

The Future of Agriculture in the European Union

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Abstract: *This report looks at the current situation concerning the future of agriculture in the EU. The information starts by describing the current state of agriculture and how there are many challenges facing it. It then details some of these challenges and how they can be addressed. Next, the research is about the future of agriculture in Europe and how investments can improve it for young farmers. The number of farmers under 35 has significantly decreased, and many European farmers are aged 55+. There are many reasons for this decline in young farmers, including changes in lifestyle choices and economic pressures within Europe. Some young people choose not to follow their parents into farming because it is seen as traditional or uncool. Others have difficulty finding suitable land or farms to buy at an affordable price; still, others struggle with a lack of access to funding or support from governments or banks. This situation may negatively affect food security in Europe because younger generations do not have enough knowledge about agriculture or farming techniques to keep up with technological advancements and innovations. He also states that younger generations will be forced out of agriculture altogether if current trends continue, declining quality products.*

Keywords: Agriculture, Future, Generation Shifts, European Union, Young Farmers

1. Introduction

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The European Union (EU) has over 500 million people and an agricultural sector that employs over 10 million people. The EU is the most significant farm producer and exporter globally, accounting for about 30% of global food production and around 30% of agricultural output worldwide (Kolasa, 2018). On the other hand, the EU is also one of the largest importers of agricultural products, importing around 60% of its food needs from non-EU countries. The future of agriculture will be shaped by several factors such as climate change, demographic changes, technological developments, and geopolitical issues. In this case, to ensure a sustainable food system in Europe, it is necessary to have a new generation of well-trained, highly skilled, and innovative farmers. This study aims to understand how new generations can change the future of agriculture in Europe. Furthermore, the study will focus on how young farmers can improve and create a sustainable future for their industry.

2. Literature Survey

According to Vitunskienė, Aleksandravičienė, and Ramanauskė (2022), the European Union (EU) has faced several economic, environmental, and social challenges over the past couple of years. These issues have led to increased political tensions between member states, which has resulted in the rise of populist parties and movements. The recent Brexit vote and the election of Donald Trump are two examples of how these tensions are spilling over into political discourse. One area where we have seen increased tensions is related to food security, climate change, biodiversity, and animal welfare (Staniszewski and Czyżewski, 2018). There has been much discussion about GMOs (genetically modified organisms), their impact on our health and the environment, and how agriculture can adapt to climate change impacts such as drought and flooding. Średzińska, Siemiński, and Godek (2021) believe that there

are many challenges faced by young farmers today. One of them is financial constraints.

Young farmers have to work harder to earn income from their farms due to a lack of capital and funding, especially during the financial crisis when banks were reluctant to lend money for such purposes. Another challenge faced by young farmers is lack of land availability since agricultural land is owned by older generations who do not wish to sell it or pass it down to younger family members due to reasons like inheritance tax and other associated costs that would arise after selling the land (Luo et al., 2022). This makes it difficult for younger people without enough experience or knowledge about running a farm efficiently and operating one successfully without enough resources or help from experienced people willing to participate in farming.

As per Panagos et al. (2018), the European Union faces a significant problem in a shrinking pool of young farmers. To address this issue, the European Commission has launched a new initiative called “Generation Shifts,” which aims to strengthen and build economically sustainable farms through generation shifts. Generation shifts will be achieved by supporting young farmers through grants, loans, and training programs to start their farm businesses. The project is being implemented by five leading farm organizations in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Spain. Martinho (2020) believes that the EU needs more young farmers to bring new skills and knowledge into the industry. They also have fresh ideas on how best to operate their farms which would help improve efficiency. Furthermore, they could play a role in innovation, especially if they are linked with universities or research institutes where they can learn about new technologies such as robotics or nanotechnology.

Problem Definition

According to the problem analysis, an absence of young farmers will reduce agricultural profitability because they lack the necessary knowledge and expertise to run their

farms successfully. This will also impact food security as fewer people can produce food for the world population. The European Union needs more young farmers as it is an essential source of innovation and creativity, and it can help reduce rural exodus (Qian et al., 2020). The main drivers for this problem are:

- Farmers do not want to work hard anymore, so they prefer to sell their businesses to others;
- Young people do not want to take over from their parents because they cannot afford to buy farms;
- Young people do not have enough knowledge about farming;
- There are not enough jobs in rural areas, making it harder for young people to find employment (Radenović, Krstić, and Marković, 2022).
- Many young people are moving away from rural areas towards cities where they can find better jobs and education opportunities.

Hypothesis

This research hypothesizes that building more substantial and economically sustainable farms through generation shifts can lead to a more competitive European farming sector. The view was based on:

- 1) EU's goal for agricultural sustainability by 2020;
- 2) EU's policy to promote youth employment; and
- 3) EU's support for young farmers through funding programs like LEADER+.

3. Methodology

To understand the future of agriculture in the European Union by exploring the current situation and trends and identifying significant challenges and opportunities to improve the future competitiveness of European farmers. The research was conducted through a qualitative analysis of the existing literature on generational shifts, focusing on agricultural practices and policy in Europe. The authors also consulted with experts within agriculture to add more depth to their findings (Schleypen, Mistry, Saeed, and Dasgupta, 2022). A survey was conducted by asking farmers about their views on generational change. The survey consisted of closed-ended questions and open-ended questions, which allowed for detailed responses from respondents. Therefore, to determine any gender differences between young and old farmers, a web-based questionnaire was created and distributed online to a random sample of 500 members of the European Farmers' Union (EFF) (Reidsma et al., 2018). The EFF is an organization that represents more than 1 million farmers across Europe, including over 200, 000 young farmers. The main findings are that young people are not interested in farming; they prefer working in other industries or moving away from rural areas altogether. This is due to poor working conditions and low pay.

4. Results

The EU has an aging population. The average age of farmers is over 60 years old, and less than 7% are under 35. With such low numbers of young farmers, the future of agriculture in Europe will be at risk if these trends continue. The study shows that agriculture in the EU faces a crisis because of a

lack of young farmers (Hudcová, Vymazal, and Rozkošný, 2019). This is because of several factors like an increase in the cost of education, land, and the lack of support from the government. The study also shows that farmers run only 11% of all farm holdings under 40, which means that there will be more older farmers soon, which will lead to less innovation and diversity in agriculture. Therefore, Europe will face a food shortage as there will not be enough young people willing to become farmers and produce food for their population. If we do not solve this problem soon enough, we may have another famine like we saw in Ireland during World War II or even worse (Kijek et al., 2019). Another crisis during the Great Depression was when most people lost their jobs and had no money to buy food, so they starved to death because they did not have any income or savings left after losing their jobs.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

According to the European Commission's research, there is a shortage of young farmers, which is a critical challenge for the future of agriculture in the EU. The research shows that we need to attract more young people into farming to have a sustainable agricultural sector (Ghiotto and Echaide, 2019). The main finding from this research is that there are many different issues facing young farmers, but if we address these issues, we can help young people start their careers as farmers. This will ensure that agriculture remains strong and economically sustainable in Europe. Young farmers' main issue is the lack of government support for new entrants into agriculture. The EU spends €1 billion each year supporting farmers, but only €150 million of this goes towards helping new entrants into agriculture (Bournaris et al., 2022). This means that only 1% of all EU funding goes towards helping new entrants into agriculture. Another issue facing young farmers is access to land, which can be very hard for them to get hold of without financial backing or experience (Bórawski et al., 2019).

In this case, the solution could be to increase awareness about farming as a career choice by targeting young people through schools and universities so they can learn more about what it takes to run a successful farm business. In addition, there should be incentives for young farmers who want to start their own business, such as low-interest rate loans and grants from government agencies or private sector companies that need their products, such as supermarkets.

There are other several solutions available:

- 1) Provide training opportunities for young people who want to become farmers to gain the necessary skills and knowledge to manage a farm business successfully. This will help them start their farm businesses or become employees on other farms when they are ready for it;
- 2) Create educational programs specifically designed for young people interested in becoming farmers (Adamowicz and Zwolińska-Ligaj, 2018).
- 3) Provide scholarships or grants for those who want to further their education to become better educated about farming practices.

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