The Exclusion of Farmers: an Historical Challenge for the International Labour Market

Henri Rouillé d'Orfeuil
Guy Trebuil (ed.)

Electronic version
URL: http://sapiens.revues.org/1487
ISSN: 1993-3819

Electronic reference
Henri Rouillé d'Orfeuil, « The Exclusion of Farmers: an Historical Challenge for the International Labour Market », S.A.P.I.E.N.S [Online], 5.1 | 2012, Online since 30 September 2013, connection on 01 October 2016. URL : http://sapiens.revues.org/1487

The text is a facsimile of the print edition.

Licence Creative Commons
The exclusion of farmers, an historical challenge for the international labour market

Henri Rouillé d’Orfeuil

Member of the French Academy of Agriculture.
Former CIRAD investigator.
Former president of Coordination-Sud.
Contact: rouille@cirad.fr

Farming jobs are often considered as an adjustment variable that varies with changes in economic activity. As a tool for the sectoral and geographical mobility of “workers”, the job market is supposed to offer new opportunities to people leaving, or excluded from, agriculture. Unfortunately, because of a lack of regulation, the job market is flooded with workers. Most farmers no longer leave agriculture to respond to a job offer or a proposal for integration into another sector, but because of agricultural impoverishment that leads to exclusion. In continents where most people are farmers, those who are excluded from farming and are seeking paid work flock into cities that do not have the economic and industrial resources to offer them a job and provide them with an income. If nothing is done to change present trends, the ever-increasing integration of agricultural markets could lead 1.7 billion male and female farmers to leave agriculture within a few decades. If present employment needs and those linked to population growth prospects are added to that figure, the theoretical global need totals 3.8 billion new jobs by 2050! Such a prodigious figure is incompatible with observed job creation rates. Our aim is not to draw up a specific scenario but to show that the challenges would become insurmountable if present trends were to persist. Such a large pocket of poverty and exclusion would have considerable social, economic, and geopolitical repercussions. The interface between agriculture and market must be reconsidered so as to curb exclusion mechanisms and allow farmers to make a dignified living from their work. The future of agricultural employment, particularly in family farming, and its global consequences must be taken into account in the current WTO trade negotiation rounds.

Keywords: Agriculture, Job, Urban Development, Employment, Unemployment, Poverty trap

Volume 5 Issue 1 2013

Published: 30 September 2013
Edited by: Guy Trebuil – This manuscript was reviewed by two anonymous reviewers. We are grateful to Evelyn Apaire van Gelder and Antoinette Bourdelet for their translation of the manuscript. © Author(s) 2013. This article is distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License.

http://sapiens.revues.org/1487
on job markets, and therefore on the international job market. This analysis should make us aware of the serious dangers generated by the concentration and exclusion mechanisms at work at the core of agricultural activity.

2. THE REFERENCE MODEL: RURAL EXODUS, URBANISATION AND INDUSTRIAL TRANSITION

At the global level, agricultural work in the strictest sense still accounts for almost 40% of human labour. This percentage would be even higher if people working upstream and downstream of agricultural production were included. Agriculture is therefore by far the largest global employer.

This percentage, which is an average, conceals a wide diversity of geographical and historical situations. Farmers account for 60% of the population in most Asian and African countries – representing almost 75% of the global population. Industrialised countries, mainly in Western Europe, have achieved their agro-demographic transition and their percentage of agricultural workers is less than 5% of the total labour force and still dropping1. The percentage of agricultural workers varies from 90% in Burundi (Stads & Ndimurirwo, 2011) to 2% in the US (WDI, 2010) and 2.5% in France (Agreste, 2011).

Most of the people heading farming organisations, research institutes and public services linked to agriculture have the same view of agricultural modernisation, and consider that agriculture must shed growing numbers of farmers in order to modernise. This would make workers available for industrialisation, service sector expansion and urbanisation, and ultimately the development of other economic sectors. Where they are still numerous, farmers are seen as a reserve force destined sooner or later to serve industry or services. From this viewpoint, economic history would be that of a job transfer from agriculture to other sectors and from the countryside to urban centres.

This job transfer from agriculture to other economic sectors is accomplished through the labour market, which matches job supply and demand at local, regional, national, and even, nowadays, global level. As a tool for sectoral and geographical mobility of jobs and workers, the labour market contributes towards the restructuring of the local, national, and global economy and geography.

Once, rural exodus could have been the result of both a voluntary step by farmers hoping for better working and living conditions and a need for transition towards a more industrial economy, and so there was no cause for alarm at the fall in the proportion of farmers. However, in most countries nowadays, the disproportion between incoming and outgoing flows in the labour market is disturbing. One to two billion

---

2 Data from FAOSTAT: http://faostat.fao.org/
3 The EU lost 20% of its farms between 2003 and 2010 [according to the analysis of the 2010 agricultural census by Eurostat, the EU Statistical Office]. www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat
people are already caught in a poverty trap and the exclusion processes at work at the core of the agricultural economy – that will be further analysed below – may have increasingly serious consequences. “Such urbanisation unaccompanied by an industrial revolution carries the risk of social explosion, as if atomic bombs were piling up around African cities”.

Without calling into question the appropriateness of job transfers, some countries can regulate farmers’ exit from rural areas or their entry into urban areas. The Chinese example is particularly forceful. In China, rural exodus is a very sensitive issue. Since the inception of the People’s Republic, the leaders have insisted on keeping rural people in their villages and on controlling internal migration. The departure of farmers to cities is only officially tolerated if jobs are available for them and only as long as the jobs last. If the economic situation deteriorates, internal migrants who lose their urban wages are compelled to return to their villages if they want to benefit from free public services (access to health care, education, housing and subsides) and recover a legal status, represented by the famous “huku” which is a sort of identity card indicating place of residence and activity of Chinese citizens. Created in 1950, the huku is still in use. Rural migrants working in cities or having a different activity live the precarious life of undocumented workers. The Chinese economy owes a lot to this “flexibility” of the labour market. Alongside the control of internal migration, the Chinese authorities have developed a policy of rural job promotion, in particular through the creation of small-scale industries in the countryside.

More traditionally, many Latin American countries and some Asian ones endeavour to keep people excluded from agriculture within geographical and economic margins in the countryside, and, at best, to provide social measures for this large proportion of their population. In most Latin American countries and a few Asian ones, small-scale farming is considered as a sideline to the economy, keeping large numbers of those excluded from the economy busy and providing cheap labour to large-scale farming, the only scale considered as genuinely economic

### 3. AN INTERNATIONALISED LABOUR MARKET AND A GLOBAL SHORTAGE OF JOBS

#### 3.1 AN INTERNATIONALISED LABOUR MARKET

Some economists consider that the labour market is not internationalised because of the existence of stringent anti-migration policies in most so-called “host” countries. We think such an argument is fallacious for the following reasons:

- First, there are 214 million migrants throughout the world (UN, 2011), i.e. more than 3% of the global population. This flow, often illegal, persists in spite of the policies.
- Secondly, there is a strong offshore movement towards low wage countries.
- Finally, even if neither people nor businesses cross borders, the difference in labour costs between two economic areas influences the competitiveness of the goods and services produced, that of the economies concerned, and the development of the global economic geography.

For all these reasons, we consider that the labour market is internationalised.

Employment is indeed a priority today for most governments. Whether what is involved is creating new jobs or relocating them from other countries, these strategies are always implemented in a context where hundreds of millions of pieces of the global pie of paid work are lacking. We will now focus on estimating job requirements globally.

#### 3.2 DUBIOUS EMPLOYMENT FIGURES

Assessing global employment and its development in the coming decades is complicated by the fact that the concepts of “job” and “unemployment” differ from one organisation to the next. Figures may thus vary by a factor of four between institutions. According to ILO, 850 million jobs are needed worldwide to enable all people of working age to have a job or paid work (ILO, 2012), whereas the World Bank’s figure is 200 million job seekers (World Bank, 2013). Some of the key terms that must be defined are the following:

**Economically active person:** defined traditionally as a person of working age, i.e. over 15 and under 65. These stated limits do not match reality in numerous countries where many children and elderly people are involved in the family economy. The definition, although controversial, at least has the advantage of being clear. We will use it in full knowledge of its limitations. The “world index of working-age population” (percentage of people aged 15 to 64 within the total population) is 65%, whereas those under 15 represent 27% of the global population, and those over 65, 8% (Pison, 2011). Notice in passing that the index is subject to strong variations: because of the one-child policy, people of working age in China represent 76% of the total population. However, if the policy remains in force, the percentage will change considerably when a majority of single children, having entered the job market, have two non-working parents. By contrast, the working-age population is only 49% in Niger because of the high proportion of children under 15. According to these indices, calculated on the basis of UN statistics, humankind comprises 4.55 billion people of working age. We will use that figure, which is at the low end: the World Bank, in its report on jobs, indicates 5.35 billion in 2012 (World Bank, 2013).

**Employment:** This concept is trickier to define. Most countries do not know where employment starts: can a woman who

---

4 Address by Joan Clos, Executive Director UN-Habitat, June 27 2011 in Paris, at the opening of the conference “Reconciling poverty eradication and quality of the environment”, organised by Agence Française de Développement and Institut Veolia Environnement.

5 That of the fazendeiros or of the large agro-industrial plantations in Asian wetlands.
buys a carton of cigarettes to sell them one by one during the week, or a man who works as a day labourer for a pitiful wage be considered in employment? According to definitions, this is not employment, but it is de facto paid work: there is a work-income pair. The World Bank lists 1.65 billion formal jobs, i.e. official workers in the public and private sectors receiving regular wages (World Bank, 2013). Agricultural work and small family farms account for 1.5 billion “jobs” which at best offer only limited protection and are often poorly paid (World Bank, 2013).

Unemployed person: This concept is relative and is only meaningful when a country offers benefits, which requires defining “entitlement”. The World Bank lists 200 million unemployed persons: the figure in no way reflects the actual number of people deprived of decently paid work (see Box A) (World Bank, 2013). In countries where there is no employment policy and no benefits are available to those “officially” unemployed (i.e. almost all non-OECD countries), what good would it do to register as unemployed?

The 850 million missing jobs proposed by ILO correspond approximately to the total number of working-age people living in extreme poverty. The World Bank estimates there are 1.3 billion people living in a situation of extreme poverty, which corresponds to 845 million working-age people (aged between 15 and 65). This estimated number of people seeking paid work is consistent. Mr Juan Somavia, the former Director General of the International Labour Organisation, exaggerated somewhat during his presentation of the annual ILO report in 2012 when he added together unemployed people and those in extreme poverty: “Despite strenuous government efforts, the jobs crisis continues unabated, with one in three workers worldwide – or an estimated 1.1 billion people – either unemployed or living in poverty”.

Whatever figures or definitions are adopted, it is a far cry from full employment and even more from “full decent employment”. In what follows, we will use the low-case ILO estimate, knowing the figure is probably itself largely underestimated (see Box A).

### 3.3 Prospective Job Creation Needs by 2050

While it is impossible to predict how many jobs might be created in the coming decades, it is possible to have some idea of developments in demand. This is based on three more or less predictable figures:

- Excluded people/job seekers: at present, estimated at 850 million (ILO, 2012).
- New entrants on the labour market resulting from population growth by 2050: according to demographers and the UN Population Division, there might be 2 billion more people in 2050, of which 65%, or 1.3 billion, of working age, and all job seekers.
- Finally, people seeking work following the destruction of today’s existing jobs. This figure is more uncertain and the next section is devoted to reviewing the prospects for agricultural employment. As we will see, if agricultural product markets and land continue to be liberalised and integrated, the number of farmers will drop considerably (see section 3). We make the assumption that this drop will continue until the rates experienced in developed countries are reached, i.e. about 3% as in France today (see para. 3.1). Assumptions about exits from agricultural production and the extent of rural exodus on which these figures are based are consistent with prevailing ideas on agricultural modernisation and economic development.

The addition of the three figures (0.85 + 1.3 + 1.69) leads to an estimated global job need of 3.8 billion by 2050! Is it possible to create that many jobs in the coming four decades? The least one can say so as not to insult the future is that it will be very difficult and out of all proportion with job creation rates experienced up to now, especially since work productivity, largely the cause of job destruction, will probably increase further.

### 4. Prospects for Agricultural Employment: The Great Evacuation from the Countryside

The international opening of the land market and international integration of agricultural product markets induce farmers of all countries, whose competitive capacities are highly unequal, to compete with each other in order to defend or win market shares. Land and agricultural market concentration entails the marginalisation or exclusion of the weaker competitors (Roudart & Mazoyer, 1997). The widening “poverty trap” leads to the cancerous growth of peri-urban areas that are deprived of essential services, and, more diffusely in rural areas, to farmer proletarianisation. The scale of these developments is difficult to measure but easy to observe. Land concentration – indeed, land monopolisation in poor countries – and domestic market capture by international corporations are visible in all parts of the world. Land concentration may be due in part to the voluntary departure of producers, but also...

---

6 Or even matches one by one, as I observed in Port-au-Prince.
8 Other sectors may shrink in the coming decades, particularly in the civil service, small trade and crafts, and therefore worsen the situation. However, our intent is not to draw up accurate scenarios but to show the challenges that would become insurmountable if present trends were to continue. To that effect, the size of agricultural figures suffices.
Box A: Unemployment figures according to the World Bank

Two quotes explain the employment figures presented by the World Bank (2013) in the “World Development Report 2013: Jobs”:

- “Worldwide, more than 3 billion people are working, but their jobs vary greatly. Some 1.65 billion are employed and receive regular wages or salaries. Another 1.5 billion work in farming and small household enterprises, or in casual or seasonal day labor. Meanwhile, 200 million people, a disproportionate share of them youth, are unemployed and actively looking for work. Almost 2 billion working-age adults, the majority of them women, are neither working nor looking for work, but an unknown number of them are eager to have a job” (pp. 3-4): so much for the 2 billion economically active people who don’t “work” and of whom it is not known whether they are eager to work.

- “Nearly half the people at work in developing countries are farmers or self-employed and so are outside the labor market” (p. 3): so much for the 1.5 billion farmers and self-employed people inside the labour market.

In its report, according to its own figures, the World Bank only takes into account 1.65 billion workers and 0.2 billion registered unemployed people, which only represents one third of the economically active people in the world. It sets aside a second third (the 1.5 billion farmers and self-employed people) and totally disregards the last third of humankind (the 2 billion people of working age who do not work, do not actively seek work, and of whom it is not known whether they are eager to work). Note in passing that the World Bank estimates in its report that there were 5.35 billion people of working age in 2012, which does not correspond to the 4.55 billion people aged between 15 and 65 in 2012 according to the UN.

If farmers and most unemployed and excluded people are disregarded, society enjoys full employment! Joking aside, this peculiar view of full employment has serious consequences. It is one of the unspoken assumptions of the “General Equilibrium Macroeconomic Model”, used as a reference in particular in the WTO negotiations. Such an assumption is by no means without significance. It gives a positive slant to farmers’ exclusion. Sandra Polaski, at the time the head of the social sector at Carnegie, studied the effects of a change in the assumption on labour market prospects. It appears that the General Equilibrium Macroeconomic Model thus modified gives very different results, especially for the poorest countries. The trade liberalisation of agricultural products is no longer a good thing for all countries, and there really are winners and losers (Polaski, 2006).

In the past, the exclusion of farmers and the decrease in

---

Note: As in India in the infamous “suicide belt”, where small landowners are forced to mortgage their land.
The urban population will probably increase from 3.4 billion (2010) to 6.3 billion (2050), which represents 70 million extra urban dwellers each year.

- The global population will probably increase from 7 to 9 billion over the same period, which represents an annual demographic growth of 50 million people. The urban population today represents 50% of the total population, and if demographic growth is considered to be the same in cities and rural areas, urban demographic growth could reach 25 million people a year.

- The difference between annual urban population growth (70 million people) and urban demographic growth (25 million) is accounted for essentially by rural migration to cities. The difference is estimated to be 45 million people a year. Therefore, according to UN forecasts, 1.8 billion rural dwellers could move to cities by 2050. That number is of the same order of magnitude as that of farmers who may, according to our estimates, leave their holdings, not to mention the significant number of newly excluded people who will remain in rural areas.

In conclusion, extending present trends led us to consider that the percentage of farmers in the global population would converge towards the present percentage in developed countries which by the way is still declining. We proposed a figure of 3%, which implies the departure of 2.6 billion people by 2050, i.e. 1.69 billion active workers. In view of the above, 70% of those leaving (1.17 billion active workers) would move to cities and the others (30% of leavers, i.e. 800 million people including 520 million active workers) would remain in rural areas.

### 4.2.1 OPENING OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT MARKETS

Competition on one single large market of all world farmers can only lead to concentration of resources, markets and capital, and to the exclusion of the weakest competitors. There are winners and losers in this competition, and the economic and technological weapons of the various groups of farmers are so different that it is not difficult to predict the outcome. How can farmers with little equipment and land, barely supported by public policies, deprived of support in terms of research, training and information, often living in areas where the climate is difficult and soils are degraded, fight against producers who have all the advantages? The competition resulting from market opening is untenable for the weakest competitors and condemns them to withdraw from markets, and even from farming (for a review of eviction mechanisms and their historical origins, see Roudart & Mazoyer, 1997).

Moreover, market opening is accompanied by the enforcement and strengthening of standards – particularly health standards – that are difficult to meet for small-scale farming. The standards impede small farmers from accessing Northern markets, and even sometimes the urban markets of their own countries.
Without market regulation, there is no reason why eviction processes should stop before the number of farmers reaches a small percentage of the total population, as occurred in countries that underwent their agro-industrial revolution. Note that the trend towards market integration would be even more pronounced if the trade negotiations called “the Development Round” launched by WTO in 1999 were to conclude in line with the wishes and positions of the leading actors in the negotiations.

4.2.2 LAND CONCENTRATION AND LAND GRABBING

Financial groups or authorities in rich countries lacking farming land on the one hand, and, on the other, governments of poor countries ready to sell or lease large land areas, are negotiating contracts concerning hundreds of thousands of hectares, usually without worrying about the farmers who are already working them. The years 2007 and 2008, when food crises led to sharp price increases, saw a growing interest of investors in land purchases – and even in starting agricultural production – and a proliferation of speculative transactions. In some parts of the world where land markets are open to non-agricultural investors and foreigners, this avenue was already available, but, in most cases, land transaction regulations or the lack of private property and land markets precluded large-scale sales to foreigners or investors who were not agricultural producers. In any case, the low profitability of agricultural work and the high risk of investment in agriculture deterred speculators. However, regardless of the extent of future land grabbing by foreign investors, a land concentration process is at work in most countries. It has a significant impact on agricultural employment. In France, for every four farmers leaving, often in order to retire, there is only one establishment by a young farmer, most departures leading to the enlargement of neighbouring farms.

4.2.3 DEGRADATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION CAPACITIES

Climate change and natural resource degradation (soil fertility, water quality or its disappearance, loss of biological diversity) bring considerable pressure to bear on agricultural production conditions. In its 1985 report, UNEP introduced the concept of “climate refugee”. At the end of 2008, the Deputy High Commissioner of the HCR, Craig Johnstone, considered that almost 6 million people would have to leave their home each year. Christian Aid, a British NGO, went much further in its report “Human tide: the real migration crisis” (2007): “On current trends, a further 1 billion people will be forced from their homes between now and 2050. We believe forced migration is the most urgent threat facing poor people in developing countries”. [p.1]

Soil erosion and impoverishment – particularly in areas where takings exceed fertiliser input – often lead to producer hardship. The UN and FAO have been warning about soil degradation for several decades, especially in tropical countries:

“Some 17% of the land surface has already been strongly degraded and the affected area is still growing. Overexploitation, overgrazing, inappropriate clearing techniques and unsuitable land use practices have resulted in severe nutrient decline, water and wind erosion, compaction and salinisation.”

Ten million hectares of farmland disappear through erosion every year (Pimentel, 2006).

Urbanisation is another factor leading to the degradation or disappearance of arable land areas, often the most productive. In Europe, the situation resulting from the settlement of new land areas and the loss of arable land because of urbanisation is very negative. The European Environment Agency gives an idea of the scope of the process: “It shows that the spread of urban areas and transport infrastructure has been accelerating. Artificial land cover increased by 3.4 % in Europe in the period 2000–2006, by far the largest proportional increase in all land use categories”.

The description of the various processes of eviction of farmers from their land and their occupation should not hide the fact that a large proportion of departures from farming is linked to positive aspirations and voluntary action. Hopes of a better life in cities or abroad drive many farmers to leave, particularly among the younger generations. But, whatever the reasons or the motivation, each departure means a new arrival on the labour market.

The eviction mechanisms – directly linked to trade liberalisation and agricultural market integration, to land market opening and the reinforcement of health standards, and also to natural resources degradation – which leave those who are excluded from agriculture in an economic and social void are in fact, paradoxically, considered as factors for progress, and are usually encouraged by national public policies, international cooperation policies, and the implementation of international agreements.

Over and above these individual and family tragedies, this unprecedented inflow into the labour market of people looking for low-skilled jobs is a major source of social, economic and geopolitical instability. The relative success of the historical transition of agriculture, especially of West European family farming, in developed countries that have completed their transition towards a 3% farming sector seems to show the way to countries that still have a majority of farmers. However, most of the factors that enabled the European transition have now disappeared.

5. THE WEST EUROPEAN TRANSITION CANNOT SERVE AS A MODEL

Structural unemployment only appeared in France in the
late 1970s, at a time when rural areas were already largely deserted, and when high immigration from, successively, Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa had already occurred, particularly during the so-called golden post-war years. Europe was able to accomplish its agro-demographic transition, i.e. the change from 60% to 3% of farmers in the total population, without the emergence of lasting structural unemployment. This was in spite of periods of economic crises, especially the most serious one in 1929. The context has changed so considerably that European history cannot serve as a model for countries that still have a majority of farmers:

- The European demographic transition started in France and lasted two centuries (1740-1940) with a period of strong demographic growth that levelled out when the drop in birth rates equalled the earlier drop in death rates (Vallin, 2004).
- The European agro-demographic transition occurred over almost one hundred and fifty years, since France had 60% of farmers in 1840 and reached 3% at the end of the 20th century (Démier, 2000).
- The two world wars killed large numbers of farmers and changed the demographics of the countryside.
- In the 19th century, 55 million Europeans, including a large number of farmers, were able to emigrate to new worlds and new land, often with government and colonial administration support. The process continued in the early 20th century (Rygiel, 2007).
- There were long growth periods with high job creation at the time of industrial revolutions and large-scale infrastructure works.
- Public policies, particularly social ones, were implemented to accompany these job transfers and allow elderly farmers to retire.
- Since the end of the 19th century, excellent public schooling trained whole generations of young farmers and supplied them with the skills and diplomas allowing them to leave the land in good conditions.
- The resilience of farms has diminished: the agricultural model, despite appearances, has become more fragile, particularly because of hefty investments, the burden of debt, and price volatility.

A review of these various factors shows that the success of the West European transition is due in part to the wealth of the nations who operated it, and to the maturity of their institutions and public policies. These are essential assets that are unavailable to most countries undergoing their agro-demographic transition today. Moreover, in a packed world with heavily guarded borders, massive emigration is no longer possible.

6. CONCLUSION

There is currently a huge imbalance between flows entering the labour market, partly because of mass farmer exodus, and outgoing flows measured in terms of job creation, especially if only reasonably decent and formal jobs are considered. Even countries experiencing high growth rates are affected. The difference fuels a huge poverty trap that has already caught over 1 billion farmers. If exclusion mechanisms were to intensify, the situation in some areas of the world would become, not unacceptable – because it is already that – but unbearable, explosive and contagious. How could the hope of a “decent job”, which is that of trade unions and ILO, materialise when hundreds of millions of excluded people are ready to work in the worst legal and pay conditions?

In the area of agricultural employment, as in others, flows must be regulated. There is no question of banning movements or focusing on a percentage of farmers to be preserved. What is needed is to work to balance the flows. The only way to achieve this is, first, to make all possible efforts to create jobs, particularly upstream and downstream of agricultural production in rural areas. In terms of employment, family farming usually performs much better than other forms of agricultural production. It must therefore be supported by agricultural policies that are adapted to its characteristics. However, exclusion processes must also be tackled, and an end put to promoting them and thinking that that they are inevitable and useful. Last but not least, steps must be taken to allow farmers to make a decent living from their work, and take into consideration the issue of jobs when developing public policies and negotiating international agreements. In particular, the issue of agricultural employment at global level must be taken into consideration in the “development round” trade negotiations that were initiated at WTO in 1999, and have been stalled since July 2008.

If those efforts are not made or were to fail, in the face of the huge job deficit, only three solutions would be available: abandoning, purely and simply, part of humankind considered as surplus and permanently out of the economic game, as suggested by Malthus; massively redistributing the resources of those who are included to those who are economically excluded through taxation and ever stronger social policies; or spreading paid jobs between the various geographical levels. Faced with the already considerable paid work deficit, governments are attempting to win labour market shares, and, failing to win them to the extent needed, they hesitate between the three approaches or are in search of an acceptable trade-off.

We have always known that agriculture must be productive and supply safe, or, at the very least, non-toxic products. We have known for a few decades that it must respect natural resources and have a high environmental value. We must now admit that it must also have a high social value, i.e. be concerned with “decent jobs”, something that should apply to all agricultural holdings worldwide. World agriculture must find the way to manage responsibly and sustainably the large number of human beings involved in agricultural activity.

The good news is that the quests for high social values and high environmental ones go hand in hand; environmental intensification goes with the expansion of labour-intensive agriculture.
REFERENCES


