



## Extended farm family arrangements: What statistics do not say about agricultural structure

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## Abstract

The structural transformations that have taken place in the agriculture of developed countries over the last decades have run parallel to important sociological changes within the farm families. These patterns of farm change involve the adoption of complex and unconventional organizational forms by family farms. This paper focuses on the spreading of farms jointly managed, either formally or informally, by several kin households. Extensive fieldwork was carried out in a study area of intensive horticulture in Spain. The results are discussed drawing connections with the French literature on farm change and family farming.

**Mots-clés: farm structures, family farming, farm arrangements, farm partnerships.**

## 1. Introduction

Agriculture in developed countries is undergoing dramatic transformations. Statistical data show that the process of farm adjustment have progressed in Western countries over the last decades, with a generalized drop in the number of farms and an increase in the average size of the remaining ones (Blandford and Hill, 2006). Moreover, large-scale farms control a growing share of land, agricultural production and employment (Arnalte et al., 2013; Tosstorff and Martins, 2011; Hoppe et al. 2008).

This dynamics of concentration in farm structures at the macro-level results from the aggregation of individual trajectories of the production units. Whereas many small-scale farms become marginalized under market pressures and eventually disappear, other holdings are capable of embarking in trajectories of growth, capitalization and intensification and succeed in the field of mass production. On that account, commentators have underlined the importance of a better understanding of the structural change at the farm level (Moreno-Pérez et al. 2011; Poppe et al., 2007).

It is noteworthy that structural transformations are taking place against the backdrop of the domain, even in developed countries, of family-based farms (Brookfield and Parsons, 2007; Lobley et al., 2012). The identification of the explanatory factors of the prevalence of such holdings compared to purely corporate ones has been a central issue in the literature on the political economy of agriculture for decades. Scholars have conceived excellent theoretical contributions in this field, in which the capacity of *adaptation*, *flexibility* and even *permeability* of family farms to "capitalist" forms of production was highlighted (see eg. the celebrated review by Gasson et al., 1988).

In this context of continuous transformations, French scholars early pointed out important sociological changes within agrarian families such as the rupture of the group of family labour (Blanc, 1987), due to the fact that the spouse and children of the farm holder were increasingly prone to follow their own professional trajectories and less and less involved in farm work. Because of this (and also thanks to the adoption of labour-saving technology in extensive agricultural systems) family farms involving only one member of the family are gaining importance<sup>1</sup>. This trend

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<sup>1</sup> Evidence on these transformations was later found also by Spanish scholars (see, for example, Arnalte, 1997 and Gómez-Benito and González, 2002).

towards ‘individualisation’ has been corroborated by recent academic works in France (Nicourt, 2013). In the meantime – and partly as a result of this, salaried workforce progressively gains relative weight with respect to overall farm labour (Arnalte et al., 2013; Cahuzac and Détang-Dessendre, 2011, Laurent, 2013).

Alongside with these patterns of change, unconventional forms of organisation of the farm families are emerging and gaining importance in Western countries. For instance, evidence has been found in several OECD countries on holdings jointly managed by several families (residing in different dwellings) joined by a collateral or intergenerational relationship, the issue that concerns us here.

Within this framework, **this paper aims at contributing to the debate on the new “governance structures” that are arising just at the interplay between the family and the farm** in developed countries, upon the base of a Spanish case study. We will keep a comparative approach with France throughout this work, that will revolve around three main topics:

- i) The analysis, in aggregate terms, of the recent evolvement of agricultural structures both in Spain and in France.
- ii) The analysis of the spreading, nature and rationale of unconventional, ‘multifamily farms’ in a study zone of intensive horticulture in the Mediterranean coast of Spain. The discussion of the assembly of these organizational forms in the traditional conceptions of family farming will be informed by the recent developments made by literature in this field.
- iii) The overlap of the ‘real’ configuration of multifamily farms – the structure with which the farm businesses actually operate- with their legal status.

This paper structures as follows. In the next section, light will be shed on some patterns of change observed in Spanish and French agriculture over the last decades, as revealed by the national statistical sources of both countries. Emphasis will be made on the major changes underway in farm labour and legal status, as well as in remarkable trends of concentration and specialization. Later, in section 3, some outstanding developments in the recent academic debate on family farming will be discussed, paying special attention to French scholars. Section 4 will tackle the study case performed in Spain and finally we will draw conclusions in section 5.

## **2. Patterns of agricultural change in Spain and France: an overall picture**

The major patterns of agricultural change in France and Spain in recent times are similar, to a large degree, to those exhibited by many other Western European countries.

In the case of Spain, the last Agricultural Census performed by INE registers 990,000 agricultural holdings in 2009, with an average surface of 24.5 hectares (notably higher than other Mediterranean countries as Greece (7.2 ha), Portugal (12 ha) or Italy (7.9 ha), according to EUROSTAT), although great polarization hides behind this piece of data<sup>2</sup>. Spanish agriculture has been immerse in a strong process of agricultural adjustment over the late XX – early XXI century. The number of farms decreased in 23% between 1999 and 2009 and the average surface of the remainder underwent a 25% increase<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Half of the farms in Spain are smaller than 5 hectares, a quarter ranks between 5 and 20 hectares, and only 5% exceeds 100 has.

<sup>3</sup> Farm adjustment was also intense in the 1990s: between 1989 and 1999, the number of holdings dropped in 22% and the average size increased in 36%. Comparisons between these two periods should be made with caution, since farm data are obtained from different universes of reference (see Arnalte et al. 2013).

The evolution of Spanish agriculture is configuring a set of large farms in continuous expansion that lead the most relevant transformations of this sector – a sort of “hard core” of Spanish agriculture (Arnalte et al., 2008). According to Farm Structure Surveys<sup>4</sup>, farms beyond 40 Economic Size Units (ESU) of Standard Gross Margin – an operative threshold used in some works (Moreno-Pérez, 2013, Arnalte et al., 2013) only accounted for 11% of all the holdings, but managed 49% the Utilized Agricultural Area (UAA) and 63% of the agricultural output. In addition, meanwhile the number of holdings below this threshold falls, farms beyond 40 ESU have gained importance both in absolute terms (from 58,000 to 117,000 farms between 1997 and 2007) and in relative terms (from 5% to 11% of all the holdings in the same period).

It is important to remark that the bulk of farms incorporating to this segment were specialized in intensive agricultural orientations (horticulture, fruit and citrus fruit, specialized livestock) or on traditional permanent crops which have strongly intensified in the recent past such as olive trees and vines (Cots-Folch et al., 2009; Gallardo and Ceña, 2006). Therefore, whereas structural concentration in Spain during the 1990s fitted in well with the ‘classic’ model of agricultural adjustment – i.e. territorial expansion combined with mechanization, in the search of economies of scale, it appears to have turned to a more intensive-like pattern in recent times (Moreno-Pérez, 2013). Intensification in vines and olive trees has taken the form of mechanization and increase in irrigation. Commentators also point to changes in the spatial patterns of production: vines have expanded and modernized in areas of good agro-climatic conditions and regressed in low-productivity areas, where they are abandoned many times<sup>5</sup> (Moreno-Pérez, 2013).

In another vein, according to 2009 Agricultural Census, natural persons (ie. unincorporated farmers) hold an overwhelming 94% of farms in Spain (80% of which were also managed by the holder him/herself). Only the remaining 60,000 holdings are constituted as legal entities, but, as they concentrate in the upper dimensions of size, they gather 30% of the UAA in Spain.

Regarding farm labour, in three quarters of the farms all the work is carried out by the farm family. However, many of these “purely family farms” with no salaried workers are small-scaled (half of them do not reach 4,000 € of Standard Gross Output) and, arguably, they are held by part-time or retired farmers. Importantly, as we ascend in economic size, only farm holders increase significantly their dedication to the farm – the bulk of the remaining labour being performed by salaried workers rather than by the rest of the family<sup>6</sup>. This replacement of family with salaried labour is one of the reasons why the latter has continuously increased its relative weight in Spanish agriculture, to represent a notable 37% of all the Annual Work Units (AWU) in 2009, according to the Census<sup>7</sup>.

As for France, 510,000 holdings were registered in the last Agricultural Census with an average size of 53.9 hectares. Leaving aside the well-known differences with respect to Spain regarding farm structure (historically much more even in France, with an ample segment of middle-sized farms), concentration is also a major trend in French agriculture. Indeed, the number of farms has declined at the same pace in both countries in recent times – a quarter part of farms disappeared

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<sup>4</sup> Farm Structure Surveys are the appropriate source to observe the evolution of the *economic* dimension of the farms between the 1980s and 2000s, since it is measured in the same way all this period long (by means of the Standard Gross Margin, SGM). SGM was replaced in the last Census with Standard Gross Output (SGO), which does not detract any farm cost. No equivalence table between the two measures has been provided, hence comparable time series of farm economic dimension brake from 2007 on.

<sup>5</sup> Several studies have shown that traditional grazing livestock systems evolve much in a similar way - abandonment of marginal pastures running parallel with intensification in the use of the most productive and accessible ones (Bernués et al. 2011; Riedel et al. 2007).

<sup>6</sup> For example, farms between 50,000 and 100,000 € of Standard Gross Output employ exactly 1 AWU of family labour as an average, while hired workers perform 40% of the labour. Farms over 100,000 € have even less family dedication (see Moreno-Pérez, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> Obviously other fundamental reasons are the massive drop of the number of small-scale farms, where salaried labour has little importance, and the aforementioned expansion of intensive agricultural orientations, which demand more salaried workers.

between 2000 and 2010 also in France, very much like in Italy and Portugal, according to EUROSTAT.

Something of a “hard core” of farms is also configuring in France. Large holdings (those exceeding 100,000 € of SGO) represent one third of the total in 2010, but account for 80% of all SGO in France (compared to 73% in 2000) and 64% of all the UAA. Furthermore, very large holdings (over 250,000 SGO) alone gather 45% of the agricultural output. As happens in Spain, farms in the upper stratum of scale are mainly specialized in very intensive orientations - pig and poultry production, horticulture and flower growing. Specialisation is another remarkable trend in French agriculture: within the group of medium and large-scale farms, the relative share of non-specialised ones (ie. those belonging to mixed technical-economic orientations<sup>8</sup>) has declined from 14 to 12.6% over the first decade of XXI. In the same line, agricultural output concentrate in specialised farms in all types of production except vegetables (Agreste, 2011).

Farm labour transformations are also marked by the gradual regression of the labour performed by family helpers. The part of AWU of familiar help (family labour leaving aside farm holder and partners) have gone from 35% to 11% between 1988 and 2010. Meanwhile, permanent salaried labour has increased from 12% to 19% and seasonal and occasional labour from 7% to 11% in the same period (Pollet, 2014).

Concerning the legal status of the farms, individual (unincorporated) farms represent a great part of the holdings although they have notably fallen over the last decades (from 93% to 69% between 1988 and 2010 in France *métropolitain*, according to the Censuses). Contrarily to Spain, the evolvement of farm partnerships has been facilitated by the existence of a number of “*forms sociétaires*” specifically devised to institutionalize the relationships within these organizational forms.

According to the detailed report recently published by Agreste (2014) on this matter, farms constituted as societies manage more than a half of the UAA and two thirds of the agricultural output in France. The *Exploitation Agricole à Responsabilité Limitée* (EARL) is the more spread legal status (54% of societies), followed by the *Groupements Agricoles d'Exploitation en Commun* or GAEC (25%). Indeed, EARL format has continuously displaced GAEC since its creation in 1985, allegedly because it allows to protect the personal patrimony while is more flexible in the requirements of farm labour performed by the members than GAEC. It is revealing that half of EARL farms are unipersonal and particularly large in economic terms (they double the average SGO of unincorporated farmers). On individual EARL farms, labour is 42% performed by salaried workers. It makes thus sense that, whereas EARL farms are spread in extensive arable crops, GAECs prevail in family-based agricultural systems such as dairy farming.

### **3. Family farms towards corporatization: new categories of analysis in the scholarly debate**

Some of the patterns of farm change outlined above (increase in the size of agricultural holdings, farm incorporation, raise in the relative share of salaried labour, etc.), widespread in developed countries, have challenged the classical conceptualizations of family farming over the last decades. Consensus appears to exist among scholars in recent times regarding the little sense in keeping rigid and static boundaries between family and corporate holdings. There is a border area – what Brookfield and Parsons (2007) named the *shadow zone* - were farm families “*remain in the economic heart of farm ownership and operation, but in the context where they relate to their land-based assets through legal and financial structures characteristic of the wider economy*” (Pritchard et al. 2007: 76).

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<sup>8</sup> Technical-economic orientations are classifications made by EUROSTAT on the basis of a threshold of two thirds of the Standard Gross Output of one or a group of productions.

New categories of analysis have been recently suggested to encapsulate the condition of agricultural holdings situated in this shadow zone, in line with the classical concept of “farm family business” coined by Gasson and Errington (1993). For example, Pritchard et al. (2007) formulated the term “*farm family entrepreneurs*” to designate large and capital-intensive, yet family-based farms in Australian horticulture. Later, Magnan (2012) adopted the same expression to refer to vertically integrated grain mega-farms in Saskatchewan (Canada). Not only did these authors use the same label, they also coincided the same interesting theoretical reflection: agricultural holdings of this kind, “neither family nor corporate” (Pritchard et al. 2007: 76), **can be interpreted as stable management units of a hybrid nature rather than a part of an incomplete process of corporatization of farming.**

In France, the traditional assumptions regarding family farming have also been challenged in recent times. After four decades of explicit support of a model of middle-sized family farm specifically defined in the *Lois d’Orientation Agricole* in 1960 and 1960, the economic, social and institutional coherence of French agriculture start to fracture by late 1990s in the light of the above mentioned transformations. New legal instruments have been recently created in France (and old ones have been reformed) to facilitate the transition towards a more entrepreneurial agriculture and the set-up of young farmers<sup>9</sup> (Mundler and Rémy, 2012; Bosse-Platière, 2005).

In this context, recent academic developments have put into question the monolithic conceptions about family farming that have pervaded in France for long. Hervieu and Purseigle (2011), for example, emphasize the fragmentation of the agricultural landscape and the coexistence of different ideal types of family forms of production. Among others, these authors identify a category of “*agriculture familiale sociétaire*” that exhibits a corporate-style management yet keeping a family base regarding the provision to labour and capital to the farm. In their own words, these holdings oscillate “*between the temptation of a strictly financial approach and the conservation of its patrimonial architecture*” (p. 62). In another attempt to grasp the complex changes underway, Mundler and Rémy (2012) speaks of a model of “*agriculture post-familiale*” characterized, among other traits, by the separation of domestic and professional spheres, the permeability of the household’s incomes and the aim of putting farm workload on a level with any salaried workers.

French scholars have also accomplished interesting study cases in specific areas. In one of these investigations, Nguyen and Purseigle (2012) unveiled in Camargue a heterogeneous group of holdings at the junction between family and entrepreneurial rationale, and devised an analytical framework aimed at refining the categorization of these uncommon farms. Upon the base of a number of criteria related with farm management, labour and capital (among other issues), they came to different farm types. Meanwhile, in another research based on the collection of farm-level empirical information, De Raymond (2013) found holdings in Côte d’Or organized around arrangements between farmers that were not related by family links, but by those of personal affinity. Such arrangements, of a “reversible” nature, go beyond the traditional mutual help or outsourcing of farm operations: they may entail a profound division of labour between the partners, which makes it possible for them to scale up their operations while simplifying their workload and keeping their lifestyle.

French literature has also paid much attention to the evolvement of the different types of farm societies existing in this country (see above). However, the issue of multifamily farming that concerns this investigation (ie. organizational forms, *either formal or informal*, involving kindred households *living in different dwellings*) has received little attention by French literature. In fact there have been few scholarly works on this matter in other Western countries, and they have tackled it in a rather disconnected and tangential way. For instance, Lillywhite y Duffy (2001) found, from a survey to farmers carried out in Iowa (USA), that a quarter part of the agricultural

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<sup>9</sup> A significant movement by social actors in this context of change of paradigm was the abandonment by FNSEA of the ideological reference to family farm in favour of the term “*agriculture d’entreprise*” (Mundler and Rémy, 2012).

holdings were “multifamily farms”. The Agricultural Censuses performed by USDA register, from 2002, the number of households sharing in the net income of the farm businesses. The percentage of farms involving more than one household was a surprising 21% in 2002, and also in 2007 (USDA, 2009). Similar figures were found in Canada (Bollman, 2005). Also in North America, Machum (2005) observed that the partnership of different families contributed to success in farms located in an Atlantic region of Canada. The aforementioned study of Pritchard et al. (2007) also found, in their study case of Australian processing tomato farming, holdings held by several households.

In Europe, Calus and van Huylenbroeck (2005) found multifamily structures in Belgian agriculture, and so did and Poppe et al. (2004) in the Netherlands. Johnson et al. (2009) explored the complex organizational forms of agricultural holdings (involving multiple operators, owners or households) from the statistical information available in several countries<sup>10</sup>. However, none of the quoted works have deepened in the functioning or the rationale of these structures.

#### **4. Micro-level analysis: Extended farm family arrangements in Campo de Cartagena**

The study area of this investigation is the county of Campo de Cartagena, located in the Southeastern coast of Spain (more concretely the three municipalities of Pilar de la Horadada, San Javier and San Pedro del Pinatar). In this area, a myriad of small-scale farms<sup>11</sup> are specialized in greenhouse vegetable production and, to a lesser extent, citrus fruits and floriculture. Substantial gains have been reached in both the yields and the quality of vegetable production by way of a number of technological changes undertaken from the 1970s<sup>12</sup>. Agricultural expansion was also fuelled with the entrance in this region of immigrant workforce over the 1980s, which were massively occupied in these farms (Pedreño, 1999). Later, the introduction of the *California* green pepper cultivar in early 1990s, highly appreciated in European markets, provided extraordinary benefits from exportations and boosted a forceful process of farm growth. However, around 10 years ago the moderation of green pepper prices and the rise in input prices (notably diesel) put a brake on the expansionary policy of most of the farms.

Our results are based on fieldwork information in the form of in-depth interviews with 20 selected informants (farmers, representatives of local farmers’ organizations and technicians of cooperatives and horticultural auction markets located in the zone) and a survey to 135 farmers in the study area. The questionnaire of the survey included, first, a set of questions aimed at identifying the farm holders and determine whether or not they lived in the same household, their kin relationship and which of them play an important role in farm decision-making. Later, farm characteristics, household’s composition, farm labour and disparate aspects of farm management were tackled. Finally, semi-structured questions allowed reconstructing the main decisions over farm investments taken over since 1990. This part of the fieldwork was carried out in 2009, and a second stage, consisting of in-depth interviews to holders of multifamily farms, was performed in 2012 to complete and update the earlier information.

The survey information revealed that intensification was the predominant farm trajectory from 1990 to 2009. Thus, 76% the survey farms enlarged the greenhouse area in this period (most of the times at the expense of open-air cultivation), 45% refurbished greenhouses and the same percentage modernized irrigation systems. Surface expansion was hampered by the high land value in this coastal zone. Thus, 55.6% the survey farms remained operating their little original surface, although

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<sup>10</sup> USA, Canada, Italy and the Netherlands.

<sup>11</sup> The average farm size is 9.5 has, although a half of them do not reach 5 has. 80% farms have at least one greenhouse, the average indoor surface being 2.9 has.

<sup>12</sup> Greenhouses became widespread in this area by late 1970s. Moreover, the completion in 1979 of a water transfer between the basins of the rivers Tajo and Segura alleviated the dramatic water shortage in this area, located in the most arid region of Europe (Sánchez-Picón et al. 2011). Access to this water triggered an extraordinary expansion of irrigation and gave impetus to agricultural exports, definitively opened in 1993 with the end of the transitional period after the Accession of Spain to ECC.

a notable 39.2% managed to increase their territorial base, either by renting or purchasing land. Only 5.2% of the holdings opted by downsizing the farm surface (typically elderly farmers with no successor).

In order to systematize the analysis of the ‘family-scapes’ in the study area, three categories of farm families have been identified:

- ‘*Monofamily farms*’, in which both legal ownership and family labour are associated with members of the same household (i.e. those living in the same dwelling). This category also includes farms in which non-resident relatives still play a minor role (eg. elder parents helping out in seasonal peaks).
- ‘*Vertical multifamily farms*’, in which households with intergenerational kinship take part. To be included in this category, at least one member of each household should be (i) fully employed on the farm, and/or (ii) farm holder by means of a legally formalised partnership.
- ‘*Horizontal multifamily farms*’, defined in a similar way to the previous category, but consisting of two or more households linked by a *collateral* relationship (i.e. siblings) -they may also include the parents’ participation and therefore comprise more than one generation.

Survey data show that monofamily farms, the most ‘conventional’ farm type, are still the most spread in this area (73% of the sample), but a meaningful 27% of the farms were found to be jointly held by several households belonging to the same extended family. The group of monofamily farms was compound by the smallest productive units (see Table 1). Three quarter parts of them involved only one member of the family, who worked alongside an important volume of hired workforce –a fact that makes evident the rupture of the binomial farm-family even in this intensive, labour demanding agricultural system.

As for multiple-household farms, a few of them uniquely involve a parent and one son/daughter who continues working on the family farm after leaving home, giving rise to what we have named “vertical multifamily farm”. As time passes, the participation of the parent lessens, taking the forms of seasonal help, influence in decision-making or tenure arrangements. In any case, the successor’s farm will eventually amalgamate with the parents’ farm and become again one independent, nuclear farm unit with the successor as holder. This sequence would align with the analysis performed by Agreste (2014) upon the base of longitudinal data of more than 86,000 French farms, that revealed the changes in the legal status of corporate farms from 2000 to 2007. This report reveals that GAEC farms made up by father and son, conceived of to facilitate new set-ups and the process of farm transfer, are essentially transitional figures and end up turning to individual farms<sup>13</sup>.

The remaining 28 farms are “horizontal multifamily farms”, in other words, they are run by several controllers with a collateral kinship relation. The most common family ‘morphologies’ of these farms – understanding by morphology the number of households involved and their kinship relations (see Moreno-Pérez and Lobley, *in press*) were parents + two independent siblings (7 cases), two siblings (10 cases) and three siblings (6 cases). However, complex structures were also found involving up to six households from three generations –a sort of *farm family networks*. Taken as a whole, horizontal multifamily farms exhibited the greatest size in the study area, particularly in terms of greenhouse area - determinant for the economic size of the business (see Table 1). Moreover, according to the survey information, a half of horizontal multifamily farms embarked on the most aggressive strategies of growth (those combining strong intensification and land expansion) over the study period, compared with 30.6 % of monofamily farms. At the same time,

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<sup>13</sup> It is worth noting that there are some differences between a father-son GAEC and our type of “vertical multifamily farms”: the latter do not have necessarily to be legally formalized, and father and son need to live in different households.



regressive strategies or stationary situations were less frequent on horizontal multi-family farms (7%) than on mono-family ones (17%) (Moreno-Pérez et al., 2011).

**Table 1. Farm labour and structure per category**

	<b>Monofamily farms</b>	<b>Vertical multifamily farms</b>	<b>Horizontal multifamily farms</b>	<b>All farms</b>
<b>Number of holdings</b>	98	9	28	135
<b>Percentage</b>	72.6%	6.7%	20.7%	100.0%
<b>Average farm area (Ha)</b>	8.8	10.8	11.3	9.5
<b>Average greenhouse area (Ha)</b>	2.0	2.0	4.9	2.9
<b>Nuclear family labour (average AWU)</b>	1.35	1.17	1.10	1.29
<b>Extended family labour (average AWU)</b>	0.03	0.80	1.46	0.38
<b>Hired labour (average AWU)</b>	2.59	2.51	5.23	3.13

*Source: Own elaboration from farm survey data.*

These findings reveal that organisational forms have been key aspects of farm differentiation. Interviews allowed us to understand that horizontal multifamily farms were the most appropriate farm governance structure to cope with the complexity of this farming system. First, most of these farms occupied at least one person on a full-time basis from each nuclear family involved in the business. This approach makes it possible to overcome the decline of farm labour supplied by the nuclear family - a fundamental constraint for monofamily farms. Several members of the extended family can deal with the multifaceted technical and managerial aspects of the farm – administrative paperwork, control of the hired labour, and multiple farm operations. Furthermore, labour specialisation could provide further advantages in the case of skilled operations (computerised irrigation and accounting) or those for which specific training or a license is a legal requirement, such as the application of pesticides or food handling. Second, these holdings have a larger investment capacity, either by pooling their financial resources or by gaining easier access to bank credits. Third, the advantages of extended family partnerships compared to monofamily farms are also found in terms of economies of scale in certain aspects of farm management, and more efficient use is also made of farm irrigation infrastructure.

In the present case study, the advantages of joint management are important enough to cement family relationships, conferring stability on farm businesses exclusively controlled by collaterally related holders. These arrangements, therefore, appear to be not only a transitional stage prior to the division of assets between siblings after the father's retirement, but stable governance structures in their own right. However, micro-level information on these multiple-household arrangements shows that they often have an informal nature, particularly when parents are still involved in the farm. They are more prone to incorporate when the first generation retires and only collaterally related

holders run the farm; these arrangements can integrate siblings who are not directly involved in farming but hold inheritance rights over the land. In exceptional cases, multifamily farms adopt a different legal configuration from the real organizational arrangement under which they operate - eg. the same 'real' farm is split into two legal partnerships, following tax advice (Moreno-Pérez and Lobley, *in press*).

In another vein, multifamily farms in Campo de Cartagena were found to be less likely to belong to cooperatives (53%) than monofamily farms (73%). This fact may connect with Hervieu and Purseigle's (2011) suggestion referred to the farm model of "*agriculture familiale societaire*": if the capital base of the farm is sufficient all the functions of the *filière* can be integrated on the farm and it thus emancipates from other forms of collective action.

## 5. Conclusions

The classical family farm model is no longer universal. Within the dynamic scenario in which agriculture evolves in Western Europe, new farm governance structures are arising that remain largely unexplored by scholars. This paper has shown evidence on "multifamily farms" in a study area of intensive horticulture in Spain. These agricultural holdings maintain some of their family foundations (a part of the capital and labour is provided by the farm family, farm management is family-led and there is a desire to transfer the business from generation to generation). It is significant, in this sense, that no cases of multiple household farms were found outside the extended family. However, these holdings also exhibit a corporate-style management, employ a great amount of hired labour and, in many cases, are formalised as societies. This hybrid governance structure may be not a mere transitional stage but have a stable nature, given its competitive advantages with respect to conventional monofamily farms.

This connects in a way with De Raymond's work (2013), who reported that farm partnerships based on personal affinity in Côte D'Or allowed them to take advantage of economies of scale while reducing the operators' workload. What these findings appear to tell us is that, in pursuing certain thresholds of size, farm operators often change the grounds of micro-level organization - particularly when the rest of the family is scarcely involved in farming. In this context, singular production units with varied morphology are configured that go much beyond the binomial "one farm-one household" assumed by the traditional conceptions of family farming. Moreover, the complex organization of these holdings, in which different stakeholders may asymmetrically control farm capital, labour and decision-making, challenges the very definition of "farm" as technical-economic unit of production.

The transformations remarked here are shaping a farm structure "in the shadow" that largely escapes the notice of official statistics. It is thus urgent to update the methodologies of collection of farm data to better capture how family-based farms are really configured in the field. The questionnaires of the Censuses and the Surveys on farm structure need to be reviewed and updated. At academic level, the grey zone between entrepreneurial and family forms of production is yet to be theorized. With this purpose, there is an urgent need for further fieldwork to reach a more complete knowledge on the way these uncommon farm governance structures operate, as well as on the relationship between multifamily farms and other agricultural and rural actors.

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