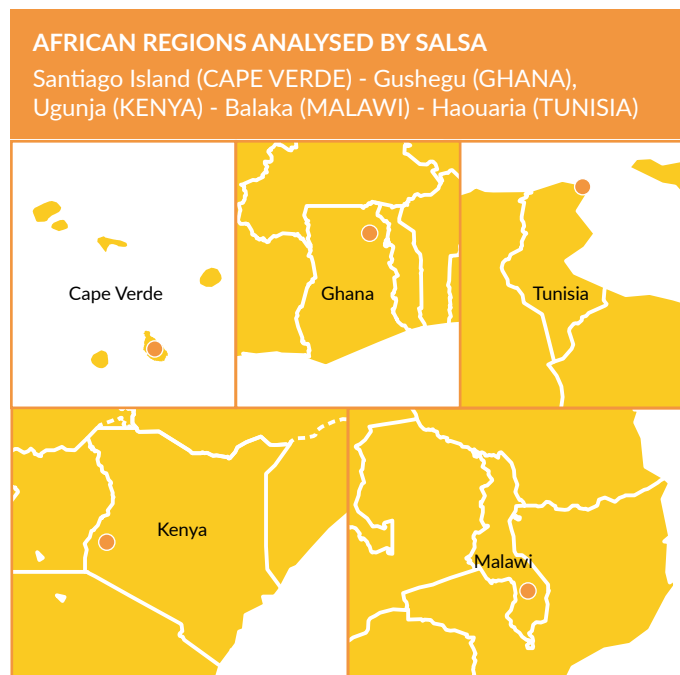


The main challenge for African food systems in the future will be to provide food for a rapidly growing population with changing diets and food preferences. Whilst the population of Europe is decreasing, with consumers demanding food that is produced in an environmentally and socially responsible way, Africa's population will more than double between 2020 and 2050, with food demand increasing even more as a result of dietary changes.



The project focused on small farms with **up to 5 hectares of land** and an economic size of **up to 8 Economic Size Units** (equivalent to €9,600 of standard gross margin). The SALSA researchers also took account of the specific relationship between small farms and the associated farming family/ household, notably the importance of **self-provisioning**.

In each region investigated by SALSA a **food system study** of two to four selected products was conducted. By identifying the characteristics of each **regional food system** for a range of **selected key products** the SALSA project: a) highlighted the **different ways** that small farms and small food businesses can contribute to **food provision, food availability** and **food access** (the three key elements of FNS) in different food regional systems, and; b) developed better understanding of the overall functioning of these food systems.

SALSA is an EU Horizon 2020 project that set out to assess the current and future role of **small farms and related small food businesses** (suppliers, processors, distributors) in achieving sustainable Food and Nutrition Security (FNS). One important part of the project was identifying the necessary **enabling conditions** for small farms to meet the growing demand for food in an increasingly populated and resource-constrained world.

SALSA studied small farms in **30 reference regions in 20 countries** - 25 regions (at the so-called NUTS3 administrative level) in Europe and 5 regions in Africa. In Africa, these reference regions were equivalent to a district (Ghana and Malawi), sub-county (Kenya), commune (Tunisia) or island (Cape Verde).

WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF SMALL FARMS IN AFRICA?

Africa has the world's **fastest growing population** in the 21st century. It is projected to reach 2.5 billion in 2050 with the majority of the population estimated to remain rural until the 2040s. Although no consolidated data exist for all countries in Africa about the number of farms, FAO estimates that 60 million agricultural holdings provide labour for 220 million agricultural workers.

Small farms in Africa are estimated to undertake more than **70% of the agricultural activities on the continent**, thereby helping ensure food, employment and rural livelihoods. Available data however indicate that there remain **severe challenges** related to food insecurity and nutrition. Producing enough food in Africa in an environmentally and socially sustainable

manner will therefore require **sustainable increases in productivity** for all farm types.

According to the EU Task Force on Rural Africa (2019), 52% of African farmers cultivate less than 1 hectare of land and 76% have less than 2 hectares. These farmers are normally family farmers producing food for home consumption and sale. Farmers managing small farms often struggle to access markets and normally consume a high proportion of their produce – issues that make the African regions analysed by the SALSA project **similar to those studied in Eastern Europe**.



WHO ARE THE SMALL FARMS IN SALSA'S AFRICAN REGIONS?

In order to address the great variety of contexts in which small farms were found in the regions studied, SALSA produced a **novel typology of small farms** for Europe and Africa.

It is based on three main distinguishing characteristics: 1) the **degree of orientation to the market**; 2) the **use of certification**, and; 3) the **degree of reliance on cooperatives**. These variables permit differentiation between the level of farm income generated by agricultural activities thereby highlighting differences between farms who seem to struggle and may be close to poverty, from those that are wealthier, specialised, organised in cooperatives, and integrated to the market in diverse ways.

In the African reference regions studied by SALSA, the most common small farm types were 'Part-time' and 'Conventional Strugglers'. Both types **consume a large proportion of what they produce** leaving only a smaller percentage for sale to proximity consumers, included regional markets or wholesalers. For this reason, they are **less market integrated** than the other three types of small farms identified by SALSA. Furthermore, processors, small retailers and cooperatives are rarely among the sales points that small farms access. The **more specialised and export-oriented** the food system is, the **smaller the proportion** of small farm produce that is consumed within the household.

SALSA typology of small farms



1. Part-time farms



2. Conventional strugglers



3. Conventional entrepreneurs



4. Business specialised



5. Business multifunctional

Most representative types in Africa

Farming appears to be a **secondary** activity that supplements other sources of income, by generally young farmers, who started farming as their own option; a high proportion of production stays in the household

Second poorest cluster, and oldest; farming is rooted in tradition; agriculture accounts for a **high proportion of income**; high household self-consumption

Relatively wealthy, relatively old and established in farming; rely on **family labour**; access markets through cooperatives

Wealthiest group, relatively old and established in farming; **extensive use of hired labour**; access to markets through cooperatives, invest in certification

Wealthy, relatively young and new to farming; extensive use of **hired labour**; **diverse portfolio of buyers**

The main distinguishing characteristics between 'Part-time' and 'Conventional Strugglers' are the fact that the former are younger and have other sources of income besides farming. 'Conventional Strugglers' are older, more traditional and have the lowest incomes out of all five types. They were found in many of the regions studied by the SALSA project but are **most prevalent** in the regions of Africa and Eastern Europe.

HOW DO SMALL FARMERS IN SALSA'S AFRICAN REGIONS CONTRIBUTE TO REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS?

In order to understand the different contributions of small farms to regional food systems, the SALSA project also developed a **typology of regional food systems** for Europe and Africa. This is based on the percentage of small farms' produce to food systems, as well as the percentage of food that is consumed within the region or exported.

The three types of food systems resulting are: 1) '**regional**' (where a significant proportion is consumed locally); 2) '**export-oriented**' (where a significant proportion exported outside of the region), and; 3) '**balanced**' (between the above). The results of this analysis reveal that in the African Reference Regions studied by SALSA **small farms contribute**

significantly to the regional food system, producing 60-100% of the total regional production for the key products studied.

In 15 (89%) of the 17 African food product food systems studied, the **commodity produced was also consumed in the region** thereby contributing substantially to regional food availability. Only in two food systems (from Gushegu district in Ghana) the product is exported outside of the region, indicating **more balance** between regional consumption and greater market integration.

WHAT ARE THE NEEDS AND ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR SMALL FARMS IN SALSA'S AFRICAN REGIONS?

Because of the high proportion of small farmer types with weaker market integration in Africa, policy makers seeking to develop appropriate interventions for them should firstly assess the **motivations** and **level of policy responsiveness** of the specific types of farmer they aim to support. This is particularly true for the 'Conventional Strugglers' type of farmers, who seem to be older, while **part-time farmers** might be more **responsive to the diversification of rural businesses** and the **provision of rural services** that can help them remain in rural areas.



Whilst recognising that informal markets will continue to be an important outlet for small farms, one very **important condition for increasing/strengthening the integration** of small farms into local, regional and export markets is the development and promotion of appropriate food safety standards. The uptake of such standards also requires **training and other forms of support** (e.g. small-scale investment funds) in order to assist farmers with the adoption of standards and the creation of the necessary production/processing facilities.

Cooperatives were identified as an important structure in the regional food systems studied by SALSA and allow small farms to **aggregate their produce and overcome their structural limitations** in terms of size. More attention needs to be paid to **successful models of small farm aggregation** in order to increase/strengthen their integration with national, macro-regional and continental trade networks.

An analysis of the structure of national agricultural programmes in the African countries studied by SALSA indicates that national governments may want to consider focusing on softer measures for supporting market integration, such as the **integrated packages of support for short food supply chains** that is available to farmers and associated food businesses in the European Union. This recommendation is also in line with the conclusions of the report of the EU's Task Force on Rural Africa, which encourages **more urban-rural linkages** as part of a territorial approach to food systems.

In addition to the above recommendations, stakeholders from **multiple levels of governance** in the African regions studied by SALSA **prioritized 5 areas of needs** of small farmers and suggested



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some **general common solutions** that could help address those needs.

Due to the different policy domains governing each country, as well as international cooperation arrangements, the recommendations related to these solutions refer to **generic types of good practices** from each country and leave it to decision makers to consider how their own **specific national policy context** could support these measures.

1) Youth engagement in agriculture

Engaging young people in agriculture is an important priority for the continuity of rural communities, however it is evident that a **poor match exists between youth education and the practical needs** of the farming sector. Furthermore, numerous other specific barriers prevent young people from becoming successful farmers, including:

- difficulty in accessing land and credit;
- limited opportunities for young people to participate in policy design, and;
- lack of attractive opportunities, such as the use of modern technology in farming or support for innovative agriculture.

Agriculture is simply not promoted to young people as a skilled and potentially lucrative enterprise!

Improvements are needed in particular in relation to policy development, technology transfer and innovation. Young people rarely have the opportunity to be involved in the design of agricultural policies that affect them resulting in policies that **do not respond** to their needs. Rural youth organisations should ideally be **engaged with the design** of new agricultural programmes.

Young people tend to be attracted to technical and social innovation in agriculture, but there is not enough support for youth innovation and entrepreneurship. Agricultural research especially does not address the needs and interests of young farmers.

More funding is needed in order to support youth innovation and entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector in order to identify and make use of the **business opportunities for small farmers**, particularly

in linking urban and rural areas. Furthermore, innovation stemming out of youth agri-entrepreneurship should be re-incorporated into local food systems to assure the success of such businesses on the local market.

A few **examples of the favourable policies and programmes** noted by stakeholders from the African regions studied by SALSA are described below.

- In **Kenya**, there are a number of innovative **initiatives and policies supporting youths** (training, apprenticeships, funding, etc.), many of which aim to make farming more attractive to young people and to develop their practical/business skills through appropriate training and experiences (e.g. via incubation centres);
- **The Kenyan National Youth Development Policy (2018)** aims to empower young people to productively contribute to sustainable development, including by “transforming agriculture and agri-business to make it attractive to the youth”. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) internships are available for young people in Kenya and via Agricultural Colleges and Farm Institutes in Ghana, and;
- In **Ghana** the **National Youth Council** is responsible for promoting youth issues, but has not been able to engage the whole youth population. There are also **youth programmes in agriculture**, but mainly run by NGOs (e.g. UWEZO fund, Kenya; Planting for Food and Jobs in Ghana).

2) Access to affordable credit

Small farms in SALSA's African regions face difficulties in accessing **appropriate and affordable agricultural credit** for agricultural inputs, tools, machinery and other investments. Existing financial institutions do not normally prioritise the credit needs of small farms. They also **do not have access** to crop insurance in case of crop failure, despite being highly vulnerable to climate change induced risks.



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In most of African countries studied by SALSA, the **removal of social barriers** to accessing credit, such as age and gender, would help small farms greatly. ICT and mobile-enabled credit schemes have been noted by SALSA's stakeholders from African regions as having had a positive effect for small farmers in rural areas – even though there are also **concerns about them contributing to indebtedness**.

Several SALSA African countries (**Ghana, Malawi and Tunisia**), offer **input subsidies**. However, such programmes encourage high external input farming practices rather than support agro-ecology and sustainable intensification. Consequently, there is increasing concern about their negative environmental impacts. Decisions about this type of support should therefore be **carefully reviewed** taking account of available evidence and independently from any political motivations.

3) Natural resources and climate

Three **priority interventions** were identified by SALSA stakeholders regarding natural resources and climate in Africa:

- Agricultural extension services are paramount for educating farmers and local government about climate change risks and adaptation strategies;
- Micro-irrigation systems can help farmers overcome drought, and;
- Special programmes are required to reduce the felling of trees for firewood.

In both Ghana and Kenya important **legal changes now enable women to own and inherit land**. In the long term, this is believed to support sustainable land management practices.

Kenya has also established a number of other successful programmes and interventions that supported sustainable natural resource management and climate change adaptation, such as the **devolved climate finance system**. Other successful examples include the introduction of **climate smart agriculture**, conservation agriculture and agroforestry in Ghana.

Despite many successful examples of well-targeted and effective interventions there is **much scope for improvement**. Three main issues to address are:

- General shortage of funding for natural resource management and climate change;
- Dependency on donor-funded or non-state actor supported projects and programmes with limited coverage and time scale, and;
- Lack of evidence-based programme design.

SALSA stakeholders in Kenya specifically identified that some policies and programmes tackling sustainable natural resource management and conservation agriculture are **not sufficiently considering the needs of small farms**, such as their labour practices. A more detailed understanding of the economics of small farms through **facilitated needs assessment workshops**, as well as more inclusion of small farmer organizations in programme design is needed in order to ensure **better targeting and effectiveness** of interventions.

As most programmes addressing natural resource management and climate change are funded by sources from outside Kenya (notably international development agencies, bilateral donors and NGOs) there is a risk of discontinuity. Whilst these programmes have often established successful pilots, they have **generally struggled to scale-up their success** by covering larger geographic areas/ more farms and to achieve sustainability by becoming self-supporting. Such programmes **need to build in 'exit strategies'** and ensure that government agencies have the financial and technical capacity, as well as political will, to implement these strategies.

4) Products, Markets and Marketing

Priority policy interventions identified by SALSA stakeholders in Africa were to develop a) **processing and storage facilities** for adding value to produce from small farms, and b) more **structured demand systems** (based e.g. on multi-stakeholder platforms and price control systems), especially for younger, more entrepreneurial farmers.

A positive development in recent years has been the **increased availability of market information** (depending on national context) through various media channels. These initiatives have good impact by helping farmers **better understand their market positioning** and should be maintained and enhanced.

Other relevant issues noted by stakeholders from the African regions studied by SALSA are:

- Many agricultural inputs that small farmers buy in Kenya are counterfeit. The development and implementation of **legislation for the regulation/ control of fertiliser and pesticide products** should be a high priority for the government.
- Stakeholders from Kenya and Malawi reported the good level of household food consumption achieved by many small farmers, but noted that **low productivity was preventing integration into regional markets**. Policy makers are urged to pay greater attention to the limitations on small farm productivity. The **increased availability of good quality agricultural inputs** (mentioned above) would help greatly, especially if also accompanied by more Agricultural Extension Officers to **promote the efficient use of these inputs**.
- The **lack of functional cooperatives** in some regions and for some crops was highlighted for Kenya and Malawi. This is highly context specific, but where the situation exists it is a **major obstacle** to the entry of small farms into regional and export markets. In many cases, regulations already exist for supporting the development of collective forms of small farmer organization, but they are **not properly implemented** at local/ regional level.

Better understanding is also needed about a) the numerous reasons why established cooperatives stop functioning effectively and b) what actions can be taken to avoid this. For example, it is suggested that **specific incentives are needed** to

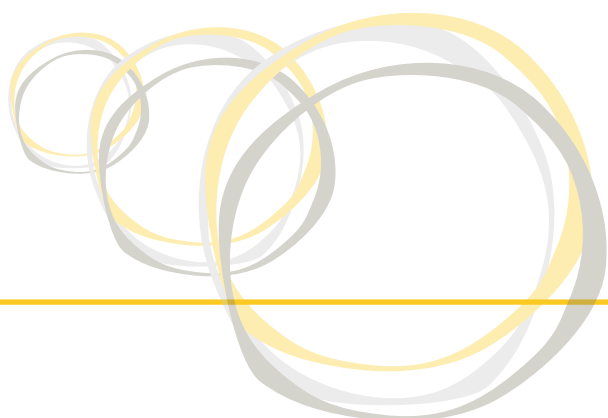
ensure the transition of younger, more entrepreneurial farmers into the leadership of cooperatives.

- Although it was noted that many small farms benefit from more liberalised markets with a broad choice and the high demand for produce from small farmers (for food, but especially for cash crops such as tea, coffee, cocoa), some stakeholders mentioned that there should be **more structured markets that would allow for contract farming**. This would help provide more predictability and reduce risks for small farms. A better understanding of who the regional 'aggregators' are and the roles they play in each district would also benefit small farms.

5) Better Infrastructure and Connectivity

In terms of improving connectivity and infrastructure, the priority policy interventions identified were:

- The undertaking of **proper needs assessments** of rural areas. Basic issues such as reliable access to low cost electricity must not be overlooked;
- Construction and maintenance of **good quality rural roads** to improve access to and connectivity with markets;
- Provision of **faster, more stable and affordable mobile phone and internet connections**. Good mobile phone coverage in rural areas enables agricultural messages sent to farmers through SMS and voice in local languages. This can usefully supplement local FM radio and TV stations broadcasting market information for farmers in local languages;
- Appropriate **irrigation infrastructure**. Large-scale infrastructure is often government-run and can be poorly maintained because of challenges at the procurement stage. Smaller irrigation schemes, in addition to the large ones, are important for small farms.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EU-AFR DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION PROGRAMS

Equitable partnerships

Future research programs funded under Horizon Europe should seek to include a balanced representation of EU and AFR partners, in order to assure that both sides can have similar levels of responsibilities in all aspects of the project (including in particular research design).

Continue supporting inter-continental research

The SALSA project experience demonstrates that agricultural and food systems research across continents, with research sites in both Europe and Africa, can result in valuable insights and learning in both directions. Lessons from Europe are valuable to African partners, as their countries are developing rapidly. An understanding of strengths and weaknesses of European agricultural policies (and their impacts on small farms) can improve decision making. European partners can learn from Africa about informal and community-based approaches to support food and nutrition security. Hence funding such trans-continental research through equitable research partnerships should be a priority.

Supporting sub-regional research and development cooperation

SALSA partners and stakeholders emphasised the need for support to language-based cooperation initiatives for research and innovation (e.g. Portuguese, French or English-speaking countries in Africa), as well as regional initiatives across continents (e.g. Southern Europe and Northern Africa). Thematic platforms/fora developed along these lines could help boost networking among African and European researchers.

Flexibility of grant agreements

More flexibility in the terms and conditions of the grant agreements under the Horizon 2020 program, to take into account differences in organisational and legal frameworks in partner countries, would facilitate the application of the same methodology in different contexts and reduce transaction costs in cross-continental partnerships.

Finally, further reconciling the research topics in which AFR research partners are included with the 'Roadmap towards a jointly funded EU-AFR Research and Innovation Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture' could help ensure further coherence of research work for all partners involved.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS SUPPORTING THEIR AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD SECURITY POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

Explicitly acknowledge the diversity of small farms and food businesses in agricultural and food policies

Whilst the CAADP process enables countries to adapt CAADP principles to national contexts, the agricultural and food policies of most African countries do not systematically differentiate between different farm types. But the needs (in terms of services and support actions) of farms of different sizes and market integration are different, and this should be reflected in all policies and interventions. An evidence-based national typology of farms could be useful for this.

Acknowledge that part time farming can be a viable option that requires specific support

Whilst part-time farming is a reality for small-scale farms both in Africa and Europe, there is no or limited acknowledgement of this strategy and virtually no targeted support. Donor frameworks such as DFID's Conceptual Framework on Agriculture envisage just three options for farmers: 'Stepping up' (agricultural intensification and market integration), 'Stepping out' (leaving agriculture for non-farm employment) or 'Hanging in' (unsustainable coping strategy). However, supporting small-scale part-time farming for its contribution to local and regional food and nutrition security, alongside the development of rural non-farm employment, may be a valid strategy deserving specific targeted support to small farms.



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