

Abstract

This research is about peasants and nature. The aim is to study the way in which peasant farming¹ opens up a range of opportunities for future generations. The scope is global, including both Global South and Global North.

The following questions have guided this research:

- i. Are peasants disappearing or increasing and where?
- ii. What are the values they create in relation to nature?
- iii. Which approach could facilitate a shift towards a more peasant way of farming?

To answer these questions we have used a methodology based on literature reviews, analysis of world data and statistics, interviews, field enquiries, case study analysis, lessons learned and identification of knowledge gaps. The increased relevance of the characteristics of peasant farming to contemporary challenges, and the fact that it has received little attention in the past, makes it a unique ground for further research. It is hoped that this work will bring some contribution to the creation of innovative support mechanisms including financial, legal and technical tools and instruments, and to the design and implementation of postmodern policy approaches in support of the peasant way of farming.

The thesis is divided into four sections progressively building upon the results of each other. It includes an introduction, a discussion of results and a conclusion. Elements of this research have been published in two books, translated in four languages, with updated reprinted version, one of which launched at the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development- Rio+20, and at the People's Summit. Both books have been distributed to countries as well as to different agriculture and development ministries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. They have also been distributed to world development networks and to international agricultural conferences and events. This research has been the basis for the creation of an international pro-peasant platform engaged in the development of specific tools and instruments dedicated to peasant farming.

¹ Peasant farming is defined in Section I. Peasants are people involved in peasant agriculture (also defined in Section II: Status and Trend).