Young farmers’ needs in France
Annex I.10 to the Pilot project: Exchange programmes for young farmers

Client: European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development
Rotterdam, 25 September 2015
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Rotterdam, 25 September 2015

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1 Introduction

Objective of the Pilot Project study on young farmers
The “Pilot Project: Exchange programmes for young farmers” has been commissioned by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI) to identify the needs of young farmers, get an overview of the existing exchange schemes for young farmers and develop a guide to establish or improve exchange schemes for young farmers (DG AGRI, Tender No AGRI-2012-Eval-03). The study has been implemented by Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte in 2014-2015. The aims of this study were:

- To provide a comprehensive assessment of the specific needs of young farmers across the EU;
- To describe and access existing schemes and initiatives for the exchange of young farmers;
- To identify specific results of exchange schemes and specific support measures that have proved to be effective and efficient;
- To provide recommendations on the design, implementation and delivery of exchange programmes and schemes.

This country report on the needs of young farmers
The needs analysis was performed through desk research, interviewing on average 78 farmers per EU Member State and having a focus group in each of the 28 Member States. In the focus group the results of the interviews and the needs of young farmers concerning exchange schemes were discussed.

This report contains the needs analysis for France, and contains:
- General information on young farmers (chapter two);
- The needs of young farmers (chapter three);
- The needs regarding learning and communication (chapter four);
- The hindrances in obtaining information (chapter five);
- Sustainability of the exchange schemes (chapter six);
- The focus group participants (chapter seven).

The report is targeted at policy officers and other stakeholders interested in getting an insight into the needs of young farmers.

Where to find more information
The following documents can be found on the DG AGRI website:
- The 27 other country reports on the needs of young farmers;
- The Analysis on the needs of young farmers (report I);
- The Inventory and Analysis of exchange schemes for young farmers in EU-28 and a selected number of OECD countries (report II). Together with contact details of around 200 exchange schemes and case studies of 22 exchange schemes;
- A guide for successful exchange schemes for young farmers (report III).

All reports can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/external-studies/index_en.htm.
2 Activities of young farmers

In the interviews, the young farmers were asked the following details, among others. Indicated in the table below are:

- The mean age of the interviewed young farmers;
- The % of young farmers with a Bachelors (BSc), Masters (MSc) or PhD;
- The mean hectares of Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) that the respondents own or rent;
- The mean hectares of forestry that the respondents own or rent;
- The % of respondents that indicate that their farm is located in a favourable or less favourable area;
- The % of young farmers with organic farms.

Table 2.1 Some general features of interviewed young farmers (YF) in France

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>EU15 $^1$</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>New MS $^2$</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>EU28 $^3$</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (mean (std))</td>
<td>28.9 (4.8)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>29.4 (6.0)</td>
<td>1 241</td>
<td>29.4 (6.0)</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>29.4 (6.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% YF with high vocational education (BSc, MSc, PhD)</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>1 332</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>873</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha UAA owned (mean (std))</td>
<td>76.3 (70.8)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>77.7 (309.3)</td>
<td>1 138</td>
<td>51.9 (165.5)</td>
<td>778</td>
<td>67.2 (260.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha UAA rented (mean (std))</td>
<td>81.2 (76.0)</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>56.7 (156.2)</td>
<td>1 097</td>
<td>49.5 (157.5)</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>53.7 (156.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha forestry owned (mean (std))</td>
<td>1.5 (7.1)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>20.7 (106.7)</td>
<td>954</td>
<td>5.4 (22.9)</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>14.4 (83.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ha forestry rented (mean (std))</td>
<td>0.6 (2.7)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2.5 (20.9)</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>1.3 (25.3)</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>2.0 (22.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% favourable area</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>1 332</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>873</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% less favourable or highly unfavourable area</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>1 332</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>873</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% YF with organic farms</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>1 331</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>873</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

* n = the number of people that were interviewed in respectively France, EU15, New MS and EU28.

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$^1$ EU-15 are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

$^2$ New Member States are the countries who joined the EU in or after 2004: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

$^3$ EU-28 are all Member States, both EU-15 and new Member States.
The figures above and below highlight the difference between the main activities of young farmers that have been interviewed and the main activities of farmers in general as included in the Eurostat statistics.

Figure 2.1 Main activities of interviewed young farmers in France

The percentage of respondents involved in different activities:
- Field crops: 40%
- Grazing livestock: 20%
- Horticulture: 10%
- Granivores: 5%
- Mixed crops: 15%
- Mixed livestock: 10%
- Mixed crops and livestock: 5%

Figure 2.2 Main activities if farmers in France according to Eurostat

The percentage of farmers involved in different activities:
- Field crops: 60%
- Permanent crops: 20%
- Grazing livestock: 10%
- Horticulture: 10%
- Granivores: 5%
- Mixed crops: 10%
- Mixed livestock: 5%
- Mixed crops and livestock: 5%
3 Needs of young farmers

The needs of young farmers have been identified through, among others:
1. Which issues they perceive as problematic, e.g. the possibility of buying land, having access to credit, having the right machinery, having seasonal workers, etc.
2. Which knowledge needs the young farmers have.

3.1 Challenges for young farmers

The interviewed young farmers were asked which issues they perceive as problematic. This is shown in the figure below.

OUTCOME: The bottlenecks identified by the interviewed young French farmers seem to be in line with the bottlenecks that are experienced by their counterparts in other EU countries. The interviewed young French farmers perceive the availability of land to buy and rent and the national inheritance law as more problematic than their peers in other EU countries.

Figure 3.1 General needs of young farmers – percentage of interviewed young farmers who perceived the issues mentioned in the figure below as problematic

Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.
The focus group members confirmed the outcomes of the survey, which addresses all the main needs. In addition, they provided the following observations:

- **Access to land:** Although the price of French farmland is relatively low compared to other EU countries, competitive pressure to access farmlands is high between various groups of actors (competing sectors, adult farmers and neighbouring farmers). Moreover, access to farmland is often one of the main obstacles of becoming a farmer. This depends on local public authorities, who are in charge of the overall definition of objectives and terms of land use;

- **National inheritance law:** It is highly regulated and often does not favour young farmers. This is, for instance, because retired farmers often prefer to rent out their land to neighbours or more experienced farmers, instead of to young farmers. In some cases, farms are often family owned and not considered as economic tools that can be passed from one farmer to another;

- **French farmers are rather ‘individualistic’** and therefore prefer to work ‘on their own’ instead of creating or joining a cooperative or association between several farmers.

### 3.2 Knowledge needs of young farmers

The interviewed young farmers were asked how likely it is that they will develop the skills mentioned in the table below through trainings, courses, workshops, study groups or participation in an exchange scheme. The results are included in the figure below.

**OUTCOME:** The interviewed young French farmers perceive it more likely than their counterparts in other EU countries that they will develop skills related to technological knowledge, the development of a farm strategy, management and communication skills and skills related to the improvement of animal welfare through trainings, courses, workshops, study groups or participation in an exchange scheme. They perceive it less likely that they will develop foreign languages, skills related to applying for subsidies and marketing and financial skills.
The focus group participants agreed with the overall results. Furthermore, they discussed the following points:

- **Management skills**: it was not clear to the participants whether ‘management skills’ had been interpreted by the survey respondents as ‘strategic’ skills (developing a farm strategy in the medium-long term, also in financial terms and/or being able to adapt one’s strategy to a changing environment) or as ‘management’ skills (being able to manage a farm in terms of work organisation, HR on a daily basis). In any case, both types of management skills were considered by the participants as a recurrent need of young French farmers;

- **Communication skills**: it was not clear whether this category included skills such as e-marketing or, for instance, the use of internet, social media and new technologies;

- **Skills related to the improvement of animal welfare**: this result reflects the growing concern of young farmers regarding the regulatory environment affecting animal farming. In this sense, there is indeed a need to acquire skills in this matter;

- **Regarding knowledge needs, which were not addressed by the survey, one participant mentioned the ‘capacity to work with others’. In this context, working with others was intended as the capacity to build and motivate a group of employees, collaborating with partners on joint projects and/or working with associates.**
4 Needs regarding learning and communication

Young farmers were asked about their needs regarding learning and communication:
- Through which sources do young farmers like to obtain knowledge?
- Which persons or institutions are information sources for young farmers?

4.1 Most used information sources

The interviewed young farmers indicated that the following sources were most used for obtaining knowledge.

OUTCOME: The interviewed young French farmers seem to make more use of field days and excursions, individual advice, agricultural trainings or courses and study groups or networks and exchange schemes than other young farmers in the EU. They seem to make less use of the internet and social media, farmers’ journals and fairs or exhibitions.

Figure 4.1 Sources that young farmers use to obtain knowledge (% of respondents)

![Bar chart showing the most used information sources for young farmers in France.](source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.)

Participants of the focus group provided the following observations on the outcomes presented in figure 4.1:
- They highlighted the ‘social’ dimension of all sources, which are said to be most used by survey participants. In fact, sources such as field days, individual advice, training courses and study groups, which are believed to be widely used by young farmers, all point to direct human contact. On the contrary, one can observe that all other ‘non-human’ sources are used less;
• The fact of already being part of a group or a network can have a positive impact on the likelihood of a young farmer looking for further information (including knowledge training);
• Trainers highlighted that often young farmers use a mix of information sources. The most important thing, and often the most complicated one, is the capacity to choose among different sources of information and, most importantly, to be able to adapt information to one’s needs.

4.2 Young farmers obtaining information from people and institutions

The interviewed young farmers were asked from which people and institutions they obtain knowledge. The figure below presents an overview.

**OUTCOME:** In terms of organisations and persons that function as information sources, the interviewed young French farmers use a diverse group of information sources. Compared to their peers in the EU, they seem to make more use of farmer’s organisations, accountants and banks and political parties and slightly less use of agricultural consultants, buyers or customers.

![Figure 4.2 Information sources for young farmers](source)

Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

The focus group participants did not seem to be surprised by the results in the graph above on farmers’ associations and accountants. There are numerous associations in France, which is well reflected in the survey results. Participants were not surprised either by the high number of respondents using their accountants as a source of information. In France, there are accountants that specialise in the farming sector who are usually located very close to their clients.
5 Hindrances in obtaining information

The interviewed young farmers were asked which issues were hindering them most in obtaining information, e.g. lack of time, too many sources, the language in which the information is available, the costs of the information, lack of good internet connection. The figure below describes the results.

**OUTCOME:** All identified issues in the graph seem to be more problematic for the interviewed young French farmers than for their counterparts in other EU countries.

![Figure 5.1 Issues that hinder young farmers in obtaining information (% of respondents)](image)

Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.

The **focus group** participants were rather surprised by the results and provided the following observations on the outcomes presented in figure 5.1:

- **Lack of time:** This result could be linked to the widespread use of social connections for accessing information. In fact, some participants explained that developing and maintaining direct links with other professionals is much more time consuming than, for instance, using the internet as an information tool. Others did not entirely agree with this explanation and argued that, for some young farmers, looking for useful information might not be considered as part of their work. Hence, the time spent looking for information is not efficiently used or is even a ‘waste of time’. Others pointed out that certain categories of young farmers might just have less time available (livestock farmers, for instance);

- **Lack of interest:** the majority of participants were particularly surprised about the lack of interest. Most of them tried to link this result to there being too many sources for obtaining information, which causes confusion and eventually lowers the interest to actually look, obtain and select information. It might also mean that they are well aware of all available sources, but are unwilling to ‘make an effort’ to obtain information;

- **Linguistic barriers:** Languages are a barrier, notably when it comes to having access to technical and scientific information, which is often in English;

- **Missing or bad internet connection:** Agricultural areas are often landlocked or isolated, also in terms of internet connection. Although it may exist widely, internet connections are often slow or...
unavailable. According to some participants, this can be considered as a real barrier to accessing information and knowledge. Some regional and local authorities have tried to invest in internet connections (i.e. Nord Pas-de-Calais region).
6 Suitability of exchange schemes

The young farmers were also asked about the suitability of the exchange schemes to address their knowledge needs and their interest in participating in these schemes. This was done by asking about:

- Participation of young farmers in exchange schemes and their satisfaction and awareness of exchange schemes;
- Young farmers’ attitudes with regard to participating in an exchange scheme;
- Issues that hinder young farmers in participating in an exchange scheme;
- Intention of young farmers to join an exchange scheme;
- Opinion of young farmers about exchange schemes.

6.1 Participation of young farmers in exchange schemes and their satisfaction and awareness of exchange schemes

The interviewed young farmers were asked:

- How aware they are of existing exchange schemes in their country;
- If they participated in an exchange scheme;
- If they improved their skills after participating in an exchange scheme;
- If the exchange scheme taught the young farmer what he wanted to learn.

The figure below presents an overview.

**OUTCOME:** The participation of interviewed young French farmers in exchange schemes seems somewhat higher than that of other young farmers in the EU. This does not count for the awareness of existing exchange schemes. In general, interviewed young French farmers who did participate in an exchange scheme were satisfied with it.

**Figure 6.1 Participation of young farmers in exchange schemes and their satisfaction and awareness of exchange schemes (% of respondents)**

Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.
6.2 Young farmers’ attitudes with regard to participation in an exchange scheme

The interviewed young farmers have been asked:

- If they consider participating in an exchange scheme in their own country useful;
- If they consider participating in an exchange scheme in their own country realistic;
- If they consider participating in an international exchange useful;
- If they consider participating in an international exchange realistic.

The figure below presents an overview.

**OUTCOME:** The interviewed young French farmers perceive participation in an international or national exchange scheme similarly useful and realistic as other young farmers in the EU.

6.3 Issues that hinder young farmers to participate in an exchange scheme

The interviewed young farmers were asked which issues were hindering them most in participating in an exchange scheme, e.g. lack of time, no replacement at their farm, language barrier, the costs of the exchange, lack of knowledge on the exchange. The figure below describes the results.

**OUTCOME:** Lack of time and language barriers seem to be the main bottlenecks for the interviewed young French farmers in participating in exchange schemes. These two hindrances together with lack of money and lack of knowledge are perceived as obstructing the interviewed young French farmers more than their counterparts in other EU countries.
6.4 Intention of young farmers of joining an exchange scheme

The interviewed young farmers were asked if:
- They have the intention of joining an exchange scheme in their own country;
- They will join an exchange scheme in their own country;
- They have the intention of joining an exchange scheme abroad;
- They will join an exchange scheme abroad.

The results are included in the figure below.

OUTCOME: The intention of the interviewed young French farmers to participate in exchange schemes is comparable to that of their peers in the EU-28 and seems to be somewhat higher for the exchange schemes in their own country. In comparison to the EU-15, the young French farmers seem to be more inclined to participate in a national exchange scheme.

Source: Ecorys in cooperation with LEI and Aequator Groen & Ruimte, 2015.
6.5 Opinion of young farmers about exchange schemes

The interviewed young farmers were asked their opinion of exchange schemes. They were asked if it would be a valuable experience for them, improve their skills (either management, marketing, networking skills), cost them a lot of time or money and if it would improve the family income or farm results. The figure below presents the results.

OUTCOME: The perception on what participation in an exchange scheme will bring the interviewed young French farmers is comparable to that of their peers in other EU countries for most of the issues mentioned in the graph below. The interviewed young French farmers seem to be less convinced that participation in an exchange scheme will improve their marketing skills and they think to a lesser extent that it will cost them a lot of money.

Figure 6.5 Opinion of young farmers about exchange schemes (% of respondents)

The participants of the focus group identified the following key elements for a successful EU exchange scheme in France:

- It should be possible for young farmers to participate in EU exchange schemes during their ‘pre-installation’ period (participants were sceptical regarding the success of exchange schemes after the pre-installations phase);
- The exchange scheme should not have too many or too rigid criteria for participation;
- Flexibility in terms of exchange periods: allow for both short stays and long stays;
- Allow for individual as well as group participation;
- Possibility for different actors to participate: farmers, key actors involved in agricultural matters at the local level;
- Foresee (financial) incentives;
- Advertise exchange schemes. Knowing which exchange schemes exist and their own needs, might encourage farmers to participate in a (collective) exchange scheme abroad to visit another rural area which has been confronted with a similar need/problem/project; Allow for the creation of a list of themes around which exchange schemes could be organised at the national level; each theme would respond to key needs of young farmers;
- Ensure that replacement schemes are known and used by farmers.
# Focus group participants

The following people participated in the focus group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Joëlle Silberstein</td>
<td>Ministère de l'Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Catherine Loncle</td>
<td>Ministère de l'Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Yveline Guagan</td>
<td>Ministère de l'Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Marie Azema</td>
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<td>5 Christine Chavaud</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Ludovic Chavaud</td>
<td>Ministère de l'Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Bernard Lelore</td>
<td>Région Nord- Pas de Calais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Laurent Poirier</td>
<td>Conseil Européen des Jeunes Agriculteurs (CEJA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Anaïs Layole</td>
<td>Jeunes Agriculteurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Nicolas Pailloux</td>
<td>Jeunes Agriculteurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Maxime Bergonso</td>
<td>Mouvement Rural de Jeunesse Chrétienne (MRJC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Sarah Holmes</td>
<td>Mouvement Rural de Jeunesse Chrétienne (MRJC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Augustin David</td>
<td>Fédération Nationale des Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles (FNSEA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Sylvie Bourgeais</td>
<td>VIVEA</td>
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<td>15 Rémi Martiniere</td>
<td>Expérience Internationale</td>
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<td>16 Dominique Thorel</td>
<td>Expérience Internationale</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 Gabrielle Sicard</td>
<td>Inter AFOCG</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 Amandine Kerguillec</td>
<td>Chambres d'Agriculture France</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 Romain Fontaine</td>
<td>Chambres d'Agriculture France</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 Etienne Anginot</td>
<td>Leader France</td>
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**Moderator and reporter:** Diletta Zonta, Ecorys Brussels  
**Date focus group:** 12 September 2014  
**Place:** Ministry of Agriculture, Paris, France