

Farm, family and work: new forms, new adjustments? Liveability in the dynamics of livestock farming systems

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Abstract: *Farming has been undergoing profound changes as not only agriculture, but also work patterns and family dynamics have evolved. The continuity of farm businesses depend not only on technical and economic performance, but also on the life conditions the system offers farmers and their families. Here we define the liveability as the upholding of an articulation between farm, family and work. According to farmers, it is becoming more and more difficult to reconcile these three terms. To gain a better understanding of how farming is changing, with a view on liveability, we undertook an analysis of how changes in farming activities, non-farming activities and family events interact in farming households. We surveyed 14 livestock farms in one area of the French Northern Alps to map the history of the farm, the family and the activities of each member of the household. We found seven forms of work-family-farm relations, which can be linked together in the career of farming households. Using this situated approach, we analyse the concrete reasons for the emergence of historically attested forms of work-family-farm relations in the cases investigated and their practical effects. Finally we discuss the importance to better take into account family and work in their relations with the farm to understand farming system dynamics.*

Keywords: *Livestock farming, family, work, interaction, change, adjustment.*

Changes in livestock farming seen through work-family relations

In traditionally family-based systems, farmers are finding it increasingly difficult to reconcile farming and family life. Difficulties are particularly acute for livestock farmers because of the daily constraints of animal husbandry, and because the members of the family are no longer systematically associated with the farm, which can cause tensions within the family (Blanc and Mac Kinnon, 1990). Today the continuity of farm businesses no longer depend purely on technical and economic performance; the life conditions the system offers farmers and each member of the family, even or more especially those not involved in farm work, underpin the continuity of both farm and family (Gasson et al., 1988).

Since the 1990s the forms taken by farming businesses have profoundly changed as a result of joint but sometimes conflicting changes in agricultural and environmental policies, in the requirements of market chains, and in the ever-growing social scrutiny on the way farmers are operating (Ondersteijn et al., 2006). These changes in agricultural forms interact with other changes in work and family structure. With the end of the peasant toil (Barthez, 1996), the ways in which farmers view their work have become more diverse (Johnsen, 2004): for some, work is a production input, while for others it is part of a life project or a provider of family employment within a complex system combining agricultural and non-agricultural activities (Bowler et al., 1996). As to family relations, a greater degree of autonomy among members of the household (de Singly, 2005), individual independence and well-being lie at the heart of families' dynamics. More and more farmers' wives work off the farm (Gasson and Winter, 1992), and their children do not systematically carry the business on.

Thus to understand the changes in farming and take better account of them, it is in our view essential to take the relations connecting work, family and farm more fully into consideration. Changes will be more readily accepted or implemented on farms if account is taken of the impact they will have on how work is reorganised and how they will affect the relations between work and family. We have developed a method to analyse work organisation so that changes can be appraised

in terms of the impact they have on the resulting reorganisation of work (Madelrieux et al., 2009a). Now we propose to examine the relations between work, family and farm and the ways in which changes affected these relations and the modes of adjustment in play. And we define the liveability as the upholding of an articulation between farm, family and work.

Position: work-family-farm relations as subject of research

In sociological studies, the relation between family and work has been approached from the standpoint of either work or the family, probably as a result of the partitioning between sociology of work and sociology of family. Little work has been done on the relation itself, i.e., the interaction between occupation and family. However, work and family interact and their evolution processes are interwoven. Researchers have accordingly sought to address the relation between work and family by constructing it as a subject of research (Barrère-Maurisson, 1992; Bonnet et al., 2006). Barrère-Maurisson (1992) defined three principles for analysis. The principle of 'articulation' requires the entities to be addressed together, meaning that entities are interdependent and non-separable. The principle of 'transformation' avoids reducing this articulation to simple causality, through the analysis of processes and the way each influences the other in the course of change, i.e. to approach the interactions through their dynamics. The principle of 'adjustment' is necessary to maintain articulation as the relation between family and work evolves. Adjustment means the adaptation of the different terms of the relation and the relation itself so that articulation is conserved.

We adopted this conceptual framework. However, as we were concerned specifically with transformations in livestock farming, we focused our attention on the relations between farming activities, non-farming activities and family events, i.e., work-family-farm relations, rather than on the more classical distinction between domestic and occupational work (this lays due emphasis on the farm itself). We do not define the terms in general, but as a part of the relation. The different relations are defined as follows:

- work-family relation: the family division of work, for which Bonnet et al. (2006) use the dynamic concept of "family career", describing the interactions between the events of matrimony and family life and the occupational career of each member of the family.
- work-farm relation: the work sharing (household's farming and non-farming activities) in the work group (family and other workers, waged and voluntary help). Dynamically, this relation describes the interactions between events linked to off-farm and on-farm activities.
- family-farm relation: the family division of farm work, which dynamically describes the interactions between the events of family life and those linked to farming activities.

Here the farm is viewed globally, as a combination of productive activities (strictly livestock rearing and crop growing), activities of diversification (extension of production -processing, commercialisation...- or use of the farm itself as a resource -on-the-farm accommodation...-), and a work group. The changes considered are thus those affecting work-family-farm relations at the overall level studied. Adjustment covers the organisational solutions set up to maintain the articulation between the three entities and thus liveability as we defined it, e.g. recourse to waged or voluntary workers to carry out farm work or look after children, or readjustment of a spouse's combination of activities in response to a family event.

Methods

To describe the evolution of work-family-farm interactions, we combined a literature search for the past evolution (since the 1950s) with a situated approach in farms.

Collection of data from farms

We conducted interviews with farmers to map the history of the farm, the family and the activities of each of its members, from the setting up on the farm up to the time of the survey. These farms were

chosen in the same area so that contextual factors were similar, and in such a way as to cover a broad range of production systems and combinations of farming household activities. We selected the Massif des Bauges (French Northern Alps) where agriculture is traditionally family-based (Cialdella et al., 2009). This area is located close to large urban areas offering non-farming employment, and is being shaped by a process of peri-urbanisation and a growing tourist appeal potentially favouring diversification of farm activities likely to generate new forms of interaction between work, family and farm. The study is based on the experience of 12 couples of which one or both members have a farming activity, and two single farmers. There are young couples (under age 40), older couples (over age 60), but most are in the 40-60 age bracket. Our sample comprises cases where both members of a couple are involved in the farm work as their sole occupation, others where only one member is involved, and others where each member of the couple contributes differently. The production systems are varied: dairy cows (sometimes with cheese making and direct sale or associated with a wine-growing enterprise), suckler cows, goats with cheese processing and direct sale, suckler ewes, and horses.

Processing of data: mapping and analysis of "family careers"

Mapping interactions between work, family and farm entails identifying the events that mark points of inflexion and moments of re-composition of family careers (Battagliola et al., 1991) and the way liveability is in balance. From the viewpoint of career construction, we focused our attention on the couple (or single farmer), to identify the inflexions in the evolution for a constant matrimonial situation. An event is defined as causing a change in the activities of a person, thereby changing the nature of their involvement in the farm business, this we call a "shift in position". From the cases studied, we built a reading grid of the different possible career positions (Table 1).

Table 1. Positions that can be held by individuals in the course of their family careers.

Position designation	Work on the farm	including diversification	Running of farm	Off-farm or non-farming income	Further description
Pluriactive	yes	possible	possible	yes (off-farm activity)	The 'pluriactive' has a gainful off-farm occupation but work as well on the farm, and can even run the farm
Manager	yes	no	yes	no	The 'manager' runs the farm, has multiple skills and can participate in all types of farm work
Permanent worker	yes	no	no	no	The 'permanent' worker is an assistant and generally does only certain tasks (e.g., animal care and milking)
Developer	variable	yes	possible	no	The 'developer' has activities of diversification. Involvement in farm work (animals and land) is variable (from full to nil when this involvement concerns only diversification activities)
Retired	yes	possible	possible	yes (pension)	The 'retired' person works on the farm and receives a retirement pension
Independent	no (or very occasionally)	no	no	yes (off-farm activity)	The 'independent' member has an off-farm job. This member may sometimes lend assistance on the farm, but its main occupation is independent of the farm
Domestic	no (or very occasionally)	no	no	no	The 'domestic' member carries out domestic tasks. This member may sometimes lend assistance on the farm, but does his work independently of the farming activities

Farm: an agricultural production unit in the strict sense or including diversification when relevant.

NB: The combinations *no/no/yes/no* or *yes* are not given in the table as they are rare in family-based farming: they correspond more to ranching situations where the owner does not work on the farm and employs wage labour.

It characterises the positions occupied by each person in the course of time, describes the individual's involvement in the farm and corresponds to: the level of the work carried out on the farm, including diversification activities; the running of the farm; off-farm activities and non-

agricultural sources of income. These positions can be held by either the husband or the wife. They correspond to the effective activities rather than officially declared legal status, e.g. women declared as unemployed may help on the farm, while others officially declared as farmers may not themselves work on the farm. The positions are mutually exclusive: an individual may hold only one position at any given time.

Results

Diversity and evolution of work-family-farm relations in the cases studied

In the survey cases we delimited different combinations of positions for farming households. It is the position of a single farmer (Table 1) or the combination of the positions of each of the members of a farming household that produces the work-family-farm relations in each case at any given time. For the couples, the relations encountered are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Relations between work, family and farm encountered in couples.

Relation		Combination of positions	Definition and comments	
Separate activities		manager + independent	Each has a separate activity: one works on the farm (farmer or pluriactivity) and the other has an occupation that is independent of the farm work (off-farm or domestic)	
		manager + domestic		
		developer + independent		
		pluriactive + independent		
Project of couple	Agricultural	retired + domestic	The farm (reduced here to a strict agricultural production unit) is viewed as an occupational integration project by both members of the couple, who work exclusively on the farm and decide jointly on its future development	
	rural	manager + manager		
One head		manager + developer	As above, but on a farm with activities of diversification (processing, direct sale, accommodation, etc.)	
		developer + developer		
		manager + permanent		
Double activity (DA)	Economic	manager + retired	Both members of the couple work exclusively on the farm, but with the full occupational integration of only one of the members (usually the husband) who works and makes decisions, while the other (usually the wife) has a support role, most often task-based	
		retired + permanent		
	work	pluriactive + permanent		Here the prime motivation for the double activity is economic: need (in relation to the farm often small in size) for one member of the couple to have an off-farm job, while still also working on the farm. Even so, the aim is to make an income from the farm and sometimes to take advantage of the financial security offered by the off-farm job to develop it
		pluriactive + developer		
Custodianship		manager + pluriactive	Here the prime motivation for the double activity is to ensure the farm work is done: one member of the couple has an off-farm occupation (wishes to have or keep up a non-farming activity), but has to work on the farm to meet farming needs	
		pluriactive + pluriactive		
		pluriactive + retired	Couple's wish to conserve or develop the family farm (though not necessarily with the same production), keep land and work on it, but not for a livelihood	
		retired + retired		

The career of farming household can be formed by the succession of several types of relation. A diachronic examination of the careers of farming families reveals a difference between continuous family careers (no position shift for either spouse), and discontinuous ones, with shifts in the positions of either member or both members of the couple (Figure 1). The two most frequent individual positions in our sample (9 out of 26), during at least a part of their careers, are "manager" and "pluriactive". The "manager" position is very seldom a woman's, and there is only one case in which the two members of the couple are manager (contrasting with the "two-worker family model" advanced by farming profession and farm planning laws of the 1960s). The "pluriactive" position among husbands is found to be a lasting position, sometimes keeps up until retirement, rather than a temporary phase. For couples, the "separate activities" is the relation most often encountered in this sample, and is found in eight in ten cases on the dairy farms. The "rural project of couple" is a recent form of relation, found only post-2000 (such as the corresponding "developer" position). It

corresponds to projects for farmhouse cheese making and direct sales. In most of the cases studied, the positions evolve. The stability of the relations ranges widely, from five to more than thirty years. There are only two farms (MV and B) in which no position shift is observed in the family over the period studied. Shifts in position are linked to family and occupational events, or the needs of the farm. Family events are found in four cases. They include a change in the family manpower on the farm (death of a parent for RM in 1991), care required for members of the family (children for CG, parents for MG) and house move at the farm location (HP in 1975). In five cases the reasons are linked to off-farm work: unstable employment (FC), a workplace accident (M) and an opportunity for retirement (D, RM in 1999, HP in 1996, GD in 1991 and in 2002). In four cases the shift in position is for reasons linked to the farm. A failed farming project caused BC and SB to adjust their family careers. Two other cases had to solve problems of excessive workload associated with a move to make the farming activity more autonomous (CP and BB). Thus, except in the two cases of failed farming project, where farmers went to the liveable limit of the system, the others evolve before reaching such a limit and maintain an articulation between work, family and farm by transforming the system.

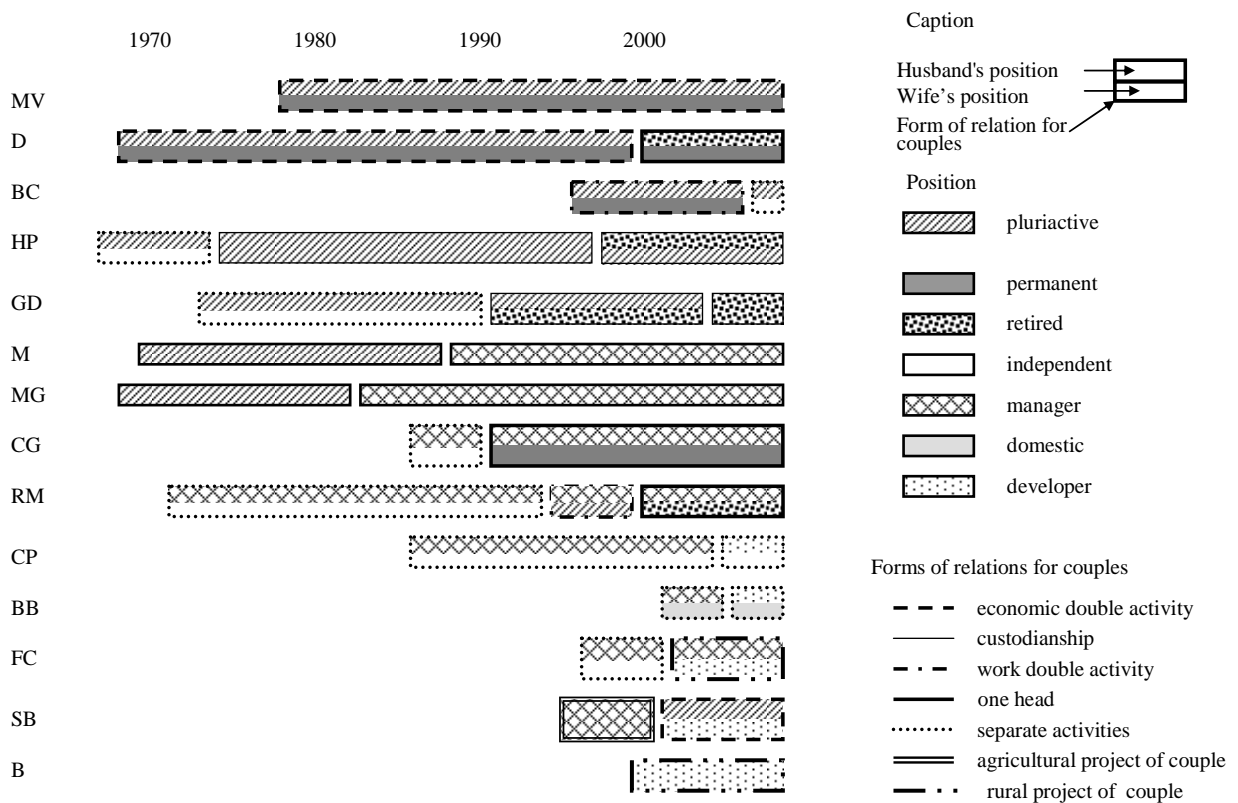


Figure 1. Family careers in the cases studied.

Work-family-farm relations: new forms?

The work-family-farm relations, we have attested, correspond in certain cases to “family farming” patterns identified by sociologists as appearing historically at certain times. Barrère-Maurisson (1992) considers that French farming, in which work and family relations were once tightly associated, is in a process of dissociation. The dominant family model (where the production unit was a multi-generational family) first gave way to a marital structure, which is giving way to a pattern in which the wife has an off-farm occupation (Figure 2).

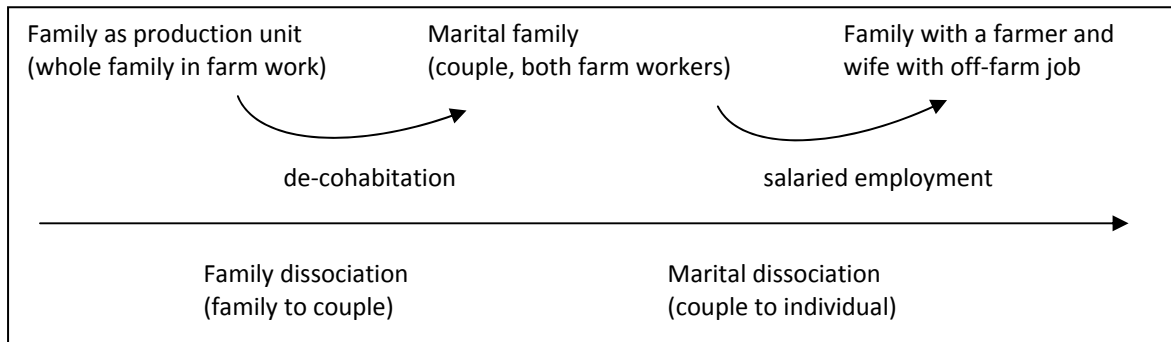


Figure 2. Changes in family structures and farming activity (from Barrère-Maurisson, 1992).

Mundler and Rémy (2009), focusing on the family dimension in farming, categorised these three patterns: peasant farming (family and farming are one), family farming (modern, occupational recognition and gender-based division of labour, model with two work units), which appeared in the 1960s, and post-family farming, or agribusiness (where the links between farm and family are looser, in particular because of off-farm employment by wives), which appeared in the 1990s. They added a further pattern, with reference to the work of Muller et al. (1989): the rural enterprise (its purpose being to recover the autonomy of the farm, often enabling wives who have not given up farming altogether to find fulfilment in a personal project), as an alternative to the post-family pattern. For these authors, “the emergence of these patterns is historically marked, but all four patterns can still be found in farming today”, and indeed we found all these patterns in our sample. The two first patterns are our “one head” or “agricultural project of couple”, the third is “separate activities” and the fourth is “rural project of couple”. However, one pattern that does not appear in the work of Mundler and Rémy (*ibid.*) is “double activity”. This pattern can be of several types: the farmer-worker, the farmer with seasonal waged work, e.g. in a ski resort, the wife who helps on the farm but has an off-farm job..., which we can find in the literature (Fiorelli et al., 2007).

We also show the shift from one pattern to another in the course of the career of a farming household, not only at the historical timescale, and how the resulting transformations are embodied in individual situations. An example is given in Box 1, which according to Figure 2 would be classified as “marital family”, but where this pattern has not always applied, and which takes the marital dissociation in the wrong way. This example also shows that de-cohabitation has not necessarily stopped intergenerational cooperation, even when the parents no longer live with their farming children.

Box 1. Example of discontinuity in wife’s work between farming activities, non-farming activities and family events

In this case (RM), the wife came into agriculture (here dairy farming) through marriage. She has a public service job that she keeps. Her husband is helped by his father. They develop and modernise the farm. On his father’s death the farmer can no longer cope with all the farm work. The wife helps him while keeping her off-farm job (in the morning before she leaves and in the evening when she gets back she helps with milking and animal care). For about 10 years, she has an arduous triple occupation; farm, off-farm job and domestic tasks. As soon as she can retire (after 15 years of service) she gives up her off-farm job, looks after the home and continues helping on the farm. The husband’s position does not change. In this case we shift from “separate activities” to “work double activity” to a “one head” pattern. The off-farm income and the involvement of the wife allow the dairy production system to be maintained and the farm, which is specialised in this production, to be modernised. One of the sons is interested in taking on the farm, and the wife will gradually transfer her position to him.

With the family and later marital dissociation, and the development of women’s employment, we see the appearance of new forms of relations between work, family and farm, which, however, do not abolish the earlier ones.

Practical effects of the new forms of relation: new adjustments?

To assess the effects of the evolution of the forms of relation on each of the terms, and the forms of adjustment that maintain the work-family-farm system, we look at two examples of the most recent historical forms, namely marital dissociation and the rural enterprise.

Marital dissociation

In Box 2 we give two examples of marital dissociation, one occurring during the family career, and the other corresponding to the situation after the dissociation.

Box 2. Examples of marital dissociation

During the family career

In this case (BC), the man is pluriactive, and is often away from the farm and his family. The woman keeps on the farming activity (dairy and suckler cows) with parents-in-law. But when the parents-in-law begin to flag, when a project for an association with a nephew fails and with her husband often away, the wife feels this system no more liveable and demands a new arrangement. The couple decide that once the compulsory ten years are up (linked to a setting up on the farm with public aid), she will stop working on the farm. The man does not want to give up his off-farm job. They therefore stop dairy production to eliminate milking constraints, the wife gets an off-farm job (shift from permanent to independent) and the husband keeps a suckler herd with the help of a permanent waged employee hired to replace the wife. In this case, the shift in position brings about a change in farm activity, because the dairy activity depended on the involvement of the wife, who withdrew. Hiring a waged worker with a fixed working week of 35 hours is not enough to keep up the dairy production (as the husband is often away from the farm). Here we shift from a “work double activity” to a “separate activity” pattern.

The wife is independent (separate activities)

In these two dairy farms (BB and CP), the wives are not involved in the farming itself (independent or domestic). The husbands want to solve a problem of workload while at the same time seeking greater autonomy from agricultural policies and market chains. As in addition they cannot get extra milk quotas, they decide to develop new activities (switch from manager to developer), which seems at first sight to conflict with the desire to reduce workload. The rationale for this, as explained to us by the farmers, is as follows: take on extra work temporarily to set up a new activity and carry through the process of transformation and commercialisation (bottling and direct sale of wine in one case, veal production, butchery and direct sale in the other), which will increase income and make it possible to hire a waged worker. In this case the shift in position from manager to developer occurs together with a change in the farm activity.

When the wife withdraws after working full-time in the dairy activity, we have seen that maintaining the production system unchanged had not been possible (even, in this case, when a worker was hired). When the wife is not involved, both the operation and the development of the farm are organised on a different basis. Recourse to wage workers becomes a new way to adjust the work-family-farm relations. Agricultural wage labour is not new. In former times farm servants shared the family’s livelihood, while day workers were hired to absorb peaks in labour demand (Lasslet and Wall, 1972). What is new is that this recourse to wage labour is a result of members of the farming family working more and more off the farm, and that it is used to adjust the work-family-farm relation. The different forms of adjustment are not equivalent (Madelrieux et al., 2009b). While the extra income and the financial security provided by the wife’s off-farm job facilitate the setting up and development of the farm (and allow a worker to be hired), and while the wife is freer for the family when she is at home because she does not work or no longer works on the farm, her off-farm occupation ends her role as a regulator on the farm, in particular through her functions of secondment and assistance (Fink, 1991). Wage labour offers less flexibility than a wife on call at all hours (because of the statutory working time of 35 hours) and is more costly than unpaid family work, but the waged worker can be more broadly-skilled than the wife, who often only looked after the animals.

Rural enterprises

The examples shown here concern the evolution of farms towards diversification, as a result of the arrival of the wife on the farm or after the failure of an initial farming project (Box 3).

Box 3. Examples of rural enterprises*Linked to the arrival of the wife on the farm*

In the case of FC, the situation at the start is “separate activities” (he is a manager, she is independent). However, the wife’s off-farm job is unstable. With the birth of the children she wishes to develop a farming project for the couple. She sets up and manages a diversification activity: cheese making and culinary processing with direct sales (markets, fairs, etc.). She does not participate in farm work as such (animals and land). She prefers to contribute jointly to the development of the farm through different activities, rather than pursue an independent occupational career. The new relation is thus a “rural project of couple”. As the workload is greater than before with her waged employment, the couple builds a house on the farm next to the husband’s parents, which brings them closer to the workplace and facilitates childminding.

After the failure of an initial farming project

In the case of SB, the dairy farm is set up outside the traditional family framework (“agricultural project of couple”). Economic difficulties, excessive workload, birth of the first child, and no prospect of obtaining land or quotas cause them to stop dairy production. To try to restart on a liveable system, they jointly decide that the husband will get an off-farm job in a transport company (desire to quit farming and economic necessity) and the wife will rest on the farm to set up a new activity she is very eager to invest in, namely horses (stabling, training and breeding), while keeping on a few cows for the production of suckling calves and to provide an income until the horse activity becomes profitable (economic double activity). In this case, the couple is seldom together and the wife is “always on the go”, as she is often alone to look after the children and the farm. However, in her own words, “it’s hard work, but I feel more secure, because the business is sounder.” She has recourse to voluntary help (family, friends) to assist her both at home and on the farm.

The analysis of Barrère-Maurisson (1992) highlights women’s employment (extra income) then work sharing (with autonomy with regard to employment) as the main evolution in the adjustments of work in families. Our cases suggest that the evolution is marked rather by a shift from individual adjustments (not always by the woman), where only one member of the couple made a shift in activity, the other carrying with the farm, towards inter-individual adjustments, where persons other than the members of the couple can also be involved. In our cases we have seen that the discontinuities in the wives’ careers made it possible to adjust the work of the farm and family life and maintain liveability (individual adjustment by wives, Box 1), but we also have cases where the wives can provide a certain permanent presence on the farm and for the family, and the husband gets the off-farm job (individual adjustment by husbands). We have seen that the wife can withdraw from the farm work for reasons of personal fulfilment, and the farm work is entrusted to a waged worker, in the same way as in the cases of diversification when the wife is not involved (interindividual adjustment with a waged worker, Box 2, cases of BC, BB and CP). Lastly we have seen that after the failure of a first project, of maintaining viability and liveability the two members of the couple can reorganise their activities and their involvement on the farm (interindividual adjustment between the two members of the couple, Box 3, case of SB).

Discussion

We now would like to discuss the results presented, in particular the changes in farming activity linked to the transformations in work-family-farm relations, the utility of the approach adopted to improve liveability of farming systems, and new prospects to gain more insight into the transformations of farm businesses, through integrating more technical aspects of farm operations and practices.

How to improve the liveability of farming systems?

The utility of addressing work-family-farm relations as a research topic is to shed new light on, and gain insight into the evolution of agricultural activities and farming systems in regard to liveability. This approach highlights the roles of family and work (internal drivers) in change, and thus underlines the fact that changes in farming businesses are not merely simple adaptations to changes in agricultural policy or economic context (Darnhofer et al., 2008). We have seen the importance of the positioning of each member of the household in the evolution of farming activity. Shifts in position are also concomitant with changes in farming activity when new activities are set up, in particular

activities of diversification. The setting up of a diversification activity refers to three different situations in our cases: i) involvement of the wife at a particular time (positional discontinuity for the wife); ii) development based on recourse to hired labour and a positional discontinuity for the husband when his wife is not involved on the farm; iii) a new project following the failure of an earlier one. We found the arguments given by Barbieri and Mahoney (2009) concerning the choice of diversification as a strategy to adapt to a changing context, in particular to reduce uncertainty and risk or to provide employment for a member of the family. However, by placing the diversification in the context of the evolution of the farm and the careers of the household members, we also see the chain of events leading to diversification. We thus find that the choice is not always the result of a planned, clearly stated strategy, but is sometimes a move to readjust after an earlier failed farming project, or is a response to the instability of an off-farm job. On the other hand, when a positional discontinuity (here that of the wife) is used to adjust the work on the farm (for example to make up for the death of a parent who worked on the farm) or in the home (for example after the birth of a child), we have not observed any change in the farming activity (at our level of resolution).

To improve liveability it is thus, in our view, essential to take the relations connecting work, family and farm more fully into consideration. Changes will be more readily accepted or implemented on farms if account is taken of the impact they will have on how work is reorganised and how they will affect the relations between work and family. To take better account of these relations could avoid failures, a breaking off liveability just letting hope that people will be able to get over after.

Level of approach and prospects

Our sample is restricted and limited, and would be improved by adding further cases. The positions we have described aimed at being generic categories, but the forms of work-family-farm relations for couples were constructed from the specific cases studied, and we did not find all the possible combinations (pluriactive + domestic, etc.). Beyond, further distinctions must be made in two directions. First, our level of analysis of the transformations is very general, and we did not enter into the detailed functioning of each activity, whereas for the farming activity buildings, equipments and the technical management of the farm can also be leverage to adjust work, in particular in relation to the family (Madelrieux and Dedieu, 2008). For example, in the case of B (couple aged under 40 with a rural project of the couple involving goats with processing and direct sale of products), the combination of activities remains the same. However, to release free time with the children and strike a balance between farm and family for liveability, simplifications were made in the technical management (adoption of single daily milking during the grazing season, grouping and staggering birthing to take a week off during the school holidays, development of fenced enclosures and pens) and wage labour was hired. One future direction for our work might thus be to make a deeper study of activities to determine whether the work and family remain the main drivers of change. Second, given the increasing uncertainties that threaten farming activity (changes in policies, agricultural demographics, societal demands, etc.) and the technical and environmental constraints imposed on farming from outside (from market chains, public planning, etc.), it would be of interest to know to what extent the factors influencing changes are going to take these uncertainties more fully into account in the future (Ondersteijn et al., 2006). We have already detected, in some of the cases studied, the emergence of a desire for greater autonomy from agricultural policies and food sectors.

Conclusion

The changes that have occurred in patterns of work, family structures and farming since the 1950s and 1960s have led to the emergence of new forms of work-family-farm relations that coexist with older forms. In the 1980s agricultural policy-makers believed they could reduce this relation to a couple on a specialised farm (the "family two-worker-unit" model). However, family assistance that goes on despite de-cohabitation, women's fight for the recognition of an agricultural status, economic difficulties and environmental impacts of the specialised models, increasing isolation of farmers in their rural environment and the need for new patterns of solidarity, etc., plainly attest

that farming is still multiform, and that evolutions cannot be explained solely by changes in agricultural policy, but also by different forms of family careers. In this context, where notions of work, family and farm and their relations need to be clarified and detailed, as they are neither uniform nor constant in time, where liveability has to be taken into consideration, we have proposed a way to analyse these configurations, their evolution, and the adjustments in play. With greater autonomy with regard to employment and more desire for personal fulfilment, it is as if work and family were no longer controlled by the needs of the farm, but the contrary (suckling instead of dairy herds for a better quality of life, diversification for a project of a couple and more stable employment, horses for pleasure, etc.). Thus these careers, despite their diversity and their specific features, suggest ever-closer convergence with patterns in other sectors, independent and wage-earning occupations, questioning the “dis-agriculturisation” of families and the “dis-familiarisation” of farms, in other words the reference to the family functioning to understand the transformations of farms and agricultural employment.

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