



PROCESSES OF EXCLUSION OF PEASANTS AND SMALLHOLDER FARMERS: A SHORT EXPLORATORY STUDY OF TWO CASES IN PORTUGAL AND ANGOLA

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A PARTNERSHIP



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WELCOME NOTE





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Peasant and smallholders suffer from exclusion from mainstream economies, policies, and development models. In the industrialised North they have already be reduced to small minorities in many countries exposed to multiple factors (economic, regulatory, administrative, demographic, etc.) that challenge their existence. The Portuguese case study looks into the situation of rural smallholders that face multiple obstacles but still cling on to their existence. Their economic, social and environmental roles have been recognised and recent policies target them, but there has not been enough follow up at local level. As a result, the pressures they face continue to

increase, their revenues erode and their livelihoods shrink. There are growing calls to position family farmers at the centre of policies to promote change towards more equitable development.

The Angolan case study tries to understand the plight of agrarian societies that have suffered decades of low intensity warfare and have been widely neglected by post-war development strategies. It questions the assumptions of current development strategies, both national and international, for war-torn agrarian societies that have been running for too long on their emergency coping strategies.



INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the perspective on the important role of family agriculture has changed. It is now widely recognised that those social models of agriculture proposed by peasants and small farmers play a key role in food production, product quality, environmental conservation, the creation of job and the fight against poverty. For instance, it is estimated that “more than 50 percent of the food required to feed the world in 2050 will be produced by small-scale farmers”¹.

However, despite the absolute need to revalue such forms of agriculture, there are several issues where this type of agriculture is not in an advantageous position². Therefore, we must understand that small farmers around the world face complex challenges. Given the diversity of family farming in the world, these constraints are very different according to the specific contexts - global and local - in which they have developed. Nevertheless, we can find a common matrix: “these shared struggles are not necessarily specific to a place in its origin, but rather (...) an inherent part of the prevailing globalised political, economic and biophysical system”³.

Some common ground arises repeatedly in discussions with small farmers, both in the North and in the South⁴. Small farmers have suffered long and profound processes of marginalisation⁵ in relation to agro-industrial models of agricultural production that have benefited from most investments, in a

context of increasingly liberalised economies⁶. They are thus faced with economic, political and social challenges, including some constraints coming from economic forces that put pressure on these forms of agriculture, and a global economy that forces competition between unequal and differentiated agricultures, often with unequal balances of power; public policies and public investment that, in many cases, enhance the processes of exclusion of peasants and small farmers; poverty, limited productive resources and biophysical challenges, such as climate change, soil erosion, pests and diseases, and post-harvest losses.

The brief study presented here focuses on the processes of exclusion and common challenges faced by these small farmers and peasants. Speaking of family farmers, small farmers and peasants cover a very wide range of situations (which actually raises a heated discussion that goes beyond the scope of this study). Thus, as a common denominator, we chose to consider in the study small farmers that are marginalised by the prevailing development policies and models, trying to capture the perspectives of local actors, in particular farmers, on the impact that global change has on their livelihoods and the main factors threatening their way of life.

In two short case studies, two very distant realities illustrate different situations and paths of small farmers. In Portugal, the case of Ourém shows a region where agricultural production is a secondary activity, but where farmers are still able to maintain their type of family farming strongly anchored in sociocultural relations and several processes of mobilisation that support and enhance a local culture. In Angola, the cases of Bengo and Cunene reveal the reality of agrarian societies that have suffered decades of war and poverty, where farmers were largely abandoned by the State. However, their social and productive organisation is still a model that works.

1 Crowley, E. 2013. Ending poverty: Learning from good practices of small and marginal farmers. Roma: FAO

2 Desmulier, Delphine Acloque & Gasselin, Pierre (2015) La quadrature des agricultures familiales: instruire et dépasser les controverses. *Agricultures familiales: trajectoires, modernités et controverses (II)* Revue Tiers Monde 2015/1 (n° 221) pp129-146

3 Stringer, L., Twyman, C. and Gibbs, L.M. 2008. Learning from the South

4 Stringer, L., Twyman, C. and Gibbs, L.M. 2008. Learning from the South: common challenges and solutions from small-scale farming. *The Geographical Journal*, Vol 174(3), pp.235-250

5 Desmulier, Delphine Acloque & Gasselin, Pierre (2015) La quadrature des agricultures familiales

6 Delphine Acloque, Pierre Gasselin & Henri Rouillé d'Orfeuil (2015) *Agricultures familiales: trajectoires, modernités et controverses (I)* Revue Tiers Monde n°220



PROCESSES OF EXCLUSION OF PEASANTS AND SMALLHOLDER FARMERS: *DISPARITIES AND COMMON CHALLENGES*

Peasant and smallholder farmers play a key role in food security: “it is estimated that more than 50 percent of the food necessary to feed the world in 2050 will be produced by small scale farmers”⁷. Yet, small farmers around the world face many complex challenges which, albeit very different, share some common dimensions. These common points emerge over and over in discussions with small scale producers both in the North and in the South⁸. Farmers are overwhelmed with economic, political and social challenges such as coping with the dynamics of global markets and the impacts they have on their activity, with changes in public policies which, in many cases, reinforce processes of exclusion of peasants and smallholder farmers, with poverty as well as with biophysical challenges such as climate change, soil erosion, pest and diseases, and post-harvest losses. “These shared struggles are not necessarily place specific in their origin but rather (...) an inherent part of the prevailing biophysical and globalised political-economic system”⁹.

This short study focuses on those peasant, smallholder or family farmers which are marginalised by dominant policies and development models. Although it covers many types of farmers, the focus of the analysis is on the processes of exclusion of small farmers in two vastly different settings: Angola and Portugal. It tries to capture the perspectives of local actors and especially of farmers themselves to provide a better understanding of the impacts global transformations have on their livelihoods and the main factors that endanger their way of life.

In two short exploratory case studies, two very

distinct realities illustrate the different fates of small scale producers. In Portugal, the case of *Ourém*, shows a region where agricultural production is secondary but where farmers try to maintain their production, embedded in their tradition and culture. In Angola, the cases of *Bengo-Tabi* and *Cunene* reveal the realities of traumatised agrarian societies, by decades of wars and poverty, where rural producers were largely abandoned by the state.

There are basic differences between the fates of farmers and peasants in the North which resulted from heavy state interventions, be it in the capitalist or socialist mould, and the destinies of peasants in the South, in non-industrialised societies, who were mainly left to their own fortunes¹⁰.

In the North, farmers were integrated into the market economy. They were actors of the agricultural revolution – the farmers who did not modernise were pushed out and disappeared. This agricultural revolution was accompanied by social transformations (communication, transport, health, education, social security, etc.) which brought about what is sometimes called the end of the peasantry¹¹. However, even though the disappearance of peasantries has been widely announced as an inevitable result of the penetration of agriculture by capitalism, peasant communities have refused to disappear¹². They are not the same “peasantries that inhabited the world of the past (...) which are indeed destroyed by capitalism”¹³, but change in the countryside of the imperialist periphery is dynamic and originated differentiated peasantries.

⁷ Crowley, E. 2013. Ending poverty: Learning from good practices of small and marginal farmers. Rome: FAO

⁸ Stringer, L., Twyman, C. and Gibbs, L.M. 2008. Learning from the South: common challenges and solutions from small-scale farming. *The Geographical Journal*, Vol 174(3), pp.235-250

⁹ Stringer, L., Twyman, C. and Gibbs, L.M. 2008. Learning from the South

¹⁰ Oliveira Baptista, F. 2013. *O Destino Camponês*. Castro Verde: 100LUZ.

¹¹ Oliveira Baptista, F. 2013. *O Destino Camponês*.

¹² Martínez-Torres, M. E. and Rosset, Peter M. 2010. *La Vía Campesina: the birth and evolution of a transnational social movement*. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37(1), pp.149-175

¹³ Bernstein, H. 2001. The peasantry in global capitalism: who, where and why?. *Socialist Register* 2001, pp. 25-5.2

In the South, on the other hand, the presence of peasants and agrarian societies is very strong (although not in the same measure in all places, as African realities are very diverse). In many African societies, the family, as well as lineages and ethnic groups, are basic structures for agricultural production as well as for the social organisation. Central to these societies is also the magical dimension in their relationship with nature and life¹⁴. The productive systems function with low inputs and rely mostly on manual work, simple tools and nearly no modern inputs, such as fertilizers or pesticides. They do not benefit from state social protection mechanisms and very little from state support or intervention. However, these peasants/smallholder farmers are, through various transmission mechanisms, linked to national and global dynamics. These include certain public policies, political instability and wars, international markets, imports and exports of produce and forced or spontaneous migration. Several of these external factors have negative impacts on agrarian societies and peasants and a high degree of food insecurity persists in several of these agrarian societies.

However, despite these external pressures, the ethnic matrix of their social and productive organisation is still a model that works – it has in the last millennia survived different kinds of attacks and still produces sustenance for about half of the population. But some of the coping mechanisms are being eroded and livelihoods are threatened.

The dynamics of agrarian change and struggles are not only very different between Northern and Southern smallholder farmers, but also extremely diverse in different places within these regions, therefore giving rise to many differentiated peasantries. Despite being linked by a common activity and integrated into global dynamics, there are some common dimensions in the challenges they face.

Although unique circumstances make a direct comparison problematic, we can generally say that both in the North and in the South, peasants and smallholder farmers suffer from processes of marginalization as a result of the dominant development models: agricultural development is “characterized by a paradigm emphasizing increases in production and productivity”¹⁵. The

increase in agricultural productivity greatly reduced the numbers of farmers and the modernization “losers” had to abandon agriculture and procure their livelihood elsewhere. There are, however, a significant number of small rural producers who managed to hold on to their traditions and integrate into the modern market economy at the same time. In the South, peasants were excluded from the benefits of global dynamics but suffer their negative impacts. The prevalence of small, impoverished farmers is not limited to small pockets of poverty which could, supposedly, be easily eradicated through targeted interventions.

Historically, (in contrast with food prices hikes in 2008 and following years) the **decrease of food prices** is one of the most **important factors in the economic and social exclusion of small scale farmers**: it affects small famers in the South but also small and marginalised farmers in the North¹⁶. As a consequence of the agricultural revolutions, there was an increase in productivity which led globally to the production of surplus (for the market) and a global reduction in food prices. This was reinforced by large agricultural subsidies as well as lower transport prices and trade liberalization¹⁷.

This revolution largely benefited the countries in the North and some favourable regions in the South. As only a limited part of the overall agricultural production is traded, this means that only a few benefitted from these lower prices. Small scale producers suffered from a severe drop in their income (they did not make enough money to live, eat and reinvest in the means of production). Many of them abandoned agriculture and moved into the cities. In the North, only producers who were well resourced and equipped, who had access to knowledge and credit, managed to increase their productivity and attain revenues higher than the basic needs of the family - to the detriment of the smaller producers who were slowly marginalized and forced out of the market. Therefore, this process systematically

Science and Technology for Development IAAKSTD (2009) Agriculture at a crossroads North America and Europe (NAE) report. [online]. Edited by Beverly D. McIntyre. Washington, D.C.: IAASTD. Available from: <http://www.unep.org/dewa/agassessment/index.html?Page=Overview&ItemID=3>

¹⁶ In the South, however, small scale farmers quite often have to buy food in the market where they have to pay prices in excess to the “farm gate prices” they receive for their own produce

¹⁷ Mazoyer, M. 2001. Protecting Small Farmers and the Rural Poor in the Context of Globalization. Rome:FAO

¹⁴ Oliveira Baptista, F. 2013. O Destino Camponês.

¹⁵ International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge,

increased inequality in rural populations. This unequal development was exacerbated by the fall in food prices which affects disproportionately the revenues of small farmers¹⁸.

On the other hand, sharp rises in food prices in 2008 caused serious crises in many countries pushing millions into extreme poverty¹⁹ (some of which were de-linked from production or had to buy additional, expensive food to complement their production). The increase in food prices should have translated into improved income for farmers but in reality this did not occur due to increases in the price of inputs and petrol. The food prices crisis was compounded by economic and financial crises which, together with the crisis of the social state, heightened pressures for the poorer population. Although they affected mainly countries in the South, the crises brought back to the forefront of international political debate the issues of agricultural production, food security and food sovereignty. The concept of food sovereignty²⁰, in particular, has inspired heated debates. Despite many unanswered questions in relation to the challenges of its policy implementations, they have contributed to ascertain the need for radical changes in agro-food systems²¹.

The crises stressed the vulnerability of certain populations whose resilience had been eroded and who had lost control over their productive systems: they were now exposed to global dynamics over which they had no control. In the South, the inflow of agricultural products from the North, the reduction

of food reserves, political instability, wars and rapid urbanization, the abandonment of the rural populations by the state, the weakening and general impoverishment of agrarian societies, all contributed to increase the vulnerability of rural populations.

In the North, the rise in food prices equally raised alarms. Portugal spent, in 2010, 7 billion Euros in food imports and with the rise in prices this bill can still increase dramatically; this risk raised alarm bells and alerted to the necessity to increase agricultural production and put food sovereignty back on the agenda.

Northern agricultural policies have significant impacts on agricultural development in the South. This is mainly due to overproduction in the North which increases the volume of trade and the many actors and networks that are based in the North who dominate food systems, such as large agribusiness. It means that they have a strong impact on demand and supply. Exports of cheap subsidised food produce from the North to the South destroy markets for local production and squeeze farmers out of their own markets.

In the North, agricultural development has provided a high level of food availability and despite the fact that hunger is not nearly as prevalent, there is nonetheless, food insecurity, especially amongst the poorest as a consequence of inadequate protection policies²². The risk of **food insecurity** increased in the North with the rise of inequality and increasing numbers of people trapped in poverty. In comparison in the South, food insecurity is still prevalent despite development interventions and their limited impacts. Policies, such as trade liberalization, structural adjustment programs, neglect of the agricultural sector and subsidies in Northern countries, all have negative impacts of food production.

Peasants are also marginalised in policy making processes. The cooperation between local small scale producers is weak, their organisational capacity is very limited, they are not active in state institutions and therefore their participation in policy making is marginal. Therefore they have little organised lobbying capacity in regional, national or transnational decision making bodies.

Legal frameworks and public policies do not usually

¹⁸ Mazoyer, M. 2001. Protecting Small Farmers

¹⁹ World Bank. 2009. Global Economic Prospects 2009: Commodities at the crossroads. [online]. Washington: World Bank. Available from: <http://www-wds.worldbank.org>

²⁰ There is a multitude of conflicting views on what food sovereignty is (see: Critical Perspectives on Food Sovereignty. Journal of Peasant Studies. Vol. 41, Iss. 6, 2014). According to Bernstein (2013, Food Sovereignty: A skeptical view), the conception most closely associated with La Vía Campesina and those who support it is: 'Food Sovereignty' can be seen as 'the right of nations and peoples to control their own food systems, including their own markets, production modes, food cultures and environments...as a critical alternative to the dominant neoliberal model for agriculture and trade' (Wittman, H., A. A. Desmarais, N. Wiebe, eds., 2010. Food sovereignty. Reconnecting food, nature and community. Oakland CA: Food First).

²¹ Marc Edelman , Tony Weis , Amita Baviskar , Saturnino M. Borras , Eric Holt-Giménez , Deniz Kandiyoti , Wendy Wolford. 2014. Introduction: critical perspectives on food sovereignty. Journal of Peasant Studies. Vol. 41, Iss. 6, 2014

²² IAASTD. 2009. Agriculture at a crossroads.

consider small scale producers interests and there are processes of regulatory exclusion at several levels (fiscal, quality standards, etc.). In the North, even in countries where small producers manage to survive, the legal frameworks are moulded according to the industrial paradigm, and more adapted to mass production, standardisation, quality processes and certification which not only affect production, but also storage, transformation and commercialisation. In general these legal frameworks impose a wide range of obstacles to small producers that only the most able manage to surpass.

Private sector investment in small holder agriculture in the North and South alike is very **limited**.

In some countries in the South, **legal frameworks**, theoretically, protect collective ownership of land. But they are often, in practice, geared to facilitate the **expropriation of communal** lands either by the state, usually for big “development projects”, or by private appropriation. New elites are increasingly manipulating legal and administrative procedures in order to transform common land into private property. The same legal frameworks also serve to sell big parcels of land to **foreign investors**. This has facilitated the global rush for land (“**land grabbing**”).

In the South, despite the role that agriculture has in poverty reduction, investment is very limited²³. Although recently some private investment is targeting agriculture, it is **mainly directed to large agro-enterprises** as the complexities of investment in small scale production and their associated transaction costs prove too expensive to attract institutional investors. In the South the **lack of land titles excludes small producers also from the access to credit**.

Small scale farmers in marginalised regions, both in the North and in the South, suffer from **limited access to transport and other infrastructures and services, such as health, education, sanitation**, etc. which are much weaker in rural areas than in urban centres. Where they exist, access is usually too expensive for small scale producers.

The **inoperability of rural extension services** in the South, combined with a general lack of interest of the national administrations in small

scale agriculture plus the weakness of education systems which are generally not designed to transmit practical knowledge to rural producers, seriously limits the access of rural producers to information and knowledge. The weakness of communication infrastructures such as the internet equally excludes rural population who also lack the technical means of access. Rural extension services in the South suffered from neo-liberal policies and efforts to slim down the state: in several countries some important experiments in agricultural research were abandoned and extension services dismantled during structural adjustment. The same occurred in some marginalised regions in the North. In Portugal, agricultural research was progressively abandoned and state technical support services slowly disappeared.

The access to inputs and markets is limited for small scale producers in the North and in the South, although in different ways. In the North, access to markets is made difficult mainly due to the concentration of power in agri-food systems in the hands of a few large actors from the supply of inputs to distributors and retailers. The near oligopoly of buyers does not buy small quantities of produce at prices acceptable to small producers. Even potential buyers well disposed towards small producers are faced with obstacles such as additional work related to the irregular supply of fairly small quantities of not certified produce.

In the South the access to inputs has **logistical as well as financial dimensions**. With no access to transport, and commercial circuits frequently interrupted or non-existent, inputs simply do not reach small rural producers. The domination of the existing markets by traders with a near monopoly raises prices for inputs even beyond the cost of transporting goods to places distant from the main hubs. The inexistence of industrial production forces traders to rely on imports even for the most basic inputs as well as for basic necessities.

Access to markets for their produce is also difficult, **prices** are usually very low, because they have to compete with cheap imports or because they are fixed unofficially by buyers who control access, transport, and storage facilities. As some traders also give credit for inputs, rural producers are often tied to them when selling their products. Even where conditions are favourable, such as access to main roads, which may enable “direct marketing” to passing clients, selling small quantities usually

²³ Crowley, E. 2013. Ending poverty: Learning from good practices of small and marginal farmers. Rome: FAO

requires an extraordinary amount of time. So producers in the South are in a double fix: very high costs for inputs and basic goods and even for food during the hunger season, and very low prices for their own products in the harvest season.

of the issues raise above for the specific cases of Portugal and Angola.

In face of the prevailing neoliberal economic policies and industrial models of agricultural production and of its negative impacts on small scale and family farmers, farmers have resisted in many ways. In recent years, they started organizing in a transnational way to respond to the process of exclusion in policy spaces. One key movement, Via Campesina²⁴, has struggled in defence of the peasant way of life and against the “disempowerment they experience daily as the dominant model’s processes of accumulation are unleashed in the countryside everywhere”²⁵. One of its main achievements was to contribute to the construction of a shared peasant identity, based on what all the “people of the land” have in common. This shared peasant identity is “the key that holds the struggle together creating a true peasant internationalization”²⁶. It counteracts the argument that the peasants and small farmers of today are backwards and in extinction. “Rural societies are proposing an alternative way of experiencing modernity”²⁷.

However, in recognising the importance of family farming, it is important not to fall into “peasant essentialism”²⁸, i.e. seeing only virtues in ‘peasant’/small-scale/‘family’ farming and viciousness in other forms of agriculture. This may also led to exclusions. It is, therefore important to consider the many processes and patterns of agrarian change in the world today and the diverse dynamics and struggles²⁹ and their importance.

In the following case studies we will explore some

²⁴ Via Campesina emerged in Latin America and then acquired a global scale in the 1980s and 1990s

²⁵ Desmarais, A.A. 2007. Building a Transnational Peasant Movement. [online]. Available from: <https://nacla.org/news/building-transnational-peasant-movement>

²⁶ Martínez-Torres, M. E. and Rosset, Peter M. 2010. La Vía Campesina: the birth and evolution of a transnational social movement. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37(1), pp.149-175.

²⁷ Martínez-Torres, M. E. and Rosset, P. M. 2010. La Vía Campesina

²⁸ Bernstein, H. and Terence J. B. 2001. From Peasant Studies to Agrarian Change. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 1 (1) (January). pp: 1-56

²⁹ Bernstein, H. 2014. Food sovereignty via the ‘peasant way’: a sceptical view. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41(6), pp. 1031-1063.



EXCLUSION AND SMALLHOLDER FARMERS IN PORTUGAL

The lifeworlds of Portuguese smallholders are extremely diverse. Smallholder family farmers occupy an important place in agriculture, as a large part of smallholdings and their agricultural production systems and livelihoods are interlinked with family networks, neighbourhood and village structures. If we take labour as one of the key defining components of family farming, then almost 80% of all labour force in agriculture is family labour, a number above the EU average. Family agriculture in Portugal still retains many aspects of traditional agriculture, with low external input use, low revenues and run by farmers with no formal training. Family farming is linked to a large extent to small scale operations, which represent more than 90% of Portuguese farms³⁰. However, the agricultural family population is in decline (following the same tendency as most of other EU countries) and small family farmers face a number of complex challenges.

Since Portugal's EU accession in 1986, larger agricultural companies have progressively gained importance to the detriment of smallholders. However, agricultural companies represent less than 4% of the total number of farms while family farming still represent 6,5% of the total population equivalent to almost 700,000 people³¹.

Small famers play an important economic and social role and, furthermore, are essential in environmental conservation. They ensure agricultural production but also provide a source of income diversification and employment and counteract the accentuated tendency for the desertification of the interior of Portugal. They also have a key role in environmental conservation by maintaining the landscape and conserving biodiversity by protecting seeds and

traditional varieties. "These are key factors for the sustainable development of the rural world and for territorial and social cohesion"³².

In the area studied (Ourém), agriculture is only a secondary activity that complements the primary economy of religious tourism to the Sanctuary of Fatima. Yet, many of the challenges farmers face are common to those of many smallholdings, even though there are small farmers in other regions which are much better integrated into the market logic such as in the case in neighbouring coastal Western Region.

In the studied marginalised areas, farmers continue to produce wine, olive oil, fruits and vegetables using traditional methods. Their holdings are small, less than 2.4 ha³³, and their number decreases steadily. But rooted in a strong tradition, the farmers try to preserve their production as a part of their collective history, even if it runs counter to market logic. They may receive some assistance from modern initiatives, but these are by no means sufficient to enable them to maintain agriculture as a primary livelihood. In a combination of adherence to tradition, lack of viable alternatives and sheer stubbornness they simply continue to produce and hang on, even if the odds are against them. The **challenges** they face are **complex**, resulting from their position "at the margins", from development models and policies that exclude them and from a number of constraints at production and marketing level.

The development path of agriculture in EU countries is very different according to political and socio economic histories and access to capital³⁴, however

³⁰ Costa, Teresa. 2014. 80% da mão-de-obra agrícola ainda é familiar. Dinheiro Vivo. 1 January 2014. [online]. Available from: http://www.dinheirovivo.pt/economia/interior.aspx?content_id=3758961

³¹ Costa, Teresa. 2014. 80% da mão-de-obra agrícola

³² Realinho, A. (2014) O contributo da pequena agricultura familiar para a coesão dos territórios. Comunicação oral. Conferência Internacional A Pequena Agricultura Familiar: Chayanov revisitado? 27.10.2014. FCSH/UNL.

³³ Camara Municipal de Ourém. 2002. Relatório do Plano Director Municipal. Proposta final.

³⁴ IAASTD. 2009. Agriculture at a crossroads

there are some similarities across the region as far as agriculture is concerned, due to geographic characteristics and common policies. Overall agriculture has undergone deep structural changes especially after the Second World War³⁵: there was an incorporation of new technologies, mechanization and enlargement of average farm size which led to increases in outputs and productivity. Agricultural policies have played a major role in this transformation.

Challenges for small farmers stem from these policies and the underlying development models. Despite the stated theme of support for family farming, in the long run, they promote a model of **modern and intensive market oriented agriculture** which promotes large farms³⁶. Policies then try to compensate or prevent the disappearance of small farmers with financial aid³⁷. However, in practice, low prices and other challenges excluded many small farmers who did not adapt to this logic: technological change favours intensive capital investment and economies of scale and mechanization favours and incentives larger holdings, therefore driving small farmers off the land.

Reforms of the European agricultural policy³⁸ recognised the importance of multiple roles of agriculture, such as preservation of the biodiversity, landscape, etc. which go well beyond the mere sphere of production and thus provided subsidies and incentives to keep small farmers in business. However, even if these concerns, expressed in policy, have somewhat made their way into development plans, in Portugal, there has not had the necessary follow up at local level to allow small farmers access to markets³⁹.

Around 790,000 people are engaged in family farming, 80% of the total agricultural labour in Portugal, which is considerable given a population of less than 10.5 million. However it has declined sharply by almost half a million people since 1999⁴⁰. Following the tendency in most of Europe, there has been, in the past decades, a decrease in farm labour,

an increase in farm size and in the number of large agricultural companies. Some argue that agriculture is now more efficient, due to the adoption of professional management systems, the introduction of agricultural technology and mechanization and economies of scale. Yet, others claim agriculture has lost its economic and social position with the decline in the number of farms and farmers by almost half since the 80s.

In recent years, the situation has become harder for small farmers, as a result of **structural adjustment and austerity policies** in Portugal following the sovereign debt crisis which led to decreases in government spending and to many setbacks in the welfare state. It resulted in a decrease in social protection (and also in the size of pensions) and in other social services with strong impacts on rural, especially older, populations. To compound the situation it led to widespread unemployment with impacts on small farmers which, in most cases, combine agriculture with other activities.

The low revenues of agriculture have since long driven farmers to take on other activities without abandoning agriculture. Nowadays a large majority combines it with revenue from pensions and other subsidies (only around 6% live exclusively of agriculture⁴¹). Almost a quarter of farmers report having other activities outside farming. In many EU countries farmers complement their farm incomes with off farms activities but this has higher expression in Southern countries and namely in Portugal. The smaller size of farms may be one of the reasons why farms operate on a part-time basis⁴². Therefore, cutbacks in social protection and unemployment have serious impacts on farmers' lives. Unemployment also pushed many to migrate, namely young and highly qualified people, and increased rural desertification.

There is some indication of countertrends, with young people trying to move back into agriculture, given their shrinking prospects in urban areas. There have been programmes to encourage **young farmers** to take up agriculture. There is, according to some, evidence that many of them are succeeding. Nonetheless, they face real challenges to build real viable projects.

The access to agricultural subsidies is another key point. Farmers claim it is still very complex and

³⁵ IAASTD.2009. Agriculture at a crossroads

³⁶ IAASTD.2009. Agriculture at a crossroads

³⁷ Veiga, J. (16 de May de 2014). Inquérito de diagnóstico de preparação a estudo de caso. Lisboa: FEC.

³⁸ For more information on Common Agricultural Policy CAP's second pillar see: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/aboutparliament/en/displayFtu.html?ftuid=FTU_5.2.6.html

³⁹ Veiga, J. (16 de May de 2014). Inquérito de diagnóstico.

⁴⁰ Costa, Teresa. 2014. 80% da mão-de-obra agrícola

⁴¹ Lusa. 2014. Indicadores agrícolas

⁴² IAASTD. 2009. Agriculture at a crossroads

excludes smallholders, often lowly skilled and rather helpless when dealing with arcane procedures and ineffective bureaucracies. Many are forced out of business, as the lion's share of subsidies goes to larger farms.

Fiscal policies and regulations are equally seen as a big burden by smallholders. Despite the implementation of some rules to mitigate some of these problems, it is still too little for the very small farmer and the rules are usually too cumbersome for very small activities. The tightening of fiscal controls, supposedly enacted to fight tax evasion, burden small and microenterprises with high administrative costs and procedures which are ill-adjusted and, in the end, force the small out of the market. The National Farmers Confederation (CNA) has denounced tax increases from 2012 which eventually will eliminate small farmers. Several voices in this sector claim for a simplified tax regime that does not kill small farmers. The CNA actually considers that one of the strongest attacks on family farming is the requirement to register for tax collection.

Other rules have similar effects. The application of pesticides requires now formal training and licenses, but there are few free courses, not enough to satisfy demand, or they have to be paid for and smallholder cannot afford them. In addition, formal training is an obstacle for many of the older semi-retired farmers. Farmers call for a more flexible process of licencing that would take into account their experience and other specific conditions.

Farmers report the **lack of public investment in agriculture which** leads to a deterioration of productive infrastructures, such as communal irrigation systems, dams, storage basins and reservoirs which result in increased difficulties in access to water for agriculture as well as an increased risk of forest fires. Most of the investments made since entering the EU in 1986 benefited only a few: 5% received 95% of the funds (21 billion euros were invested, from structural funds and governmental funds, in the modernization of farms, machinery and irrigation systems).

The Ministry of Agriculture claims, however, that there will be new policy instruments within the CAP framework 2014-2020, that will improve the family farming component such as investments in agricultural infrastructure, incentives for young farmers, innovation, support for farmers organizations and the preservation of agriculture in

marginalized areas. This remains to be seen.

In the area under study, smallholders – contrary to other regions – are not organised in any meaningful way and their capacity to **influence policy formulation is very weak**. Their claims are only seldom heard and they are often seen by the authorities as being the problem because they do not adapt to market logics. There are some national level farmers' organizations that speak up for small farmers but, despite some successes, they do not have enough power to transform policy. In the neighbouring Western Region, an important fruit and vegetable producing area which supplies the Lisbon region, farmers' organizations are more developed and the capacity to influence policy is higher. Also, in this case, access to agricultural subsidies is facilitated.

Another major obstacle to small farms has been the expansion of large distributors and supermarkets that source their products at international level, which has raised big barrier to market access. Some called it the "dictatorship of supermarkets". The concentration is very strong in Portugal with five companies controlling two thirds of the distribution of food. They exert strong pressure on prices. From the smallholders' perspectives, the big buyers pay too little and too late.

Quite often they simply do not buy from smallholders as these can only provide small quantities, cannot ensure continuous supply and cannot comply with the supermarkets "quality standards". Smallholders often have no access to certification processes due to lack of knowledge, prohibitive costs and inadequate rules.

The same applies to restaurants, canteens, etc. who cannot buy from **producers without due certification and often shy away from buying in small quantities**. The organic farm movement, for instance, which provides a vastly increasing market for small-scale farming in other European countries is very incipient and many smallholders lack knowledge and adequate training in this respect.

Many try to sell their products through their networks of families and friends, or at the door of the church, at local markets, or through modern initiatives, such as the project PROVE⁴³, which promotes short

⁴³ "PROVE is an inter-territorial co-operation project between eight Local Action Groups located around Portugal which is intended to resolve issues related to

market circuits, which favour small-holders and try to bridge the gap between traditional production and modern marketing. Several of these direct marketing initiatives exist, but these are not yet big enough to be a real alternative. The general crises provoked by the economic downturn, reinforced by imposed austerity policies, leaves little margin for demand on a significant scale for different types of produce, such as locally produced one which could translate into effective markets with higher prices and preferences for direct farmer-to-consumer marketing.

Another challenge for farmers, in recent years, have been the significant **increases in prices for farm inputs** which, together with low farm gate prices, often pushes farmers to sell at a loss.

Information and knowledge and rural extension were considered an **essential element** for the **agricultural development** and, for that reason, state extension services were created in many countries. Indeed, these were the preferred vehicles for knowledge transfer to farmers in a time where the developmental state had an important role to play. As a consequence of new models and of the drive to slim down the state, these services lost strength and were to be replaced by private services and new kinds of organizations, such as producer organizations or local development associations. However, in most cases, in Portugal, these services are only provided in a very rudimentary way.

In Portugal, contrary to other countries, the agricultural extension services never really took off.

However, at the level of Regional Directorates of Agriculture, some of these services emerged in the 70s and 80s when national, regional and local services were organized, technicians trained and projects funded. However, these services were dismantled and, today, most of the technical support is given by the private sector, cooperatives and associations but in a fragmented and dispersed way⁴⁴. This also contributes to the exclusion of smallholders from access to scientific and technical knowledge and therefore limits their capacity to innovate.

Farmers repeatedly mention the lack of access to

the marketing of local products and to take advantage of the proximity of producers and consumers in peri-urban areas". <http://www.prove.com.pt/www/english.T9.php>

⁴⁴ Cristóvão, A. (s/d). Onde pára a extensão rural?. Universidade de Trás-Os-Montes. [Online]. Available from: http://home.utad.pt/~des/docs/artigos/acristov_01.htm.

information and this is certainly the case for farmers in Ourém. Some of the existing local organizations that support farmers are small and ill resourced and cannot provide the necessary technical support. Some offer training seminars or courses, however they have limited capacity and long waiting lists prove the interest of farmers in accessing such knowledge. Most of the resources and support provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and also by a number of associations are channelled towards the implementation of the CAP and to subsidies management.

Even if the older model of extension services is not adequate anymore, farmers still need information, as proven by the interviews conducted. There is therefore a strong need for organisations and systems able to build interactive knowledge networks, foster stakeholder participation, and integrate local and traditional knowledge with scientific knowledge.

Poverty and inequality have increased sharply in recent years with several organizations reporting the widespread problems of lack of access to food, and high burden of debt in many households. The National Health Service has been seriously affected as have the education system and other public services.

Rural populations suffer disproportionately some of the effects of austerity politics and policies. These communities are already living in unfavourable conditions in regards to **access to basic services**, such as health, education, local administration, etc. but the closure of services, namely hospitals and clinics in the countryside and their concentration in urban areas further increases the divide. Worsening problems in an already feeble public transportation system increase isolation. The cuts in social benefits also had strong negative impacts in rural populations, many of which are dependent on pensions.

However, the recent crises have also shown that family farming can contribute to supporting family revenues in face of layoffs and payment cuts, to local job creation and to the reduction of the number of families in crises⁴⁵.

Although small scale farmers in Portugal may receive support through state policies and projects, these

⁴⁵ Realinho, A. 2014. O contributo da pequena agricultura familiar para a coesão dos territórios. Comunicação oral. Conferência Internacional A Pequena Agricultura Familiar: Chayanov revisitado? 27.10.2014. FCSH/UNL.

are by no means sufficient nor do they have the necessary follow up at local level to allow farmers access to markets⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ Milando, João. 2013. Desenvolvimento e Resiliência Social em África. Dinâmicas Rurais de Cabinda. Luanda, Mayamba.



AGRARIAN SOCIETIES AND EXCLUSION PROCESSES IN ANGOLA

Angolan smallholder farmers typically belong to agrarian societies that are organised along distinct ethnic lines. Their traditional type of agricultural production depends largely on their location and the practices of their ethnic group. Although the Angolan agrarian societies have shown **remarkable resilience**⁴⁷ they have been profoundly **affected by decades of warfare** that left none of them undamaged and put their capacity to deal with worsening climatic conditions and other crises into jeopardy⁴⁸.

The most obvious destructions of the **physical infrastructures** are still visible. They affected not only the urban centres that served also as hubs for the commercialisation of local produce and for the essential inputs for rural production, but also the transport infrastructure and commercial circuits as well as their rural outposts. **Economic flows** came to a near **standstill during the war** in many areas and are only very slowly recovering. The rudimentary rural infrastructure for health and education also suffered during the war. The prolonged wars have also affected demography.

Migration - forced and otherwise - affected nearly all societies. A rapid and largely **uncontrolled urbanisation** depleted the agrarian societies of their most dynamic elements and concentrated the population in the peripheries of the cities, where they are **separated from their means of production**. The re-migration of the war refugees from neighbouring countries and other regions is still an ongoing process and has, in some cases, put an additional stress on resources and on an already weakened infrastructure.

The wars have also led to an erosion of ethnic self-

organisation capacity and lead to a general **decline in trust** which affects economic and other transactions. The population has also suffered physical traumas and psychological stress - which are hard to gauge. Social tensions are generally repressed and can therefore only be inferred.

Public policies have, since the end of the war, focused firstly on the reconstruction and construction of physical infrastructure, with a strong focus on urban centres but also benefitting some rural areas for instance with road access and energy. In the countryside some areas have received special attention, notably buildings and residences for the local administration, as well as in the areas of health and education where new infrastructure is being built⁴². A strong emphasis is being given on education on all levels. These do not, however, benefit agricultural production directly.

The food crises of the last years have sharpened the perception on all political levels that smallholder agriculture has to be developed in order to avoid a repetition of the hunger crises. Therefore, **food security** and agricultural development were promoted to the **top of the political agenda**. However, even though food security and agricultural development is presented in the discourses about national policies and national and provincial development planning as a priority, in practice, there still exists a prevalence of interest in big agricultural projects; there is a notable absence of approaches and interventions that favour the rural smallholder economy.

Intervention capacities on the local level are also very limited. The municipality administrations are rather weak and have no staff qualified and experienced in direct intervention to boost local production, although the central government attributes greater importance and the corresponding means in the way of qualifying local administrators through targeted training courses.

⁴⁷ Fátima, Maria de. 2012. Populações Rurais na Huíla e Resiliência Social em Contexto de guerra: O caso do Município da Humpata (Sudoeste Angolano), Tese Doutoramento em Estudos Africanos, ISCTE-IUL, Lisboa.

⁴⁸ Oliveira Baptista, F. 2013. O Destino Camponês

The organisational landscape in Angola shows marked differences to the typical situation in many African countries where in some cases the countryside is populated by an assortment of foreign and national NGOs. The vast majority of organisations present in the Angolan countryside are mostly either local administrations or delegations from the central government as well as a few scattered Civil Society Organizations (CSO). Notable exceptions are some big international donors and some religious institutions. The rarity of foreign NGOs is probably due to the high financial and administrative barriers of operating in the country which is perceived by many donors as very wealthy due to its abundance in natural resources and its internationally displayed economic clout.

The situation of **smallholder farmers** in general is very **precarious**. Depleted of the resources by the long wars, they lack the basic equipment and inputs to improve their agricultural production. They equally have, in general, no stocks of food to take them over a bad harvest into the next agricultural cycle. Bad weather conditions or other occurrences easily transform their precarious economic existence into dramatic situations. Basic food security is far from guaranteed: this was clearly shown in recent years when, due to the effects of droughts, nearly half of the rural population became food insecure. The weakening of the internal cohesion of the agrarian societies deprives them of the social and genetic resources, such as effective traditional storage and seed distribution systems, to withstand crises and to recover from bad harvests, as well as to compensate for regional disparities. They have been running on their emergency coping strategies for decades and even these seem to be reaching their limits⁴⁹.

They have very limited **access to market** for supplies, or the economic power to buy food in times of crises. Their access to market in order to sell eventual surplus is also extremely difficult. They have therefore nearly no cash income, let alone cash reserves.

Agricultural production is very low, with very

heavy pre-harvest and post-harvest losses.

Traditional storage systems do exist but offer no good protection against losses. The range of products depends on the geographic region, but is extremely limited to one or a few basic staples, mostly cassava and cereals. Vegetables are very scarce. The production of fruit is weak in many regions, and mostly limited to short seasons.

Animal husbandry is extremely limited, even chickens are very rare; the stock of ruminants has not reached its pre-war levels. In some areas a few donkeys exist. Animal traction was not in use in the visited areas.

Tractors are - the existence of some state-sponsored mechanical stations notwithstanding - rather the exception and their use is unaffordable to small-scale producers. Irrigation systems in the dryer regions are scarce; often they seem to have fallen into disrepair. Overall, small producers are extremely vulnerable to droughts. As neither fertilizers nor other agrochemicals are available to small producers, and manure supply is down because of the lack of animals, average yields are low. There is a great risk from pests and diseases since neither the know-how nor the control methods are available to farmers.

Houses are mostly traditional and lack basic services,

such as water, electricity, lighting, mosquito nets, toilets, etc. Kitchens are absent; cooking is done over open fires. Cooking fuel often has to be procured in a very time-consuming way. Even basic equipment and kitchen utensils are lacking. In general they have no easy access to drinking water. They equally lack access to electricity. Their access to health services is precarious, often requiring long journeys to reach the nearest health post. Their access to education is improving but for many children going to school requires long walks, which are not always feasible.

Access to transport is difficult; most households own no means of transport. Collective transport in the country-side is non-existent, very irregular or prohibitively expensive.

There is a **great discrepancy** between the numbers of **poor smallholder households** (roughly more than a third of the population) and the **existing intervention capacity** which is limited to the local administrations. These seem to be neither qualified nor active in this particular field of development. The number of international and national CSOs is

⁴⁹ Temudo, Marina P.; Schiefer, Ulrich. 2003. Disintegration and Resilience of Agrarian Societies in Africa - the Importance of Social and Genetic Resources. A Case Study on the Reception of Urban War Refugees in the South of Guinea-Bissau". In: Ulrike Schuerkens (ed) *Global Forces and Local Life-Worlds: Social Transformations*, Sage, London, pp. 185-206.

fairly small and they suffer from a generalised lack of resources. They also suffer from the theoretical and methodological constraints resulting from the application of international development strategies and models: these do not take into consideration the different general conditions and assumptions governing the circumstances of Angolan smallholders and, consequently, have limited impact⁵⁰.

CSO intervention is therefore extremely **limited in scope and range**. It faces, in addition, specific constraints, such as the focus on collective approaches where projects targeting groups of stakeholders seem legitimate, but direct transfers or investments in individual households do not. Although improvement of collective infrastructures and services is without any doubt necessary the smallholder households are deprived of resources in such a way that they are mostly unable to increase their production in a significant manner. This ideologically motivated approach requires, in the perspective of the intervention agencies, the introduction of collective organisations that try to bring together the supposedly isolated rural households. It ignores the fact that this kind of externally induced development intervention in general runs counter to the already existing ethnic structures and usually does not survive the end of the intervention projects. The fact that smallholders join voluntarily and with some enthusiasm in order to benefit from interventions is in itself no proof that this approach is correct because their needs are so desperate that they easily accede to anything that promises to improve their lot. It may, however, in some cases be a necessary start and help with the introduction of new production methods and a significant improvement of collective infrastructures. The real importance of these interventions, the real benefits for the involved communities notwithstanding, (which for them is no small matter, marking the difference between eating or not) therefore makes only sense on the symbolic level. For one, they show that the situation of smallholders can in fact be improved considerably with relatively small-scale interventions. Second, they serve as experiments in order to establish what works and what does not under specific conditions. Thirdly, they constitute valuable experiments on the administrative and political limits on the local level and serve as tests which help to establish experience in how to deal with local authorities. Finally, they

provide material for advocacy in order to put the plight as well as the potential of smallholder agriculture on the political agenda.

This puts additional requirements on the specific interventions: first, they should be designed and implemented having in mind their replicability. Secondly, they should be multidimensional, and address basic needs in more than one area. Thirdly, they should be free from the constraints of specific project designs, that is, be able to assume risks and be very flexible in order to react to specific challenges in a timely way. The current distinction in approaches which can be broadly categorised as charity, humanitarian intervention, food aid, anti-poverty and development aid and economic investment, each with its own theoretical and methodological constraints, should be questioned and substituted by a practical approach that responds to real needs of real people.

Last but not least, the **capacity for scaling up** should be considered in their original design. This requires significant investments in training, monitoring and in building up relations with authorities that put an additional stress on the human and financial resources but has to be considered as important as the success of the specific intervention.

As specific development interventions on the scale currently implemented can never reach more than a few hundred smallholder families, their most important function must be the preparation of massive state intervention. Only the state has the financial resources to make a difference in rural development.

There is no doubt that agricultural production on the smallholder level can be increased greatly. The question is how? The big gap between (financial) state resources, national and provincial policies, and the absence of real development methodology that has passed the reality test provides a great opening for all the approaches that are able to produce success in improving the smallholder economy.

⁵⁰ Milando, João. 2013. *Cooperação sem Desenvolvimento*, Luanda, Mayamba.



CONCLUSION

It is difficult to have a definition of peasant that would explain the diversity of peasantries all over the world. However, there are strong common dimensions between farmers of the world who propose alternative models of production and living. These farmers play important role in agricultural production and food security, and in the economic, social and environmental sustainability of rural areas. In times of crisis, the importance of their role in the maintenance of society's cohesion is reinforced.

However, peasants and smallholder farmers suffer processes of exclusion. They are being excluded economically, financially, technically, culturally and politically from mainstream models and policies both in the North and in the South. While in industrialised countries their number has been greatly reduced, in the South, they are, in many countries, a significant part of the population. In the North where they exist in relative small numbers, their exclusion takes specific forms, such as legal, political and administrative frameworks as well as market mechanisms, that disfavour them. In the South, where their plight is much stronger, they suffer from the same constraints and, moreover, are neglected by government policies and by international development cooperation.

Given the volatility of the international economic system and the growing dangers of food insecurity worldwide which threatens poor people everywhere but those in the South disproportionately, and which have translated into hunger crises and political, economic and security instability, political elites have, in different measures, put agriculture and food security back on the national and international agendas. However, this is still not enough as many of the policies do not translate in real practical benefits for small farmers. As a result, the pressures they face continue to increase, their revenues erode and their livelihoods shrink. There are growing calls to position family farmers at the centre of policies to promote change towards more equitable development.

The two case studies show that, in Portugal, smallholders are losing out, driven out of the market and not supported by national policies, due to austerity and rural policies, even if a countertrend of European defined (and funded) policies exist. These EU policies have not translated into national policies which would effectively give smallholders the support they need to fulfil their multiple economic, social and environmental roles. Still smallholders hang on, and on some cases manage to find strategies to maintain their niche production and existence.

In Angola, smallholders are still more than a third of the population. They have suffered decades of war, forced migration and a general destruction of their infrastructures and living conditions. With few exceptions, they have been widely neglected by government policies and international development agencies. Despite their remarkable resilience, they suffer greatly from adverse conditions and even their traditional coping strategies often fail.

Their undisputed productive potential cannot, however, be developed without a fundamental change in government policies that channel state resources into the agrarian societies. As the international development strategies have mostly failed, the development of agrarian societies requires a complete rethink, and certainly, new and innovative practical approaches.

Peasants and smallholder farmers are not only a large part of the world population but they also guarantee a very large part of agricultural production and play an important role in food security of the poor. These farmers are neither disappearing nor backward looking, but small scale and family farmers that resist industrial model of agricultural production and propose alternative ways of experiencing modernity. They are struggling with processes of exclusion which stretch their livelihoods to the limit. However they should be not ignored by mainstream

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policies as the models they defend contain in them important proposals and hopes to address the processes of social exclusion, food insecurity and environmental unsustainability resulting from the industrial production model.



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