

les dossiers d'**AGROPOLIS** INTERNATIONAL

*Expertise of the scientific community
in the Languedoc-Roussillon region (France)*



Family farming

Support and *public policy*

This chapter discusses family farming research activities along two main lines: supporting farmers regarding innovations or resource management, and interactions between public policies and local or regional stakeholders.

Eight research units of the Agropolis International platform are involved in these activities. Four of these units devote substantial research to the development of tools and methods to support family farming and their organizations regarding innovation, resource and territorial management.

A first group of case studies presented in this chapter deal with participatory (or action research) interventions that link farmers and local stakeholders in the research process on a relatively diverse range of topics (acceptance of livestock vaccinations, farm changes and management, market access, taking up farming, and pluriactivity support, etc.). Action research in partnership or support initiatives (e.g. using mapping, simulation or modelling tools) generate scientific knowledge for the academic community of course, but also knowledge that farmers or other stakeholders associated with the studies can directly mobilize and use. The aim is to strengthen their decisionmaking or management capacities (markets, sector globalization, climate change, local development strategies). Interventions specifically regarding action research in partnership also address social and organizational change issues, alongside research on technical changes. Moreover, technical innovations are designed in close to real conditions with the participation of farmers and/or local technicians.

A second series of case studies highlight examples of different research positions regarding public policies focused on family farming. Agricultural and/or development-oriented research is conventionally

mobilized by policymakers to generate technical or economic innovations that could contribute to updating the content of public policies and, more recently, to directly participate in fora for public policy debate and formulation. A second area of research concerns the assessment of impacts—especially economic—of policies on target communities (e.g. economic and social evaluation of animal health programmes).

A third approach concerns the analysis of public policy development and implementation. This is, for instance, the case when programmes include the participation of local communities in decisionmaking on the terms of initiatives and projects on territorial management and development or forest resource management. Finally, another approach regarding interactions between public and private stakeholders is to begin by an analysis of standards. The production, application and processes pertaining to the certification of standards (sanitary, commercial and quality) now have increasingly marked impacts on the production and marketing of fruit and vegetables, animal products, wood, as well as various tropical products faced with sustainable development challenges (palm oil, GM seeds, etc.).

Regardless of whether the issue concerns supporting stakeholders or public policies, the time has come for 'participation' in a broad range of ways, and for the contribution of very diverse stakeholders (public and private, agricultural and nonagricultural, local or not) in defining problems and family farming futures. In this new discussion and action setting, the examples in this chapter show that research has been able to develop positions, methods and tools to renew its status and contributions.

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