

European Foundations for Sustainable Agriculture and Food (EFSAF)

Formerly European Foundations for Family Farming (E4F)

Context

Launched in 2014 in the context of the International Year on Family Farming, *EFSAF* has been set up in 2015 as a working group, enabling a potentially lasting collaborative framework of European foundations considering family farming, small-scale agriculture and agro-ecological practices to be vital to:

- the sustainability and health of our food systems
- the sustainable production of high-quality food
- the promotion of good nutrition and public health
- the maintenance and development of dynamic economic activities in rural areas and
- the pursuit of a more integrated and inclusive approach to urban and rural development that can responsibly manage the ecological and social resources upon which our food systems and cultural identities depend.

In 2014, the working group commissioned a survey on small-scale farming supported by (mainly) European foundations: “Foundations and Family Farming: Exploratory Study on Strategies, Operational Practices and Learning”, [available online](#).

In the follow up, it has renamed itself European Foundations for Sustainable Agriculture and Food (EFSAF), with the aim to encourage scaling-up successes, the diffusion of innovations and to allow field initiatives and research to influence the policy level.

Objectives and principles

With small-scale agriculture, family farming and agro-ecological practices in mind as priorities, EFSAF members subscribe to the following principles which already unite philanthropies under the Global Alliance for the Future of Food ([GAFF](#)):

- **Renewability:** Address the integrity of natural and social resources that are the foundation of a healthy planet and future generations in the face of changing global and local demands.
- **Resilience:** Support regenerative, durable, and economically adaptive systems in the face of a changing planet.
- **Equity:** Promote sustainable livelihoods and access to nutritious and just food systems.
- **Diversity:** Value our rich and diverse agricultural, ecological, and cultural heritage.

- **Healthfulness:** Advance the health and well-being of people, the environment, and the societies that depend on both.
- **Interconnectedness:** Understand the implications of the interdependence of food.

Similar to the Global Alliance for the Future of Food, EFSAF members seek to address the power imbalances that reinforce the status quo. This includes pursuing increased transparency, for example through the proper accounting of externalities and the appropriate valuation of public goods. EFSAF members also seek to ensure a fuller participation of citizens and farmers in the social construction of food systems – including through education and training.

Working Methodology

EFSAF operates in an ongoing process based on members' needs and expectations aiming at:

- **Learning:** Enabling foundations to exchange information and learn from one another on good practices and funding strategies. Facilitating networking among funders and partners to identify synergies. This includes co-working with other collaboratives and networks of foundations within the European Foundation Centre or globally, such as the Global Alliance for the Future of Food. Information sharing and learning will be done through an annual conference, regular webinars and online-meetings, or research projects.
- **Collaborating:** Facilitating networking among funders and partners to identify synergies and concrete collaboration as to maximize impact and long-term success. This will be done through thematic sub-groups (when needed) working especially via evidence based learning as well as by linking with collaboratives or networks of funders working on food, agriculture and agro-ecological practices.
- **Strategic Outreach:** Showcasing and circulating successful projects, innovative solutions, and evidence-based research to influence policy and encourage scaling up. This will be done through engaging in a regular dialogue with relevant actors from EU and international institutions, during bilateral meetings and the annual conference, as well as producing strategic information materials to share with institutions and raise awareness.

EFSAF works as a whole on the two thematic priorities outlined below. When deemed necessary, one lead per topic will be identified as a focal point to centralise the information, engage with external actors, etc. Any foundation is welcome to contribute to the process. Consultation with external experts will be valorised to ensure credibility and consistency.

Regular meetings and/or teleconference will be organised to discuss in common the thematic priorities: what are interesting developments, what can EFSAF share, who it should engage with, etc.

Thematic Priorities 2015-2016

For the years 2015-2016, EFSAF has chosen to focus its work on two key topics: Land issues and sustainable food systems. Both topics are featured in policy discussions at the European and international level. Our foundations seek to identify opportunities to get engaged on the global agenda by sharing or collectively further develop concrete experiences and good practices.

EFSAF's objectives and desired outcomes per topic are outlined below:

1) Land Issues

Challenges

Land is a fundamental condition to sustain the livelihoods of a large proportion of the rural population. It is a source of food, shelter, income and social identity. However, for many of the world's rural people in developing

countries, **access** is becoming more complicated than ever. Pressure on land is increasing as a result of a rising world population, the expansion of urban areas, climate change, declining fertility and the need for global food and fuel security.

On the other hand, the industrialization of agriculture – often called the ‘green revolution’ – during the second part of the 20th century was mainly designed following the practices of industrial optimization. The target was to increase both productivity of workers and capital through the specialization of workers and the simplification of work. This policy has been successful to increase food production but reduced the share of farmers in the population. Last but not least, the negative effects of industrialised agriculture are mounting.

These changes have resulted in a series of consequences:

- Small, family farmers impacted by the competition on world markets with better-equipped and often highly subsidised farmers with technological capacity increasing labour productivity.
- Access to land increasingly difficult for large proportion of peasants in many regions of the world, closely linked with the phenomenon of land-grabbing.
- Development of diverse forms of corporate agriculture instead of peasant family farming resulting in a loss of traditional knowledge and cultural diversity.
- Difficult access to finance to own land and develop capacity to exploit it.
- High environmental costs, such as land degradation, high greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, intense irrigation, pollutions of water systems and others, with impacts to health and society.

Desired Outcomes and Good Practices

Land and natural resources (like labour and money) unduly became goods like others. We need to recognize their indebtedness into society. We need to put an end to the “market society”, but that doesn’t mean a society without any markets! - Polanyi, 1944

Foundations are looking for ways to address the unfair distribution of land and resources and promote small-scale agricultural practices that respect the environment and biodiversity. To achieve this, a few ideas could be explored:

- A more fair and inclusive framework for property rights (land and natural resources): In place of absolute property rights, recognition of bundles of rights, and of different types of rights holders - individual and collective.
- Legal responsibility and accountability of transnational corporations.
- Public policies to discourage massive land appropriation and concentration of resources/ownership.

Opportunities for Foundations – Further engagement

While some of the desired outcomes stated above are difficult to reach and cannot be attained without a strong political will, philanthropic actors can create some positive conditions to help change to happen from the bottom up. For example, this includes:

- Compiling and disseminating collections of experiences.
- Fostering exchanges between actors from different countries and cultures; building alliances among people affected by the consequences of current phenomena and with urban sectors.
- Supporting the World Forum on Access to Land.
- Enabling the installation of new farms with young farmers, in coordination with neighbouring communities (for example: Fondation Terre de Liens).
- Supporting the launch and development of small farms hold by young farmers, promoting the use of renewable energies, technological and IT innovation, fostering farmers’ networks and cooperation.
- Supporting national and local governments to run feasibility studies and design of new policies on land issues in order to promote new forms of land property and to foster the growth of land specifically devoted to agriculture activities
- Funding local projects

2) Sustainable Food Systems

Challenges

Since 2007, and for the first time in human history, there are now more people living in towns and cities than in rural areas. This proportion is set to grow rapidly, with current estimates putting 70 per cent of the world's population in cities by 2050. This creates a particular challenge to food security and food systems, which have tended to rely more and more on a global food economy and less and less on their regions and rural hinterlands. The displacement of local food economies by global commodity agriculture brings a raft of problems that decrease the resilience of urban food security, damage the environment, and undermine small local producers.

Foundations are concerned by these negative effects and believe that a systemic change is required to address the following issues:

- Increased exposure to price volatility in international markets including those driven by climate change effects, or from external risks, for example oil price rises.
- Reductions in the availability of healthy, fresh produce – particularly for the poor – contributing to costly public health crises e.g. obesity.
- Undermining of family farming and smallholder agriculture.
- Increased and chaotic urban migration due to lack of local livelihood opportunities in rural areas creating a major challenge to the future of family farming and smallholder agriculture.
- Increased disjunction between rural and urban domains.
- Degradation/homogenization of local cultures; including loss of cultural identity and loss of skills in food production – cooking, farming.
- Degradation of agro biodiversity, soils, forests and water pollution etc.
- Lack of knowledge and awareness among citizens about food, its environmental and health impact and loss of social function of food.

Desired Outcomes and Good Practices

“Sustainable Diets are those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy; while optimizing natural and human resources.” - FAO and Biodiversity International (2011)

As part of the work of *EFSAF*, the group of foundations will exchange and discuss to identify concrete experiences (whether funded by them or not) that have proven successful in shifting the balance towards more sustainable and local food systems, for example:

- Innovations in urban agriculture, improved civic engagement and education in food.
- Sustainable local food procurement by public institutions, and private businesses.
- Planning regulations that enhance local food systems e.g. infrastructure development and the planning of productive green space.
- Better/ more transparent information about local food systems as well as economic and sociological evidence to demonstrate the advantages of local food production (for example: true cost accounting).

Opportunities for Foundations – Further engagement

The next two years presents a particular window of opportunity to affect the future direction of food systems development within the context of sustainable urbanization and the need to support smallholder agriculture and family farming. This period will see the articulation of Sustainable Development Goals; a new framework for disaster risk reduction; a new global agreement on climate change, and continuing global discussions on food security. The period will culminate with the Habitat III meetings in 2016, which represent a once-in-a-generation opportunity to help shape the future for human settlements.

- Support good policies at local level (i.e. City Food Policies), encourage knowledge exchange around the development of city regional food systems and the support systems and collaborations that can assist those wishing to effect changes and leverage political support
- Fund local projects
- Encourage scaling-up and advocate for local food systems at national, regional and global levels; particularly in the context of the international discussions on sustainable urbanization and the Post 2015 agenda. This advocacy should be evidence-based and focus on the benefits of local food systems, the blockages that prevent their progressive evolution and the steps that could be taken
- Enable research on issues that are not sufficiently covered. An example is the **food processing** stage: sustainable processing needs to be more developed, and strategic connections need to be made between the private sector and industry and research.

Timeline 2015

- The March-May: Initial briefings to establish a common understanding of the current state of play, challenges and opportunities. Identification of subtopics.
- May: First meeting (at EFC AGA in Milan) to discuss what is needed, from whom, etc. + follow-up teleconference or webmeeting.
- June-July-August: Session at EDD2015 in Brussels on city-region food systems; identification of concrete experiences to share & encourage scaling-up; design of the content for the fall conference.
- September: Pre-conference meeting
- October (13-14): Annual meeting of foundations and public conference in Milan.
- November-December: Stock-taking and follow-up; design of survey for next collaboration projects.

Participation Rules

EFSAF is open to foundations whose vision about the future of agriculture and food systems is aligned.

All participants adhere to the EFSAF terms of reference.

ESFAF Steering Group members (June 2015)

Compagnia di San Paolo

Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer pour le progrès de l'Homme

Fondation Daniel & Nina Carasso

Fondation de France (chair)

Fondazione Cariplo

The Prince of Wales Charitable Foundation