paper, [Dedieu et al.](#) capitalize on the 2nd ISWA workshops and keynote presentations, suggesting the major issues for academics and practitioners to think about with respect to the future of work in agriculture. The paper considers the specificities of OECD and non-OECD countries but also the transversal topics that influence the perspectives on work in agriculture.

References

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2017). *FAO Work to Promote Decent Rural Employment*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

With this special issue, the editors aim to contribute to the exchange of ideas within the research community interested in the multiple facets of work and employment within the agricultural sector and associated value chains. The editors also aim to facilitate the emergence of a lasting transdisciplinary debate which may help to apprehend the changes characterizing agricultural work in a rapidly evolving world.

Author contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

Conflict of interest

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