



# The Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: a Tool to Bridge the Gap between the EU and Small-Scale Farming.

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## **Abstract**

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within EU agriculture is as much a challenge as it is an opportunity. The agricultural sector is crucial for sustainable development and, more generally, for the future of all of us. However, many controversies exist between the EU and its farmers, especially small ones. Thus, in the following dissertation, we interviewed the main actors of small-scale farming about the impact of the EU and the SDGs on their daily life. Our results highlighted low trust in the EU, due to lack of knowledge and communication about existing policies. Furthermore, when discussing the SDGs more in depth, we acknowledged farmers' interest and willingness to improve policies. We concluded that trust and faith in EU regulations would be increased by educating all the stakeholders of agriculture (including EU regulators), especially in small-scale farming. We therefore propose a policy brief to improve dialogue and communication within EU agriculture policies, using the implementation of the SDGs as a tool and a basis for change. We also discuss the possibility, not to ameliorate the current system, but to transition to a more local structure, still using the SDGs as a guideline for change.

**Title: The implementation of the SDGs : a tool to bridge the gap between the EU and SSF.**

**Author: Marine Tourancheau**

**Key Words: SDGs, Small-scale Farming, EU, agriculture, STK SSF.**

## **Resumo**

A implementação dos Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ODS), na agricultura da UE, tem tanto de desafio como de oportunidade. O setor agrícola é fundamental para o desenvolvimento sustentável e, de um modo mais geral, para o futuro de todos nós. No entanto, são várias as controvérsias que existem entre a UE e os seus agricultores, especialmente os mais pequenos. Portanto, nesta dissertação, foram entrevistados os principais agentes da agricultura de pequena escala acerca do impacto da UE e dos ODS na sua vida diária. Os resultados destacam pouca confiança na UE, devido à falta de conhecimento e comunicação sobre as políticas existentes. Adicionalmente, quando discutidos os ODS mais aprofundadamente, são reconhecidos o interesse e desejo dos agricultores em melhorar as políticas. Foi concluído que a confiança e a fé nas regulações da UE aumentaria através da educação de todas as partes interessadas na agricultura (incluindo os reguladores da UE), especialmente na agricultura de pequena escala. Consequentemente, é proposta linhas de ação para melhorar o diálogo e a comunicação entre as políticas agrícolas da UE, usando a implementação dos ODS como uma ferramenta e uma base para a mudança. Foi também discutida a possibilidade, não de melhorar o sistema atual, mas de passar para uma estrutura mais local, ainda utilizando os ODS como uma diretriz de mudança.

**Título: The implementation of the SDGs : a tool to bridge the gap between the EU and SSF.**

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**Palavras Chave: SDGs, Small-scale Farming, EU, agriculture, STK SSF.**

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## Abbreviations

Common Agricultural Policy	CAP
European Union	EU
Literature Review	LR
Member States	MS
Small-Scale Farming	SSF
Stakeholders	STK
Sustainable Development	SD
Sustainable Development Goals	SDGs

## 1. Introduction

Since the 90s, not a day has gone by without talking about SD and climate change. Thus, in 2015, when the UN introduced the SDGs, no one was surprised, and most were supportive (Caprani, 2016).

Existing literature emphasizes that agriculture is central to the SDGs (Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020). Especially in the EU, as agriculture is the main negative driver of its environmental impact (Recanati et al., 2019).

However, EU agriculture faces many issues. There is a known conflict between farmers, especially small ones, and EU regulators (Ansari, Wijen and Gray, 2013; Guiomar et al., 2018). Policies implemented do not fit farmers' challenges and objectives (Guiomar et al., 2018). Moreover, in the opinion of most small farmers, the decisions taken are not in line with SD (Kloke-Lesch, 2018; Kastrinos and Weber, 2020). Thus, they come up with alternative ways, through associations and individually, to go around existing regulations (cf. Results). On the other side, policy makers take well-thought decisions, supported by most agricultural lobbies (Schuh et al., 2019). Furthermore, policies and frameworks are constantly reformed in favour of innovation and SD (European Commission, 2021).

EU agriculture is composed of 85% of small farmers (<20 ha) thus we decided to focus on SSF to better grasp the current situation of agriculture (Eurostat, 2016). We ask ourselves: **how do the SDGs impact agriculture, especially SSF, in the EU?**

In this dissertation, we aim to understand the perception of small farmers about the impact of the EU and the SDGs. We target the following points:

- What are the financial, social and environmental local impacts of EU policies on small farmers and on SD?
- Are there any differences since the implementation of the SDGs in 2015? and since the reform of the CAP in 2020? Are there any trade-offs with existing policies?
- How could EU policies be improved to successfully implement the SDGs?

We interviewed the main STK of SSF: farmers and organisations. First, through semi-structured interviews about the EU and the SDGs' impact on their daily life and second, through in-depth interviews to understand farmers' opinion on how to successfully implement the SDGs.

It resulted from our research that farmers and organisations have very low trust in the EU, mainly because of bad communication and low involvement in policymaking. Moreover, many policies do not fit within SSF's goals and work principles, leading to farmers avoiding EU regulations. Thus, we proposed a policy brief to be implemented as a tool, within all regulations on agriculture. Its aim is to improve the communication and dialogue between the EU and small farmers through the implementation of the SDGs.

## 2. Literature review

### a. Small-Scale Farming and the European Union

#### i. The European Union & Agriculture

**The main challenge of today's world is to feed the growing population with finite resources and a positive environmental impact** (Kloke-Lesch, 2018; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Fresco and Poppe, 2021). Thus, regulating the food system is an important EU concern (Giller, Drupady, Fontana and Oldekop, 2018; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Timko et al., 2018). Many policies exist but one predominates: the CAP.

Since 1962, the CAP has aimed to guide STK of the EU food system through numerous regulations and frameworks (Recanati et al., 2019). It mainly addresses financial support and environmental impact (Recanati et al., 2019). Initially, it was implemented to deal with food security and nutrition issues, following new dietary trends (e.g. eating more meat and dairy) and their impacts on public health (Lang and Heasman, 2015; Recanati et al., 2019). However nowadays, its main focuses are not nutrition and health anymore (Recanati et al., 2019). The CAP is based on two pillars. The first, accounting for 3/4 of the policies, is area-based financial help for farmers, and the second one is in favour of rural development, with 30% of its policies focusing on climate change (Global Justice Now, 2017). **As agriculture is the major driver of negative impact on the EU environment** (Recanati et al., 2019) and that more than half of

EU landscapes are used for agriculture (Halada et al., 2011), there are many attempts to increase environmental sustainability and rural development targeted measures within the CAP (Recanati et al., 2019).

Two main types of agriculture exist: industrialized farming and SSF, differentiated by size and views on agriculture (FoodPrint, 2021).

Industrialized farms are the biggest, working on more land with less workers per ha (Cram, 2021; Industrial Agriculture and SSF, 2021). According to Eurostat, all farms under 20ha are considered SSF (Eurostat, 2021). SSF represents 80% of the world's food in value terms (Laughton, 2017; United Nations, 2018), 85% of EU farms (Eurostat, 2016) and is known to practice the most sustainable agriculture (Rivera et al., 2020; FoodPrint, 2021). SSF values are ecology, autonomy, cooperation, community, livelihood and accountability (Laughton, 2017).

## ii. Small-Scale Farming and European Union Policies

Currently under reform, the CAP has to deal with a lot of controversies, especially concerning the environmental impact of industrialized agriculture (Recanati et al., 2019).

Indeed, the CAP “system” is very contradictory. Policies encourage farmers to increase their farm size and to modernize their techniques - ultimately increasing productivity with less workforce - while still strongly advocating to fight climate change and increase rural development through SSF (Recanati et al., 2019). Of course, many agree that both are not “mutually exclusive”, but almost impossible with current regulations (Fisher et al., 2008; Scariot, 2013).

For instance, the financial help granted to farmers is mainly dependent on size (Global Justice Now, 2017; Recanati et al., 2019; Eurostat, 2021). Consequently, the EU does not grant any or very little financial help to SSF (Global Justice Now, 2017; Recanati et al., 2019). The EU and MS are aware of this issue and take it into account (e.g. payments per ha decreases as farm size increases) (Recanati et al., 2019). Even so, policies still encourage small farms to increase their size and modernisation, having a considerable impact on the environment (Recanati et al., 2019). Moreover, SSF STK argue that, first, they are not involved in decision-making (Giller, Drupady, Fontana and Oldekop, 2018) and second, the EU policies for agriculture productivity

(e.g. CAP) and the ones to fight climate change (e.g. SDGs) are dramatically opposed (Fresco and Poppe, 2021; Global Justice Now, 2017).

The EU knows that most disagree with the CAP (Mondelaers et al., 2021) and tries to compensate for existing policies with new ones (e.g. Small Farmers Scheme). But those affected all note low changes and little consequences at their level (European Commission, 2017; Recanati et al., 2019).

On the other hand, the EU still argues that the main challenge and priority of the food system is to modernize its processes in order to be sustainable (Giller, Drupady, Fontana and Oldekop, 2018), which is opposed to most public opinions that recommend modifying agricultural policies to focus on SSF and rural development (Popp and Jám bor, 2015; Global Justice Now, 2017). For example, many argue that financial help should support and motivate farmers to be more sustainable (e.g. reduce GHG emissions). The EU agrees that there is a need for more degressivity and redirection in payments but still argues that size and technological adaptation are crucial for SD (Mondelaers et al., 2021; Global Justice Now, 2017). Therefore, we acknowledge a strong gap between those in favour of technology and those in favour of more natural techniques (Giller, Drupady, Fontana and Oldekop, 2018).

To conclude, on many levels but mainly socially, STK of agriculture stand against each other: innovation and productivity versus preservation and quality. Both sides agree that agriculture and climate change are closely linked. However, the challenges identified by some (e.g. the EU) drastically differ from others (e.g. SSF) and thus lead to policies that lack coherence and common vision (Popp and Jám bor, 2015; Giller, Drupady, Fontana and Oldekop, 2018).

### iii. The Future of Agriculture: Two Opposite Views

Climate change is the main reason to change the way agriculture works (Ansari, Wijen and Gray, 2013). It has already been, for years, the driver of SSF STK to consider another type of farming (e.g. agro-ecology) (Ansari, Wijen and Gray, 2013). However, when it comes to the future of EU agriculture, we observe two distinct opinions: land sparing and land sharing (cf. Appendix 10) (Laughton, 2017).

**Land sparing** defends that some land should be kept for the preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems while other land should be used for intensive and modern agriculture, resulting in high production (Green et al, 2005).

On the other hand, **land sharing** postulates that, when used for agriculture purposes, farming techniques and processes should cooperate to maintain ecosystems and biodiversity, focusing on quality (Green et al, 2005).

Thus, on one side, land-sparers stand in favour of “precision agriculture”. Farmers should increase their size and productivity by focusing on innovation of their machinery and systems (e.g. AI, GMO) in order to, first, increase their salary and living conditions and, second, be sustainable (Fresco and Poppe, 2021; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Mondelaers et al., 2021). Many argue that farm size and income does not correlate as different types of farming generate different incomes and costs (Mondelaers et al., 2021). Technology should play a more important role in agriculture as it allows it to be more efficient and less polluting (Yang et al., 2017; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Fresco and Poppe, 2021). Innovation and digitization of processes are opportunities and should be developed and adapted locally (Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Fresco and Poppe, 2021; Mondelaers et al., 2021). Through those, policies could be more targeted, and the energy transition (from fuel to bio) could be smoother (Fresco and Poppe, 2021).

On the other hand, land-sharers state that sustainable farming is only feasible in small structures and through agro-ecology and/or organic processes (Kastrinos and Weber, 2020; Giller, Drupady, Fontana and Oldekop, 2018; de Jong and Vijge, 2021). Innovation and productivity are not the answer to SD and increasing the size of structures is impossible in the long term (Timko et al., 2018; Giller, Drupady, Fontana and Oldekop, 2018). For sustainable farming, prosperity is more important than productivity and farmers need to flourish in limited resources by increasing citizens’ participation (e.g. to buy local) (Moore, 2015). Social and economic changes are essential for the future of agriculture, but research and innovation are not (Moore, 2015). Current regulations do not help to fight climate change and are “inefficient and harmful” for the environment (The CAP and the SDGs, 2021; Global Justice Now, 2017).

Both agree that a transition to more “green” energies and methods is necessary (Fresco and Poppe, 2021) and that all decisions should be locally targeted and adapted to geographical and social contexts based on farmers’ feedback and experiences (Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020).

#### iv. The Future of Small-Scale Farming

We note that there is no harmonized approach, yet, in sustainable agriculture (Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020). We observe a strong need for a local agenda in order to bridge the gaps between practice and theory (Giller, Drupady, Fontana and Oldekop, 2018; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Grzebyk and Stec, 2015; Moore, 2015; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Fresco and Poppe, 2021). Agriculture is a commons, with many STK: cooperation between domestic and foreign decisions while listening to relevant experts is crucial to avoid trade-offs and policy incoherence (Ansari, Wijen and Gray, 2013; Kloke-Lesch, 2018; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Dalampira and Nastis, 2019). Some believe that cities should be main actors in policy making for agriculture (Fresco and Poppe, 2021).

Sustainable agriculture and agro-ecology, whether it is technological or traditional, require thinking ahead and collaborating between all parties, especially local small farmers as they represent agriculture’s majority (Kastrinos and Weber, 2020; Giller, Drupady, Fontana and Oldekop, 2018; de Jong and Vijge, 2021).

Moreover, SSF is a key sector of the SDGs and of the SD in the EU (Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020). It has many benefits that fit within the SDGs. Some are the following: high employment rate per unit area, evidence of stronger community and social networks and economic resilience of mixed-farming and Community Supported Agriculture (Recanati et al., 2019). The EU has been working on many projects to gather opinions and experiences from SSF to improve its coherence in decision-making (e.g. BOND project, Future of Food and Farming...) (BOND Project, 2020; Mondelaers et al., 2021).

Therefore, SDGs’ implementation in EU agriculture and more particularly in the CAP, is an opportunity to improve policies and unite all STK for the future of sustainable agriculture (Recanati et al., 2019).

## b. The Sustainable Development Goals

### i. Origins

In 2015, the UN unanimously adopted the Agenda 2030: a “plan of action for people, planet and prosperity” (Kloke-Lesch, 2018). The Agenda consists of 17 SDGs aiming at ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring prosperity for all (Dalampira and Nastis, 2019). Each goal has its own targets and indicators that parties can choose and adapt according to their own capabilities and objectives (Dalampira and Nastis, 2019; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020). Improving society’s quality of life with decent living conditions is expensive but has a long-term impact (Grzebyk and Stec, 2015).

SDGs’ main objective is to feed the growing population with limited resources while mitigating the environmental impact (Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020). Therefore, the agriculture sector, and more precisely SSF, is crucial for the success of the SDGs (Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020).

### ii. Implementation in the European Union

The EU firmly supported Agenda 2030 and implemented the SDGs in 2015, as part of the European Green Deal, (Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Bley, 2020) and in 2020, as part of a CAP reform (European Commission, 2020). The institution has been a fervent supporter of SD and it defines it as “achieving a continuous improvement in citizens’ quality of life and well-being without compromising the well-being of future generations” (Bley, 2020).

However, all agree that it is nearly impossible to have a “one policy fits all” when it comes to SD and the SDGs (McWilliams and Siegel, 2010; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Moore, 2015; de Jong and Vijge, 2021).

The main pillar of the SDGs being the social one (Shirazi and Keivani, 2017), cross-countries and cross-cultural differences lead to numerous backgrounds and pressures creating considerable gaps in measurement and monitoring of SDGs’ progress and achievement (Dalampira and Nastis, 2019; Ansari, Wijen and Gray, 2013; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; McWilliams and Siegel, 2010; Moore, 2015; de Jong and Vijge, 2021). Furthermore, the

importance of local STK and contexts for SD raises doubts about the efficiency of common policies, even at national level (Dalampira and Nastis, 2019; Ansari, Wijen and Gray, 2013; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Kloke-Lesch, 2018; de Jong and Vijge, 2021). Existing literature highlights that the SDGs targets and indicators take that into account: they are one of the most flexible international policies (Kastrinos and Weber, 2020).

Finally, the EU has been criticized for being too slow in the implementation of the SDGs and of mainly rephrasing existing policies (The CAP and the SDGs, 2021).

### iii. The Sustainable Development Goals in Agriculture

Many SDGs have an impact and consequences on agriculture however, based on the literature, the most related SDGs to agriculture are SDG 2, 13 and 15 (The CAP and the SDGs, 2021; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Timko et al., 2018). According to the progress report of the EU, since their implementation in 2015, **progress has been good for SDG 2, moderate for SDG 15 and inexistant for SDG 13** (Bley, 2020).

**SDG 2 - Zero Hunger** aims to “end hunger and promote sustainable agriculture” (UN, 2021). This goal mentions small food producers and their living conditions (e.g. the impact of the Covid-19 crisis) (UN, 2021). Target 2.3. is specifically about “doubling the agricultural productivity and incomes” of SSF by 2030 (UN, 2021).

**SDG 13 - Climate Action** focuses on finding solutions against climate change and its consequences (UN, 2021). This goal discusses the impact of intensive food production in its target 2: “integrating climate change measures in national policies and reducing GHG emissions without threatening food production” (UN, 2021). SDG 13’s indicators strongly focus on the implementation of local and national measures, illustrating that SD policies tend to usually be country specific, at the minimum (UN, 2021).

**SDG 15 - Life on Land** is centered on ecosystems and sustainable preservation of land and forests (UN, 2021). As SDG 13, this goal advocates for national and local measures to insure efficient forest and land management as well as preservation of biodiversity and ecosystems (UN, 2021).

Most argue that agricultural sustainability can best be measured at national if not regional level (Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020). For the implementation of SDGs' targets and indicators to make sense, they have to be country specific, at the minimum (Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Dalampira and Nastis, 2019). The utopic option would be to have specific indicators at farm level - this being impossible, many advice to listen to farmers and their priorities to develop coherent indicators (Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Dalampira and Nastis, 2019). We note again a strong demand for more local agendas and/or flexible policies, whatever type of farming is preferred.

#### iv. Trade Offs and Opportunities

Putting the Agenda 2030 in practice, taking into consideration everything discussed above, is a very difficult task. Indeed, many STK from agriculture, mainly in SSF, view the SDGs as greenwashing to compensate for policies like the CAP (McWilliams and Siegel, 2010; Ansari, Wijen and Gray, 2013; Kloke-Lesch, 2018). Additionally, the numerous agriculture STK, whether it is for the SDGs or the CAP, make it hard to efficiently and quickly implement common policies (Dalampira and Nastis, 2019; Kloke-Lesch, 2018).

For land-sharers, the SDGs could be the social innovation that reforms the CAP and helps decrease human activity and environmental differences, if well interpreted and implemented (Moore, 2015). As they are new and require continuous learning processes, similarly to agriculture, the SDGs could be used as a basis to transition to a more sustainable agriculture, without losing performance and economic variety (Kastrinos and Weber, 2020). For land-sparers, the focus of the SDGs on innovation and productivity is praised and they await for their full implementation, seeing it as an opportunity (Fischer et al., 2014). Hence, we highlight the flexibility of the SDGs and the complexity in the broadness of their targets.

Currently, there are very limited obligations to respect and implement them (Dalampira and Nastis, 2019). Furthermore, in practice, all discovered that the SDGs are closely interlinked and come with synergies but also trade-offs (Dalampira and Nastis, 2019; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Kloke-Lesch, 2018; Giller, Drupady, Fontana and Oldekop, 2018). For instance, forests are crucial to SD, however large-scale agriculture as the one supported by the EU and SDG 2, is the leading cause of deforestation (Timko et al., 2018; Moore, 2015).

Therefore, the SDGs could be used as the opportunity to bridge the gap that has been widening over the years, between two types of agriculture (The CAP and the SDGs, 2021). Reflexive policymaking could be implemented to decrease trade-offs as much as possible, especially as it frequently happens in agriculture (Timko et al., 2018; Moore, 2015; Kloke-Lesch, 2018; Kastrinos and Weber, 2020; de Jong and Vijge, 2021). Reflexive policymaking would include foresight and anticipation of processes essential to the SDGs implementation, involving all STK and considering different contexts, from local to global (Kastrinos and Weber, 2020; Giller, Drupady, Fontana and Oldekop, 2018; de Jong and Vijge, 2021). To achieve policy coherence at all levels and avoid collateral damages, many argue that the SDGs should rethink and embrace local over global, aiming to prosper in limited resources (Le Blanc, 2015; Giller, Drupady, Fontana and Oldekop, 2018; Moore, 2015).

Again, the main challenges here are that not everyone agrees on the topic and/or interprets the broad targets of the SDGs in the same way. Moreover, progress in the SDGs' achievement is truly hard, if not impossible, to measure (Popp and Jámbor, 2015): how could it then be a successful common policy?

### c. Conclusion

We note that the lack of common objectives in EU agriculture results in different logics and pressures, leading to conflicts and low trust (Ansari, Wijen and Gray, 2013). The absence of a harmonized approach in agriculture is a challenge for the SDGs' success, highly dependent on this sector (Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Timko et al., 2018).

**All agree that one-size fits all policies are not possible in agriculture (Moore, 2015) and that a transition is necessary towards more sustainable practices, whether it is based on innovation or small infrastructures (Kastrinos and Weber, 2020; Bley, 2020).** We believe that SDGs could be a guideline to reform current measures into more national and/or local adapted policies (Dalampira and Nastis, 2019). They could be used, as proposed by many, as an indicator and a basis towards more adaptable regulations, nationally at the minimum, as described in SDG 13 (The CAP and the SDGs, 2021; Kloke-Lesch, 2018). Moreover, as MS are individually already strongly involved in the topic, we could expect a smooth transition (Grzebyk and Stec, 2015).

Changing EU policies on agriculture to more adaptable laws through the SDGs would necessitate specific strategies solving the current feuds within the EU: small and big farmers, SSF and the EU, farmers and the SDGs. We believe that taking all STK into account in EU strategies would improve policy coherence, increase the diversification of strategies and precise the timeline and measurement frameworks for SD and, more precisely, the SDGs (Kloke-Lesch, 2018; Le Blanc, 2015; Recanati et al., 2019).

SSF represent 85% of EU agriculture, nevertheless, from the literature, we see that small farmers feel excluded from the policies, (Ansari, Wijen and Gray, 2013; Fresco and Poppe, 2021) even though their agriculture is the most in line with SDGs (United Nations, 2018; Terlau, Hirsch and Blanke, 2018). **Therefore, we decided to discuss agriculture in the EU and in the SDGs with small farmers.**

### 3. Study 1: The impact of the European Union and the Sustainable Development Goals on Small-Scale Farming

We conducted a total of 12 semi-structured interviews (6 small-scale farmers and 6 organisations), about the general impact of the EU and the SDGs on SSF. Those interviews allow us to get the experience and knowledge of experts on our topic (McIntosh and Morse, 2015). All interviewees answer the same script thus responses are comparable and quantified (McIntosh and Morse, 2015). Each interview and the interviewees' contact details are confidential.

A website with details about the project was developed (cf. Appendix 5). The website described our research processes and objectives more clearly. It was shared, first, when contacting potential participants and second, on social media platforms to enhance word-of-mouth (Allsop, Bassett and Hoskins, 2007).

#### a. Sample Selection

We interviewed the two main actors of SSF and most impacted by EU policies: small farmers and different types of organisations working with agriculture: NGOs, associations, collectives and projects (UN, 2012; Wortmann-Kolundzija, 2019; Sutherland et al., 2017).

##### i. Sample 1: Small-Scale Farmers from the Alps

We targeted small farmers (6) from the region of the French Alps for two main reasons. Firstly, known for its diverse and thorough agriculture, the Alps region (land and mountain) mixes diverse agriforms (e.g. organic, industrial, agro-ecological) and is strongly representative of agriculture in France and, to a larger extent, in the EU (French Agriculture Ministry, 2021; Agriculture des Alpes, 2021). We believe that having a small focus on this region gave us the opportunity to more deeply learn and extrapolate the impact of regulations on farmers whilst still accurately representing EU farmers. Secondly, being located in the Alps, we hoped that some of the interviews could be conducted face to face despite the sanitary measures in place at that time.

Farmers were contacted through phone or/and by email (cf. Figure 1 & 2). Their contact information is found on the online registry of all farmers from the Alps (cf. Appendix 6) and from word-of-mouth (Allsop, Bassett and Hoskins, 2007).

All farmers interviewed for the semi-structured interviews possess less than 20 hectares of land and follow agro-ecological and/or organic processes.

## ii. Sample 2: Organisations working with Small-Scale Farming

We targeted different organisations (6), all located in Europe and working with and/or for SSF. Organisations are contacted based on their degree of impact on SSF and the role the EU plays in their daily job. Organisations working with SSF play an important role as bridges and educators between the EU and farmers, thus it is crucial to have their experience and opinion for our research (UN, 2012; Wortmann-Kolundzija, 2019; Sutherland et al., 2017).

Organisations are contacted through phone or/and by email. Their contact is found based on word-of-mouth (Allsop, Bassett and Hoskins, 2007), from farmers mainly, and through basic internet search. All organisations interviewed support and work for agro-ecologic and/or organic processes.

Out of the organisations interviewed, three are based in France, one in Croatia, one in the Republic of Macedonia and one in the United Kingdom. This panel of locations was truly instructive: France is a founding member of the EU, Croatia is a fairly new member (2013), the Republic of Macedonia is preparing to join, and the United Kingdom left the EU in 2021. All being currently affected by EU regulations on agriculture, this wide range of nationalities and thus experiences gave us more perspective for our analysis. Moreover, some of those organisations' projects are financially and/or socially supported by the EU, which gives even more contrasts on experiences.

## b. Data Collection

### i. Course of Action

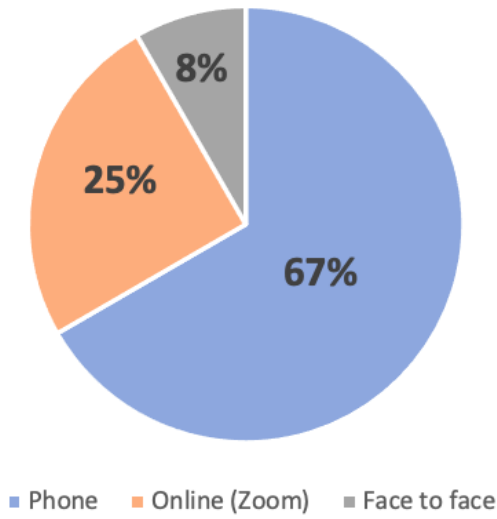
All farmers' interviews were conducted in French. Out of the 6 organisations interviewed, 3 are conducted in English (cf. Appendix 1). Thus, 50% of the organisations' interviews and 25% of all interviews are conducted in English (cf. Appendix 1).

Face-to-face interviews were planned, in order to detect non-verbal and emotional cues (Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury, 2012) and be able to more deeply understand the situations of SSF STK. However, due to the current pandemic, 8 interviews were conducted by phone, 3 were online and only 1 was face to face (cf. Appendix 1).

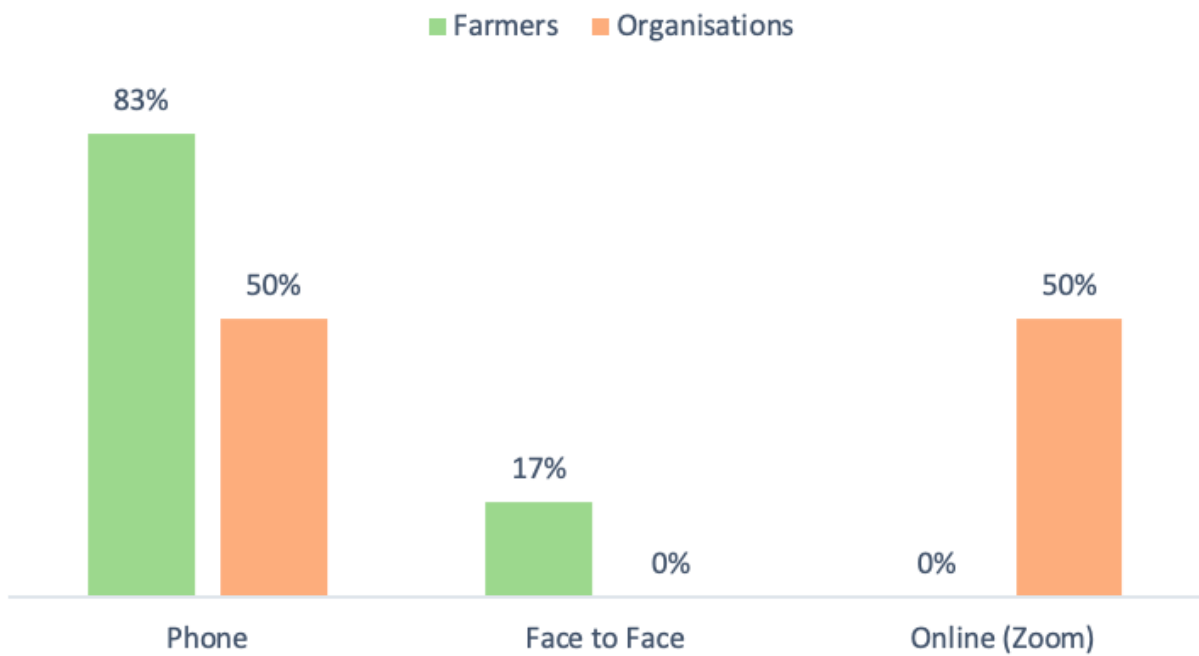
Nonetheless, we believe that having most of the interviews by phone and online ended up benefiting our research. First, phone interviews have been proved to be more efficient time- and information-wise (Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury, 2012). Second, online interviews are a positive alternative to face-to-face (Deakin and Wakefield, 2013).

Interviews lasted between 20 and 45 minutes (cf. Appendix 1 & Figure 3). As expected, our phone interviews lasted the shortest (cf. Figure 4) and tended to be more straight to the point and gave only relevant information (Irvine, Drew and Sainsbury, 2012).

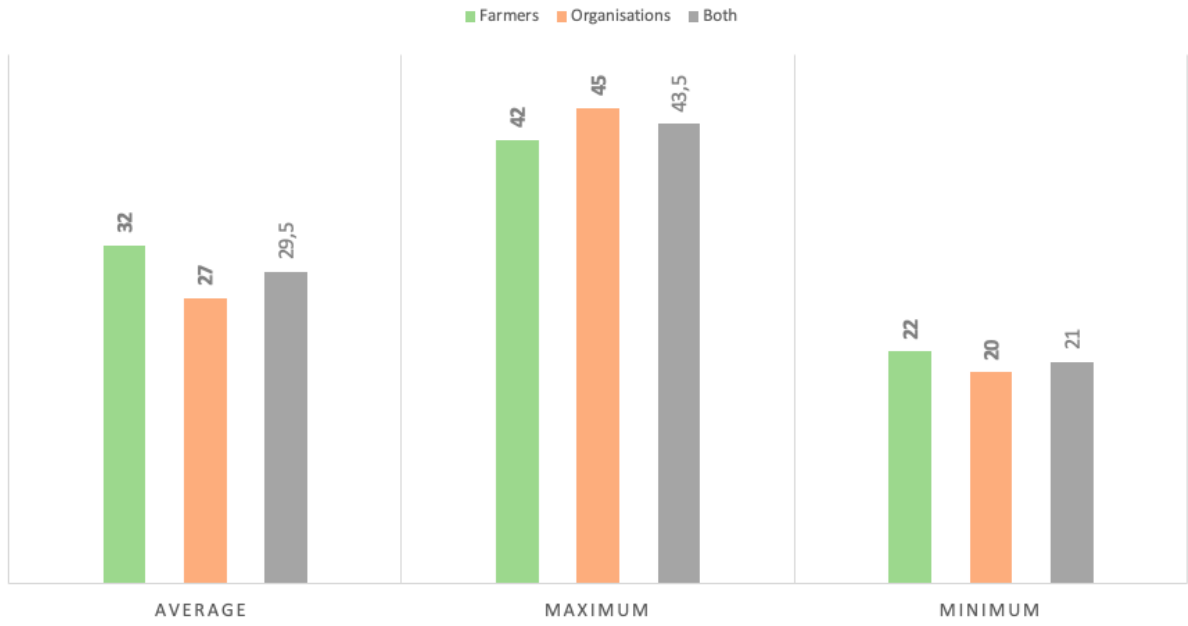
Interviews with farmers also tended to be longer on average. We acknowledge that as our topic affects them daily, they give more detailed and long answers. Second, we observed that they were not as used as organisations to discuss the EU impact on SSF and thus, organisations' answers were, most of the time, more straight to the point than farmers.



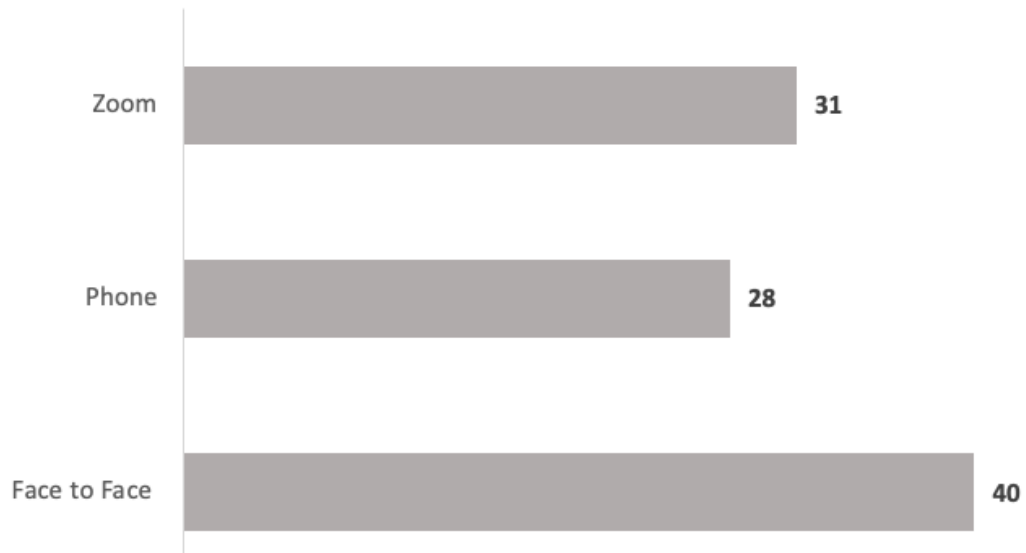
**Figure 1:** Study 1 - Interview Method



**Figure 2:** Study 1 - Interview Methods per Job



**Figure 3:** Study 1 – Interviews’ Duration



**Figure 4:** Study 1 - Average Interview Time per Method

## ii. Questionnaire Design

Based on the literature, we know that two of EU's main challenges are, first, difficulties with creating a "one policy fits all" type of regulation for agriculture and, second, policies that need to take SSF into account, as they represent a high percentage of EU farmers and seem to be the solution to SD (McWilliams and Siegel, 2010; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Moore, 2015; de Jong and Vijge, 2021). Furthermore, SSF already participates in SDGs' main objective: continue to feed the growing population with finite resources.

Therefore, the topics covered in the interview were the following:

- Impact of the EU on SSF and its trade-offs.
- Impact of SDGs on SSF and their trade-offs.
- Suggestions for the EU, SDGs and SD in general, from farmers and organisations.

Table 1: Study 1 - Interview Topics

The interview script was similar for both organisations and farmers (cf. Appendix 7). The questions were adapted based on the participants' occupation and the turn of the conversation. The topic of our research has a strong impact on participants' daily life, and they tended to answer many points at once. Thus, interviews were not comparable in their development, even though all responded to the same questions.

## c. Analytical Approach

The analysis of qualitative data was made using NVIVO and Excel. As above-said, the interview flows was different for each. Hence, we did a preliminary selection of the information from the interviews' transcripts and uploaded those into NVIVO for coding. There, the data was grouped: responses were assigned to each question/topic from our script. After, the grouped information was analysed and coded, in order to sort out patterns. Finally, the sorted data from NVIVO was uploaded in Excel. From there, quantitative data was developed. Percentages, figures and tables were analysed in order to provide thorough results.

## d. Results & Analysis

For the rest of our analysis, we remind the lector that, when talking about the EU impact, we only talk about the agriculture sector.

### i. Impact of the European Union on Small-Scale Farming

<b>TRUST in the EU</b>	<b>None – 83%</b>	<b>Strong – 17%</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Financial dependence of SFF</li> <li>○ Nothing changed before – greenwashing</li> <li>○ Should be local</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ EU in the good direction</li> <li>○ Importance of common policies</li> </ul>	
<b>Faith in the Implementation of the SDGs</b>	None – 25%	Strong – 17%	Hope but no trust – 58%
<b>Impact of the SDGs if implemented</b>	Positive – 83%	Small – 25%	

Table 2: Study 1 - Main Results

**Trust in the EU was very low** among participants: only 17% of the interviewees had faith that the EU regulations could positively impact agriculture. Others 83% stated that “nothing changed before” (e.g. F1) and that “strategies are never put into concrete actions” (e.g. N6). Some associated the regulations for SD to greenwashing.

On top of low trust from past experiences, 58% of the interviewees stated that concrete changes tend to come from regional and/or local institutions. Hence, 83% argued that efforts and funds should be directed towards **developing local decision making** and that “having similar rules for all MS does not work and makes no sense” (e.g. F2).

Furthermore, each participant mentioned at least once the **financial dependence of SSF** farmers to the EU, when they decided to take regulations into account. According to interviewees, the EU prevents small farmers from their financial autonomy by basing financial help on the size of the exploitation, consequently affecting their daily environmental and social decisions (e.g. increase land, take day-offs). Many argued that EU regulations are “made only for big structures” (e.g. F2) and thus “make no sense for SSF” (e.g. F4). Additionally, out of our sample, all agreed that industrial farming is not representative of agriculture professionals but is simply “business” (e.g. F6) and goes “against SD and nature” (e.g. F4).

Nevertheless, even the interviewees who lost trust in the potential impact of the EU, highlighted the importance of common policies (42%) and the good direction that the EU has been taking over the years, with measures like the SDGs (33%).

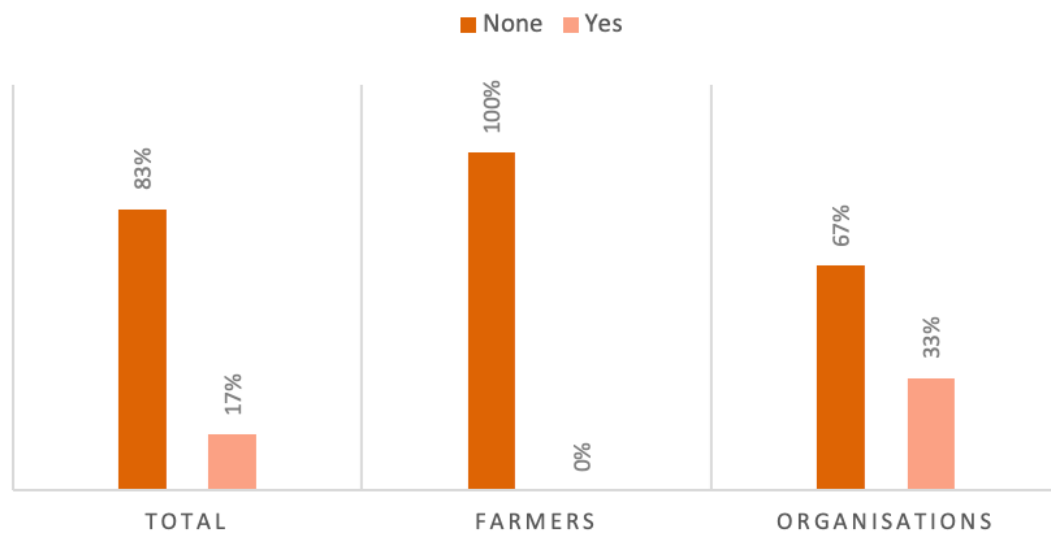


Figure 5: Study 1 - Trust in the EU

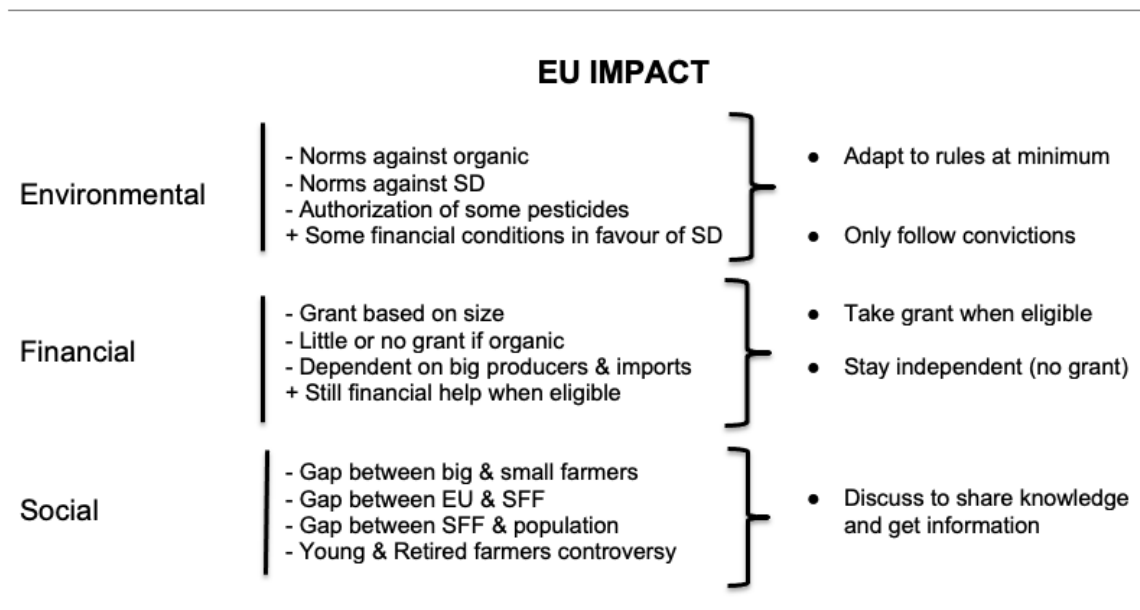


Table 3: Study 1 - EU Impact on SFF

### 1. Environmental Impact of the European Union on Small-Scale Farming

*As we explain in 3.b., our sample is strongly involved in agro-ecology. We believe it is critical to keep in mind when discussing our results.*

All the farmers and 83% of the organisations found that the EU environmental impact is **negative**, accounting for 92% of our panel. For all, the norms are made for industrialised agriculture and thus go **against SD** - even “organic norms are illogic and made for big structures” (e.g. F3). Other examples given are the normalization of seeds due to EU regulations or the complexities between European and national rules for pesticides, both aiming to manage biodiversity through industrialization of processes but, according to interviewees, considerably affecting it in the end.

To counter those policies that they disagree with, farmers and organisations described two solutions, highly dependent on context: either they **adapt to the rules at the minimum**, or they **follow their convictions and do not implement any**.

For some regulations, mainly hygienic, it would be illegal not to follow them, even though they might be a burden for small infrastructures. For instance, one farmer explains that he had to

build bathrooms for 10 people, both female and male, even though he only has one male employee. This type of sunk costs is very high and are considered illogic by small farmers.

For other regulations, if you are not eligible or simply do not ask for the grant, you do not have to implement them. Therefore, many farmers do not ask for the money they are eligible for in order to keep independence in their decision-making. They also precised that often, the time it takes to find and fill all the needed documentation costs them more than the actual grant.

When conditions for financial help are doable for SSF (e.g. adapted to SSF, easy access to administrative documents) and in line with our participants' beliefs, they do participate in EU projects and/or grants.

To conclude, interviewees strongly care about the environmental repercussions of their structure. Most already see climate change's impacts in their daily life and take decisions accordingly. However, we realize that SSF STK do not feel heard nor respected by the EU: they consider they have valuable knowledge about nature and SD and should be more consulted. Most already enforce agro-ecological norms as part of their own beliefs and thus new policies adapted to small structures would be welcomed.

## 2. Financial Impact of the European Union on Small-Scale Farming

When it comes to the EU financial impact on SSF, 83% believes it to be negative.

Firstly, 83% reported the negative impact of the funding conditions, depending on the farm size. Participants qualified big, industrialized structures as “bounty hunters”. Moreover, 67% said that even when small farms are eligible for grants, the many conditions are made for big structures and they end up losing money by implementing them, on top of the time lost in administrative tasks.

Secondly, participants noted that financial help is smaller to non-existent for biodynamics and organic practices. Even more, 33% of the farmers lost their EU help when transitioning their farm to organic, due to the conditions of eligibility.

Thirdly, 67% of the organisations mentioned the dependency of agriculture on big producers and on imports. For instance, in France, organic supply is below demand and most has to be imported. In Croatia and in Macedonia, domestic agricultural production faces problematic issues due to the facilitation of imports within the EU with substantially lower prices. This worries organisations that fear SSF might tend to the same problems as industrialized agriculture (e.g. need to increase productivity to survive) due to lack of financial means and regulations to protect local SSF.

As a result of those controversies (and the environmental ones discussed above), some farmers entirely stopped asking for help, even when eligible, to stay independent and autonomous. From our sample, the ones who still take the funds highlighted that they take what they can have from their current situation and do not make decisions according to potential EU grant (e.g. do not increase size of their land or use pesticides to get funding). We noted similar behaviours from organisations. Convictions predominate over money.

Nevertheless, we note that, in general, controversies about funding conditions are the most well-known and talked about (e.g. in TV debates). But surprisingly, they are the most nuanced among our panel. All participants, especially farmers, always highlighted that, even though it is rare, when the amount matches the need and/or the project, the EU financial help is positive and helpful. We believe that this might be for two reasons.

First, our panel being convinced about the need for agroecology and organic practices, the financial aspect of their job is not the most important nor the most critical to act upon institutionally: they “don’t do it for the money” (e.g. N6). Also, it was highlighted that farmers tend to lose their fund when transitioning. This seems very odd, as organic processes are in line with SD and that the EU aims for 25-30% of organic practices by 2030 (European Commission, 2021), but it explains that getting more EU funds is not interviewees’ priority.

Second, the conditions for funding being viewed as a cause and a consequence of the increased industrialisation of agriculture and the lobbying system in place, farmers enhance their need for autonomy over being funded by the EU. **All interviewees stated that farmers would prefer to be able to make a liveable wage without the help of the EU than getting more EU funds.** In most cases, either they already stopped asking for funds they may be eligible for

in accordance with their belief or they are too small and not eligible, even though most cannot properly live with their salary (Salon, 2021).

A vicious circle has been created: **farmers cannot live on their own salaries so they increase the size of their land to get financial help, becoming financially dependent on the EU and not practicing as they would like to (a.k.a have less land and follow organic processes). We believe that giving small farmers their financial autonomy back, allowing them to live off their sales, should be the first priority of the EU to improve small farmers' trust.**

### 3. Social Impact of the European Union on Small-Scale Farming

100% agreed on the negative social impact of the EU on SSF.

Participants explained that you have to “team up with big lobbying groups to have a voice at the table” (e.g. N6) and that “even though groups defending SSF exist, regulations do not seem to take our knowledge into consideration” (e.g. F3).

Moreover, participants expressed that it takes a lot of time to find and understand all the documentation to ask for funds or label recognition. One farmer explained that they cannot fill in all the EU papers by themselves, due to lack of time, so they hired someone to do it. But not everyone can: some participants suggested that this type of service should be given and/or funded by the EU. Organisations stated that “farmers do not know what they can ask for” (e.g. N2) and that organisations have to “compensate for the lack of EU communication by teaching and sharing about EU policies with farmers” (e.g. N6). More than half of interviewees (58%) suggested that the population should be educated on agriculture and farming. One explains that people do not link climate change to agriculture even though it is crucial for SD and the SDGs. Another highlighted that few consumers respect and/or know seasons, even when buying organic products (e.g. no tomatoes in January). Therefore, we note a strong request for education between parties (e.g. educate the EU on SSF's needs, educate SSF on EU processes, educate the population about agriculture), especially from organisations (75%).

Furthermore, 25% brought up the issue of farmers retiring without anyone to take back the farm or, oppositively, young farmers looking for a farm and not finding one. Even though

organisations and communities already try locally to fix the problem, this is already a studied and worrying social impact for the future of SSF (Timko et al., 2018; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Recanati et al., 2019).

Finally, all participants highlighted the gap between those in favour of SSF and those in favour of industrialized agriculture (EU regulations, according to our panel).

Currently, interviewees said that they deal with this negative social impact by discussing and interacting with other locals (farmers, organisations, population...), both to get information but also share knowledge. For instance, websites and focus groups on how to redefine the CAP are very active among farmers and organisations (e.g. For Another CAP).

Contrary to our expectations, everyone felt the strongest about the EU social impact. This appears mainly due to the big gap created between STK of SSF and industrialized agriculture: small farmers feel excluded from the discussion.

Moreover, education is needed for all STK of agriculture, to improve the relationship and dialogue. We believe making regulations understandable and accessible to all farmers should be the EU social priority. Access to a minimum understanding of everyone's point of view and challenges, from regulators to farmers, would be a strong start to have more supported regulations and involved farmers.

## ii. Small-Scale Farming and the Sustainable Development Goals

In the development of our interview, we asked participants if they knew about the SDGs and if yes, to what extent. If they did not know anything or only very little, we gave a brief description of the SDGs before going on.

## 1. Interviewees' Knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals

### KNOWLEDGE OF SDGs


<b>None – 42%</b>	Never heard of it before our interview.	<u>Differences noted since 2015</u> 
<b>Small – 25%</b>	Knows about SDGs from personal life or readings.	
<b>Strong – 33%</b>	Got educated about it by EU representatives.	

Table 4: Study 1 - Knowledge of the SDGs

Out of all the participants, 42% never heard of the SDGs - all farmers. Only 1 heard a little bit about them, accounting for 17% of the farmers. From the 58% left, only 33% have been educated about the SDGs and take them into consideration in their projects. We observe that 8% of the participants know about the SDGs from their personal life but do not apply them professionally.

Additionally, we asked participants to grade from 1 to 10 if and how much the EU helps SSF to “continue to feed the growing population with finite resources”, which is the ultimate objective of the Agenda 2030. Out of the 12 participants, all stated that the EU does not help SSF to achieve this objective. The average grade is 2/10. Farmers disagreed more strongly with an average of 1.7/10, 50% of them answering 0/10 and no one above 4.5/10. Organisations' maximum was slightly better (5/10) and their average was 2.4/10.

Moreover, when asked to comment on their grade, 42% argued that actions are useless if not local: “you cannot have common agricultural policies if each region has its own rules and constraints” (e.g. F2). Some emphasized, again, that EU policies are not written for SSF, even though “SSF is the solution to feed the growing population” (e.g. F1). On a more positive note, 58% of interviewees, including 83% of the organisations, believed that there is a strong willingness from the EU to solve the issue.

These results are consistent with the **lack of knowledge and trust in the EU** discussed before. Indeed, most “do not care” (e.g. N6) about regulations such as the SDGs, and only “take money when eligible for” (e.g. F5). However, we know SDGs' objectives, environmentally at the

minimum, are, on paper, similar to our interviewees'. Agro-ecological processes are part of the daily routine of all participants: they answer most of the SDGs' targets without even knowing it! Therefore, we argue that SSF's actors should have been more involved in the SDGs' agricultural decisions and communication of the EU. We believe it would have improved trust and dialogue.

Organisations who take the SDGs into account have been educated on them by EU and/or national initiatives, confirming that STK's opinion on the EU could improve through education and communication. We believe that this communication strategy should be extended by institutions to all SSF STK, especially farmers. Moreover, some organisations explained that having the SDGs as common ground makes it easier to discuss with regulators. SDGs could be used as a **tool to bridge the gap** between all stakeholders. Therefore, we wonder whether they will support the SDGs once they know more about them.

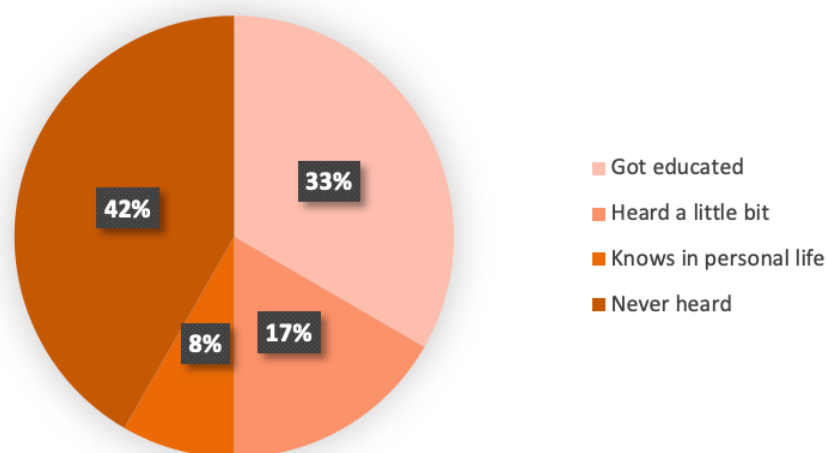


Figure 6: Study 1 - Knowledge of SDGs

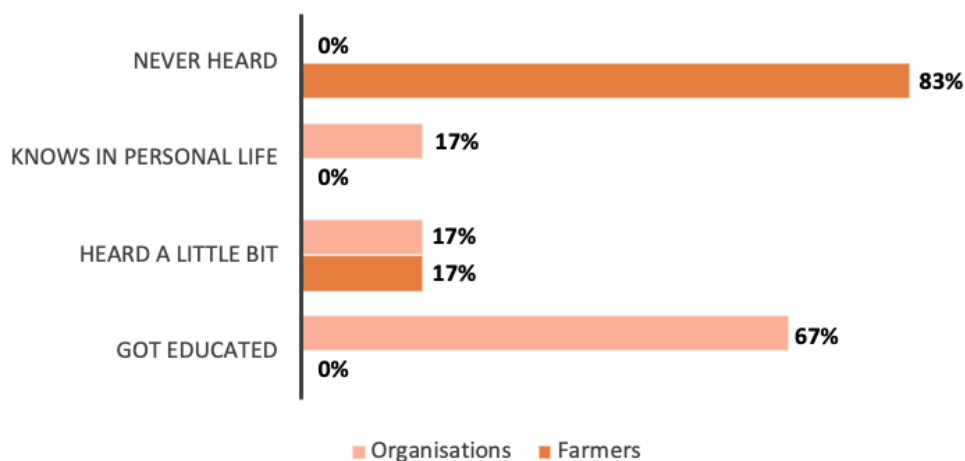


Figure 7: Study 1 - Knowledge of SDGs per job

## 2. Potential Impact of the Sustainable Development Goals on Small-Scale Farming

Since 2015 and the implementation of the SDGs by the UN, 92% of interviewees did not see any differences in the EU policies and conditions for agriculture, especially not when it comes to SD. Nonetheless, they pointed out that EU policies tend to have a medium to long term impact: it usually takes more than 5 years for policies to be fully implemented.

As we discussed the SDGs, 17% had strong faith in their implementation - all organisations. Contrarily, 25% of participants, all farmers, had absolutely no faith nor trust in SDGs' implementation. They believed it is "greenwashing" (e.g. F4) and that it "won't change anything, as it never did in the past" (e.g. F6). The remaining (58%) strongly hoped that they would but had little optimism and trust, as last policies were not in this direction: "big strategies without concrete actions" (e.g. N1). Furthermore, if the SDGs were to be truly implemented, 83% believed they would have a positive impact.

Again, we see that interviewees educated about the SDGs are the ones who trust them the most. Organisations – who, for most, already take the SDGs daily in consideration - all believed/hoped that the SDGs will impact SSF and SD in general. We wonder whether farmers' opinion might be different if they were more aware of the SDGs and the processes behind them. The mention of "greenwashing" was crucial as it is the contrary that the UN wants to convey (UN, 2020).

This result suggests that the **lack of trust in the EU is a consequence of, first, past experiences and, second, lack of effective communication of the decisions.** Even though most believed that the SDGs won't be implemented, participants approved what the institutions are aiming at. Moreover, for most participants, the SDGs were explained by our interviewer in less than two minutes. Proper marketing and information management could truly make a difference.

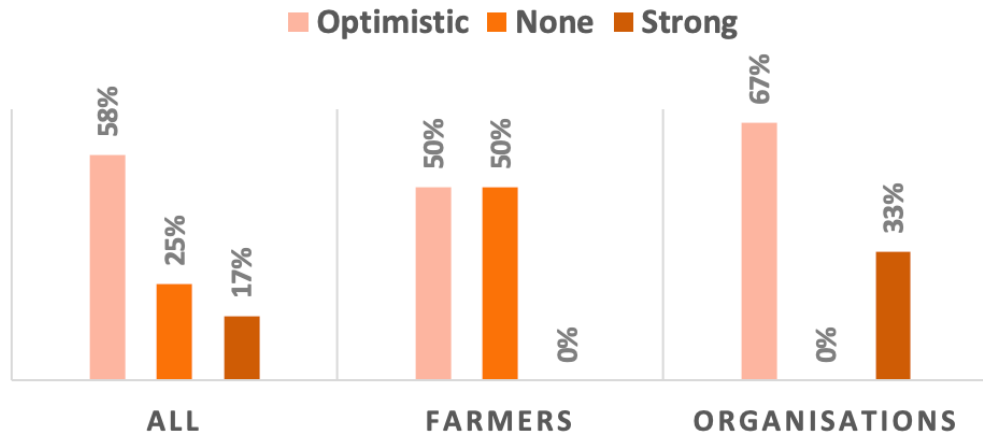


Figure 8: Study 1 - Faith in SDGs' Implementation

iii. Suggested Improvements

**Does EU help SFF with the objective of Agenda 2030?**

<b>No</b>	• Useless & incoherent actions	→ Organic Farming
	• Regulations not made for SFF	→ Educate Stakeholders & Adapt
	• Farmers are dependant	→ Change Conditions for Funding

**Noted by all participants, strong willingness of EU.**

Table 5: Study 1 - EU help towards SFF's achievement of Agenda 2030

At the end of our interviews, we ask participants which aspect of SD and SFF is the most important to focus on. The social aspect is the most mentioned (92%), closely followed by the financial one (83%). More than half of interviewees (67%) strongly insisted that all three aspects should work together - "if you remove one leg of a three-legged stool, you can't sit down." (e.g. N3).

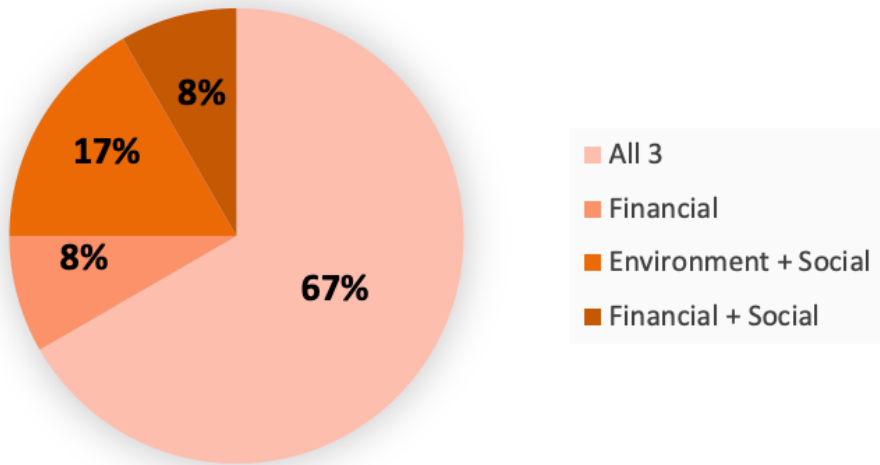


Figure 9: Study 1 - Most Important Aspect

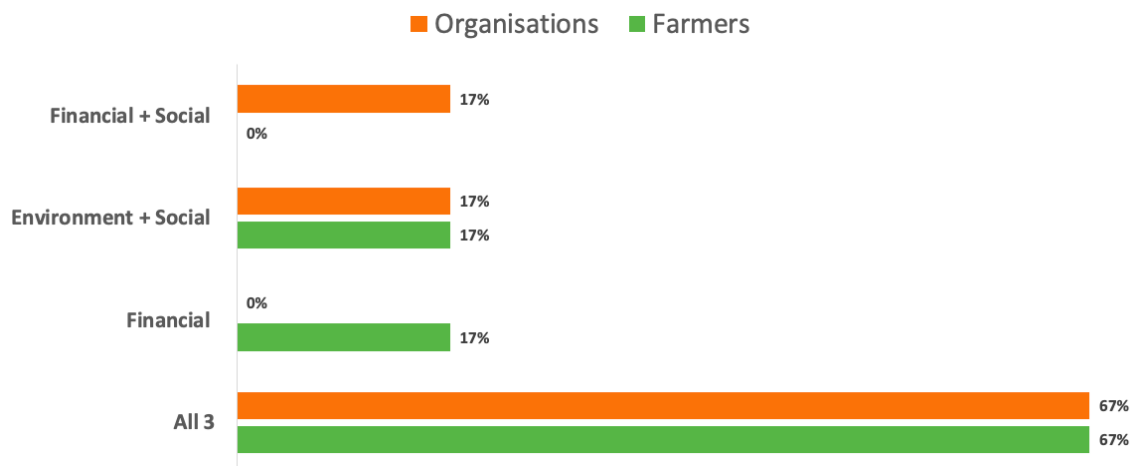


Figure 10: Study 1 - Most Important Aspects per Job

## 1. Environmental - Organic Farming

Our participants strongly assessed that “there is no SD without organic farming and no organic farming without SSF” (e.g. F1). Interviewees argued that, as the EU does not help organic farmers to develop financially and environmentally, it is difficult to have faith in the good intention behind the SDGs.

**We emphasize that organic farmers interviewed lost their EU grants when converting to organic and agro-ecological practices and/or have never been eligible for it (3.d.2).** For instance, one farmer explained that when converting, the EU financially covered less than 2% of their transitioning costs - that is way less than the grant they had before. We however note this might have changed with the new regulations of the CAP 2020.

The organic farming theme strongly shows the need to bridge the gap between EU regulators and the principal SSF STK: farmers. Moreover, organic farming cannot be industrialized (yet, at least) and hence, can only be done in small farms (European Commission, 2021).

To conclude, many strategies (e.g. Organic Action Plan) seem contradictory with the actions taken (e.g. no financial help) and thus increase lack of trust from STK. Even though new regulations might take long to implement, the SDGs’ reasoning appears - for most of it and from our results analysis - opposed to current policies faced by SSF. Sustainable food being the backbone of the European Green Deal and its Organic Action Plan, aiming for 25% of the EU farming to be organic by 2030 (European Commission, 2021), we believe that actions towards decreasing doubts of SSF STK towards the EU may be crucial.

## 2. Social - Education and Communication

67% of our participants believe that the next step for SSF and SD is to educate all STK. Our interviewees enhance the “need for a global vision of agriculture”.

First, as explained above, participants expressed that EU regulations do not take SSF daily challenges into account. They felt that laws are made for industrial agriculture which makes little sense for most SSF practices, especially organic ones. Furthermore, SSF is different everywhere, not only nationally: you do not have the same constraints in the mountains or at

sea. Thus, participants were all in favour of more flexible rules that everyone could implement according to their own challenges and habits. **In a few words: “listen to locals” (e.g. F6) and “focus on actions that make sense for SSF and SD” (e.g. N4).** 83% mentioned that the EU should consider having more adaptable and flexible laws. We saw during interviews that farmers and organisations already organized solutions to counteract what they consider “bad” regulations (e.g. forum for a new CAP).

The SDGs take this issue into account: their targets are flexible and allow implementation in the best suitable way. Therefore, we have strong faith that the **SDGs could be the basis of a new coordination** and integration for SSF. More communication on the implementation of the SDGs in agriculture and their adaptability for regions and communities could be the first step to make farmers feel more heard and improve the relationship between regulators and SSF’s STK. We highlight that the EU is currently working on new partnerships to improve trust and involve more farmers in decision-making (e.g. Farm to Fork, BOND Project...). Thus, we believe that the EU could continue working on bridging the gap and consulting locals to provide inclusive policies with less conditions through the SDGs too.

Second, we noticed two types of misinformation: first, which policies are in place and their impact on SSF and second, how to impact the EU regulators (e.g. lobbying). Some interviewees explained that farmers “have to register in associations to have an impact on lobbying” (e.g. N2) but that “lobbying in favour of SSF usually does not work” (e.g. F5). On the other hand, organisations interviewed, that work as bridges between the EU and SSF, explained that “farmers do not have the time to do administrative tasks such as getting informed on new regulations” (e.g. N1). All confirmed it: “farmers have to look for the information and the trade-offs between time lost and potential financial help is very thin” (e.g. N6). Thus, informing about existing policies and/or how and with whom to lobby is usually done by organisations independent from the EU (e.g. BOND Project, AMAPs).

We believe that sharing information to SSF actors and teaching them how to pass on their opinion to regulators should be done by the EU - maybe through regions. Developing communication on the fields for Agenda 2030 could be a great starting point as the SDGs are already very well communicated and easily accessible online: all the organisations educated about the SDGs pointed it out. Small farmers need to be educated on EU operations.

Thirdly, more than half of our participants stated that the EU population needs to learn about agriculture and SD. As it is mentioned by our participants “climate change is not linked to agriculture yet”, even though it is one of its biggest drivers (Recanati et al., 2019). 36% of interviewees highlighted that, even for organic products, agriculture is a lot dependent on imports, due to lack of knowledge from consumers. Indeed, few people respect seasons or get informed on how land is impacted (e.g. impact of corn on land field).

Even though all interviewees see a change in the current trend, we still suggest education of the population on agriculture to be done by the EU. We think that implementing it as part of the National SD Strategies would be a great start (cf. Appendix 9). Also, the marketing campaign for the SDGs could be extended to the general population, teaching about the needs for SD and more.

### 3. Financial - Funding Conditions

Firstly, from our interviewees’ perspective, eligibility conditions for EU financial help are not in favour of SSF’s development and more specifically, organic producers.

Secondly and most importantly, interviewees all enhanced their need for **autonomy**. Farmers need to live from their sales and not be dependent on EU grant to survive. They highlighted that if “you can’t make a decent salary from farming, there won’t be any young farmers” (e.g. N5). The young/retired farmers dilemma is an important and strongly studied issue (Recanati et al., 2019; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020). Indeed, for some regions like the Alps, SSF is crucial for the survival of ecosystems and biodiversity (Agriculture des Alpes, 2021).

83% of participants thought that financial help should be redirected to the ones who most need it, SSF or not, based on more realistic criteria: average yearly salary, need for employees, financial situation, national prices, etc... Those criteria should be decided with farmers, big and small. Most have faith that if the criteria are accurate, financial help received by each will change regularly and this will help SSF farmers get more independent over time while strongly participating in Agenda 2030. 67% believe that SSF needs more funds to develop a financially sustainable system, or it will be “the end” of SSF. Finally, many insisted that encouraging bigger farms’ size goes against SD.

Again, we keep in mind that the EU is aware of this issue and working on it (The CAP and the SDGs, 2021). Moreover, as explained before, the farmers interviewed are not all asking for the grant they are eligible for.

The conditions for funding based on size could change as part of the implementation of the SDGs in regulations. We believe that it will, based on the CAP reform about transitioning to organic (European Commission, 2021).

#### iv. Conclusion

To conclude, our results showed that small farmers need to be autonomous, financially but not only: autonomy in decision-making is also crucial. Implementing regulations going against SSF's principles and/or local common sense considerably damages the relationship between the EU and farmers. Moreover, for SFF STK, projects like the SDGs appear fundamentally opposed to existing ones (e.g. CAP funding conditions). Thus, even though most agree with the SDGs, it is difficult for interviewees to trust that the EU will implement them. Moreover, trade-offs between the SDGs and the CAP are numerous and need to be addressed. The SDGs could be used as a basis for the guidelines of the new CAP.

Additionally, the last reforms of the CAP targets organic farming more. Hence, we expect it to only increase as the SDGs are implemented too (European Commission, 2021). Organic farming is not the main priority of the EU when it comes to SD in agriculture and, as we discussed in the LR, "land-sparers" approach is different from our panel. Thus, as one of our participants said, "helping farmers transition to agroecology is already a big step forward for SDGs' success" (e.g. N2).

We observe that lack of faith in the SDGs comes from lack of trust in the EU and not the SDGs themselves. On the contrary, most interviewees believe that SDGs would be a great step forward. **Therefore, to improve its relationships with SSF actors, the EU could consult them upstream and inform them directly once decisions are implemented.** Most farmers do not have the time to look for EU information themselves and have to go through associations. This could be improved too: there is a strong need for communication.

#### 4. Study 2 - Discussing the Sustainable Development Goals with Small Farmers

After preliminary analysis of Study 1's results, we acknowledged that SSF STK lack trust in the EU due to their lack of knowledge and involvement in decision making. The way some regulations are written, opposed to STK's needs and challenges, make them feel left out. Additionally, interviewees who have faith in the SDGs (and in the EU) were the ones educated about them and/or involved in EU projects. Therefore, we believe there is a strong need for education of all parties and an increased involvement of SSF STK in decision making.

For this purpose, we decided to stop semi-structured interviews and conduct in-depth interviews. During those, we presented and discussed specific targets from the SDGs related to agriculture. We conducted 5 in-depth interviews exclusively with farmers, focusing on the impact of SDGs in SSF. This step of our data collection was spread over approximately 3 weeks.

Based on Study 1 and our secondary data, we chose precise targets and indicators of the SDGs to focus on. This process allowed us to dig deeper into our research questions and collect concrete comments and suggestions on the existing policies (Stokes and Bergin, 2006). Through our open-ended questions about the SDGs, we sought more information and opinions from farmers (Guion, Diehl and McDonald, 2011).

We expected these interviews to give us more insights on two levels. Firstly, from a technical point of view, farmers got the opportunity to get into details and give their professional opinion on the SDGs. This allowed concrete ground to justify the need to involve SSF more. Secondly, to some extent, we educated them on the SDGs through the solution we proposed (sharing knowledge). Hence, we are able to analyse and compare whether being more aware changed their perspective and attitude towards the EU.

The goal of those in-depth interviews was to provide precise suggestions for the SDGs based on the daily life of SSF farmers. Each interview and the contact details of interviewees are confidential.

## a. Sample Selection

We interviewed exclusively farmers (5) from the Alps.

Following Study 1, it made more sense to interview small farmers already involved in SD and agro-ecological processes in order to look for more precise information. Thus, all possess less than 20 hectares of land and most follow agro-ecological processes.

Farmers were contacted through phone or/and by email. Their contact information was found from word-of-mouth.

## b. Data Collection

### i. Course of Action

In-depth interviews were conducted online, using Zoom (40%), or by phone (60%) - it depended on the farmers' preferences. A PowerPoint presentation (cf. Appendix 8) was shared if the interview was online.

All interviews were in French and lasted between 26 and 45 minutes, for an average of 33 minutes.

Contrary to Study 1, we observed that phone interviews were averagely longer. Indeed, it took more time for the interviewer to explain and describe the SDGs by phone. Oppositively, as our PowerPoint was detailed, Zoom interviews were shorter than expected. Farmers tended to usually give descriptive answers but very straight to the point.

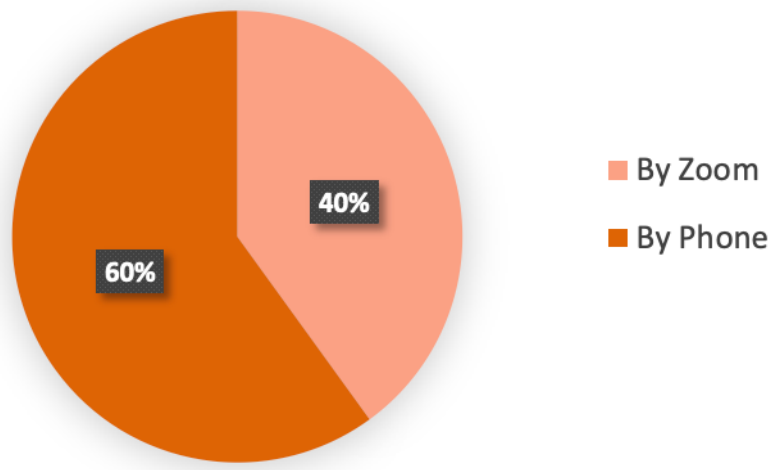


Figure 11: Study 2 - Interview Methods

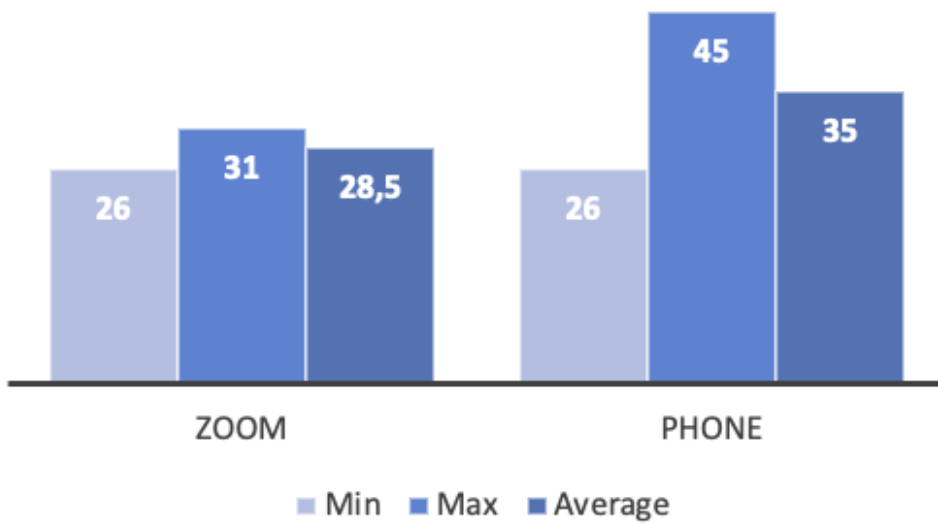


Figure 12: Study 2 - Interviews' Duration per Method (in minutes)

## ii. Questionnaire Design

The interview progressed in two stages.

First, we presented our preliminary results from semi-structured interviews. Then, we dove in the SDGs' presentation and more precisely, the ones on agriculture. Secondly, we discussed the three SDGs impacting agriculture (2,13,15) according to the literature (Recanati et al., 2019; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020). The objective was to get opinions and suggestions for policy makers based on the experience and daily life of the farmers.

Each SDG is composed of many targets (Dalampira and Nastis, 2019; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020) thus, for relevance and time constraints, we discussed only targets 2.3, 13.2 and 15.a. We chose those according to the semi-structured interviews' results and the LR.

As the problematic of farmers' financial distress following the industrialization of agriculture was strongly emphasized in Study 1, it made sense to dig deeper into it, thus we chose SDG 2.3 (cf. Table 6).

Secondly, we chose SDG 13.2 for two reasons. First, climate change is one of the main drivers of SD and the SDGs. Second, the emphasis of SGD 13.2 on national plans correlates with our primary and secondary data (cf. Table 6).

Third, the role of the EU in biodiversity's and ecosystems' preservation was set as SD's priorities in Study 1. Therefore, we talked SDG15.a (cf. Table 6).

<b>SDGs</b>	<b>Description</b>
2.3	By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers.
13.2	Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.
15.a	Mobilize and significantly increase financial resources from all sources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems

Table 6: Study 2 - SDGs' Targets

### c. Analytical Approach

cf. Analytical Approach Study 1.

### d. Results & Analysis

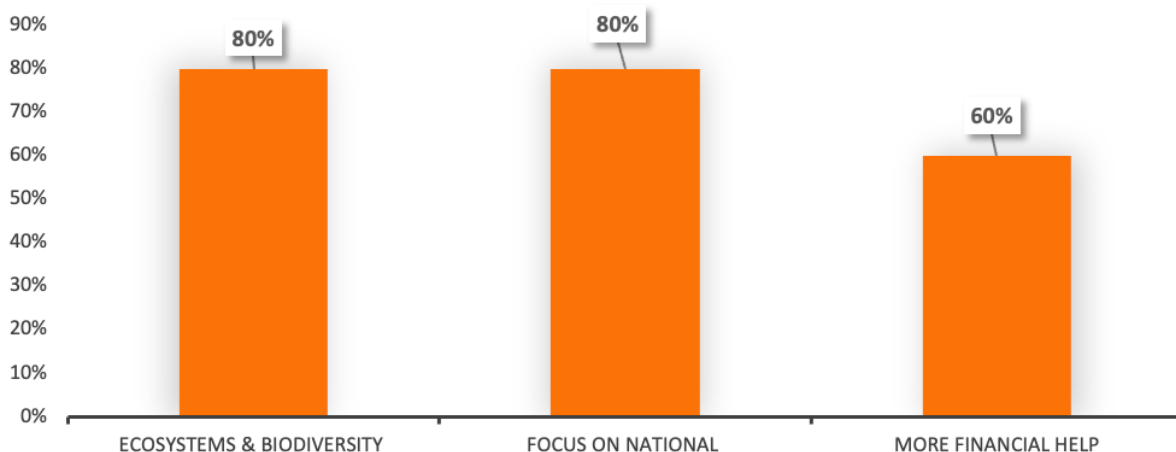
#### i. Benefits of Sustainable Development Goals 2,13 & 15

After analysing our results, we observed that participants praised 3 main benefits to the SDGs proposed.

Firstly, 80% of our panel believed that the SDG 13 and 15 will have a **positive impact for ecosystems and biodiversity**. Most of the farmers are very enthusiastic about SDG 15. They stated that it “makes a lot of sense” (e.g. F7) and that having financial help directed towards biodiversity to a greater extent than today is a step forward SD. However, they were septic about the conditions for financial help. Indeed, farmers are the ones shaping the landscape and, even if most do their best to not impact nature, “not everyone does and/or can” (e.g. F10). Finally, some participants reminded us that “nature changes all the time therefore so should the laws” (e.g. F8).

Secondly, the **focus on national** and regional regulations in SDGs’ targets, is supported by 80% of interviewees. They insisted that it would make a big difference, especially for SDG 13 and 15: agricultural methods and their impacts depend on many criteria and are different across the EU. Each region should be able to “adapt to its landscape and biodiversity” (e.g. F9). For instance, in the Alps, the wolf needs to be taken into account in farmers’ and regulators’ decision-making, which is not the case in central Germany. Moreover, mentalities and backgrounds also play a huge role and thus having adaptable laws would be a relief for many.

Thirdly, 60% believed that having **more financial help**, especially when it comes to SDG 2, is a very good idea. However, they insisted that increasing salaries by and/or to increase productivity was not a solution that would be viable in SSF. Also, most of the farmers were not motivated by higher salaries but by “having a family life and days off” (e.g. F10). Thus, the idea of doubling salaries is on the “right track” (e.g. F7) but farmers stayed cautious with the conditions associated.



**Figure 13:** Study 2 - Benefits of the SDGs

ii. Issues with the Sustainable Development Goals 2,13 & 15

For all the SDGs, 100% of our participants emphasized that the targets focus too much on productivity and innovation, which, in their opinion, is not a solution for SD in agriculture, on the contrary.

Many argued that EU policies lead to industrialisation which “discourage farmers to act in favour of biodiversity” (e.g. F9). Furthermore, all participants highlighted that SSF cannot play a big role in fighting climate change - if not none. They argued that industrial agriculture is the one responsible for agriculture's negative impact. Indeed, all insisted that SSF does not modify nature and landscape and thus following targets like SDG 13 would be “a nonsense” (e.g. F7). Moreover, selling local and from diversified small farms is, according to them, an impactful sustainable solution developed by SSF and communities.

Secondly, climate change has big consequences on interviewees’ daily life (e.g. frost). They already take measures at personal level to fight it and emphasized that SSF becomes more and more difficult due to the policies in place on top of extreme weather conditions. Therefore, they emphasized that SSF should not be the priority of SD in agriculture. If we were to help agriculture transitions for SD, many argued that investment should be directed to increase the

number “human size structures” (e.g. F11) (a.k.a SSF) and to develop the use of green energies such as animal traction or having more workforce to use less machinery.

**In our panel’s view, increasing productivity, even if it is with innovation in favour of SD and nature, would be repeating the same mistakes as the CAP.** Limitation of size and adaptable laws were mentioned by all interviewees as crucial for the future of agriculture. Again, they all considered that SSF is not responsible for a bad impact on climate change: “small farmers are already careful with SD” (e.g. F10).

By decreasing farmers’ autonomy (cf. Study 1) and making them dependent on innovation (e.g. new material or GMO imposed by CAP), it seems that the EU took away some small farmers’ - some now industrials - willingness to work respectfully of nature. This race for productivity, from our results, appears to be the main cause of EU agriculture's negative impact on the environment (cf. LR) and of SSF STK’s lack of trust. We believe that arguing for productivity and innovation won’t improve the relationship between the EU and most small farmers in favour of agro-ecology.

### iii. Suggested Improvements of the Sustainable Development Goals 2, 13 & 15

All farmers, as in Study 1, agreed that giving back small farmers their **autonomy**, financially but not only, is a priority. The potential dependency of farmers, whether industrial or small, on EU funding as presented in the SDGs, was highly criticized. Additionally, many farmers stated that they don’t feel autonomous as they cannot take days off for financial and practical reasons. Therefore, developing policies in favour of farmers’ independence was strongly recommended: “just increasing our revenues would increase our productivity” (e.g. F7). Farmers need to be able to “live off their products through fair prices” (e.g. F9) and be “independent from institutions to survive” (e.g. F11).

Measures taken should be relevant and flexible. For instance, educating the population on farming should be considered as consumers are the ones ‘making’ the price. Also, providing help for small farmers with administrative, marketing and all farming-unrelated needed tasks to improve their quality of life might be a good option.

Still in this direction, 100% of our participants highlighted that decisions should be **local** and in favour of **quality over quantity**. Innovation and use of AI and diverse machinery is not the solution (cf.6.d.ii). Reducing imports and GHG emissions by eating local and from organic and/or agro-ecological farms was seen as the most efficient solution by farmers. All agreed that it is “better to produce less with good quality and at the right price” (e.g. F7). They emphasized that few regulators and consumers consider this an option and thus the EU should work on educating people.

Finally, 80% argued in favour of **changing mentalities**. As in Study 1, education of all STK was mentioned. For example, some argue that agriculture is separated between the ones that “do it with passion” and the ones that “do it for the CAP money” (e.g. F9). All stated that funding should be based on the number of active people in farms and the relevance of the projects. They believed it would incentivize big farms to hire more people and be more connected to nature: “innovation is not the only way to feed everyone” (e.g. F11). Also, farmers stated that changing the general mindset when it comes to local products and nature in general is crucial for their survival (e.g. respecting seasons, paying the fair price for food...).

We know that 85% of EU agriculture is SSF. However, the policies in place, according to our panel, are in favour of the 15% of industrial farms. Our participants argued that **between the two types of agriculture, SSF and industrialized farming, the former is compatible with SD while the latter is not**. Therefore, even though the SDGs were welcomed by small farmers, the regulations and actions should be meaningfully adapted to both agriculture and in line with main objectives (e.g. fight climate change).

Issues with SDGs	Suggested Improvements
<b>Innovation &amp; Productivity</b> → leads to industrialization which is not sustainable	1. Education & Mindset Change – 80% 2. Quality over Quantity – 100% 3. SSF Autonomy – 100% 4. Sensible Local Decisions – 100%
<b>SSF cannot help fighting climate change</b> → does not modify ecosystems: already sustainable	

Table 7: Study 2 - Issues and Solutions with the SDGs

#### iv. Trust in the Sustainable Development Goals

<b>TRUST IN SDGS</b>		
<b>Strong – 80%</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Fast &amp; Concrete Actions</b></li><li>▪ <b>Adaptable &amp; Inclusive Laws</b></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Ecosystems &amp; Biodiversity</b></li><li>- <b>Increased financial help</b></li><li>- <b>National Focus</b></li></ul>

Table 8: Study 2 - Trust in the SDGs

At the end of our interviews, 80% of farmers had faith in the SDGs’ implementation and objectives. They emphasized that the EU needs to act fast and with adaptable laws.

First, the involvement of locals in decision-making through SDGs’ targets would be a drastic change that all hoped for. One participant stated that “the EU should be giving global direction and funds while communities take care of all the social and information side” (e.g. F11 ).

Second, all insisted that biodiversity and ecosystems are already considerably damaged and actions for SD need to be taken as fast as possible. Farmers interviewed felt that they already do their best with their means when it comes to SD. After our interview, they stated that they are “waiting to see the impacts of these goals on the field” (e.g. F7).

To conclude, 80% of our panel had faith that the EU can implement the SDGs with flexible laws that locals and SSF STK can easily adapt.

We believe that the EU should quickly take concrete actions to prove that the SDGs are not a “greenwashing campaign” thus increasing trust between SSF main actors and the EU.

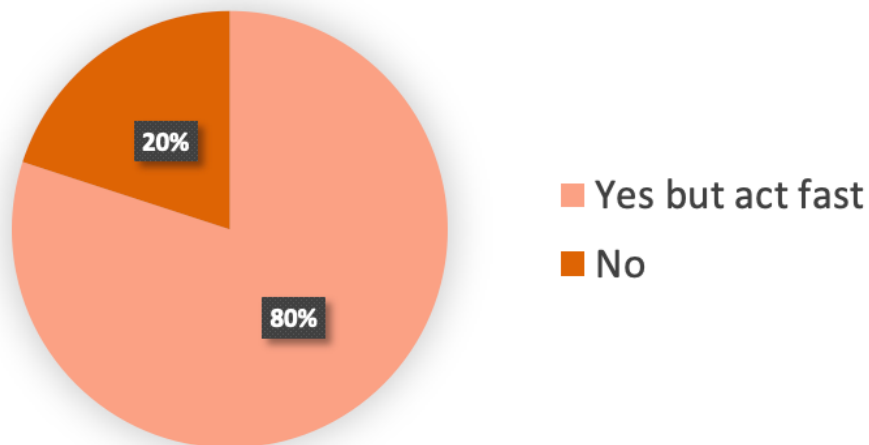


Figure 14: Study 2 - Trust in the SDGs

#### e. Conclusion

We see that, as we expected, after introducing the SDGs to farmers, they got involved and proposed solutions and constructive criticism. The benefits, issues and solutions mentioned were in line with Study 1. However, they were more in depth and detailed, confirming our hypothesis that regulations in place are not very coherent for SSF but STK were glad to participate in their improvement when asked for.

Moreover, we saw that trust of farmers in the SDGs (80%) is way higher than trust in the EU (0%). We believe this could be for two reasons. First, once involved and educated about the policies (e.g. the SDGs), farmers were less reticent and had more faith in their success. Second, low trust in the EU comes from years of bad experiences and now, is only slightly related to the actual content of the policies.

## 5. General Findings

Since their implementation in 2015, the SDGs' impact on SSF appears minimal, if not non-existent. Additionally, existing EU policies, such as the CAP, are often considered opposed to the SDGs, leading to potential trade-offs and incomprehension from SSF STK on the field. Most policies are seen as inadequate for SSF and its principles, especially for SD.

Thus, trust in the EU is low and STK argued that, to improve agriculture's positive environmental impact, the EU should focus on organic farming, education of all parties and redirected financial help. For all interviewees, EU laws are made for big structures which causes a negative social impact on SSF. Even though the need for common policies is still present, we acknowledge a breach in the relationship with the EU and more trust in local decision makers.

Moreover, the SDGs are not very known nor used but after introducing them, most believed in their potential positive impact. The lack of knowledge about the SDGs comes from lack of, first, faith in EU policies and second, communication. **Therefore, for the successful implementation of the SDGs in agriculture, improvement of the EU and SSF relationship, through better dialogue, appears crucial.**

We believe that the SDGs' communication strategy and their adaptable targets and indicators, are closely linked to the solutions proposed by our participants to improve the EU challenges.

Hence, based on our analysis, we propose a framework, through a policy brief, that could be implemented in all policies on agriculture. Policy makers would take the framework into account in decision-making processes. We would use the SDGs as a tool to bridge the gaps in trust and communication between the EU and SSF.

As SSF represents 85% of the EU agriculture in terms of farm size (< 20 ha), we consider our findings strongly representative of its needs and challenges.

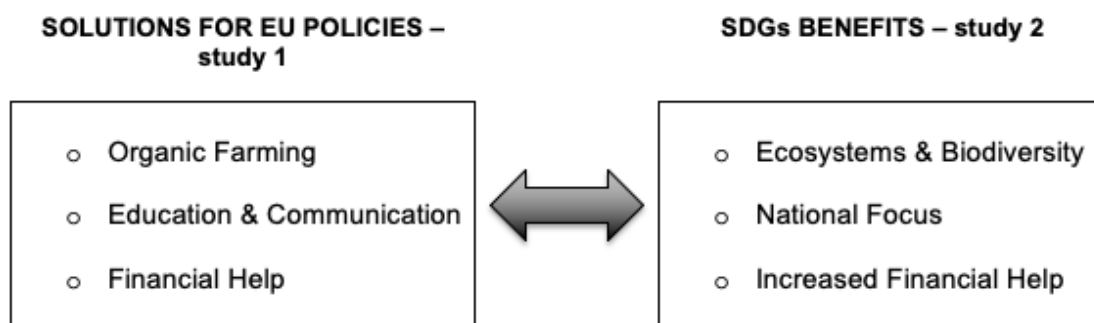


Figure 15: Conclusion - Implementation of the SDGs to improve Trust

a. Policy Brief: Trust and Communication to attain the European Union’s Sustainable Development Goals for Agriculture

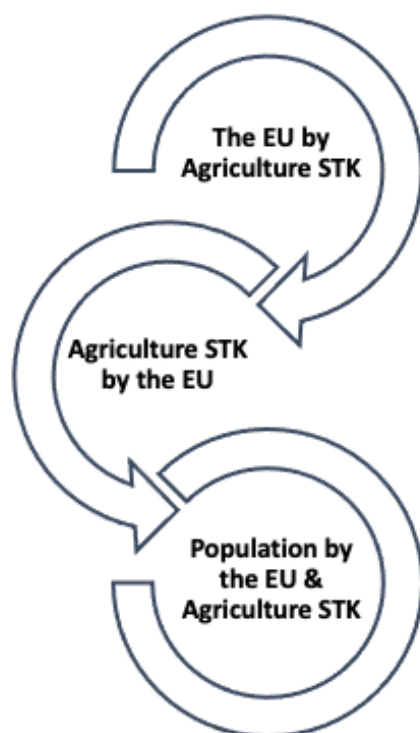
Following our research, we acknowledged that trust in the EU is very low in SSF. According to our analysis, it results from lack of knowledge and communication, on all sides. Moreover, it was highlighted that SSF STK do not feel included in decision-making processes. We also discovered that there are many controversies and trade-offs between the SDGs and current regulations (cf. Results) and within the SDGs themselves (cf. LR).

Therefore, we propose a policy brief (cf. Appendix 3) based on two phases: first, dialogue and second, communication (cf. Images A, B, C).

In the first phase, we propose the implementation of active and stronger reflexive policy making, in order to educate all parties on challenges and needs of each other’s. In the second phase, we suggest developing all communication means, especially technological ones (e.g. social media) to share all information about policies and facilitating feedback.

We propose the SDGs as the basis of our framework: their implementation would be the tool to implement and improve dialogue and communication. Their flexible and adaptable targets, more supported by SSF STK than current EU regulations - according to our research - appear to be an opportunity for the EU to improve its relationship with SSF. Moreover, the successful implementation of the SDGs is highly dependent on the trust and the involvement that SSF actors have in the EU. Thus, we believe that **bridging existing gaps through the SDGs,**

consequently increasing the participation of SSF STK in policy making, would be a dual-benefit solution.



**Would lead to:**

- Better understanding of everyone's constraints and needs thus better decision-making and more trust
- Better assesment of SD needs and easier implementation of the SDGs
- More involvement of Agriculture STK

Image A: 3 Levels of Education Needed

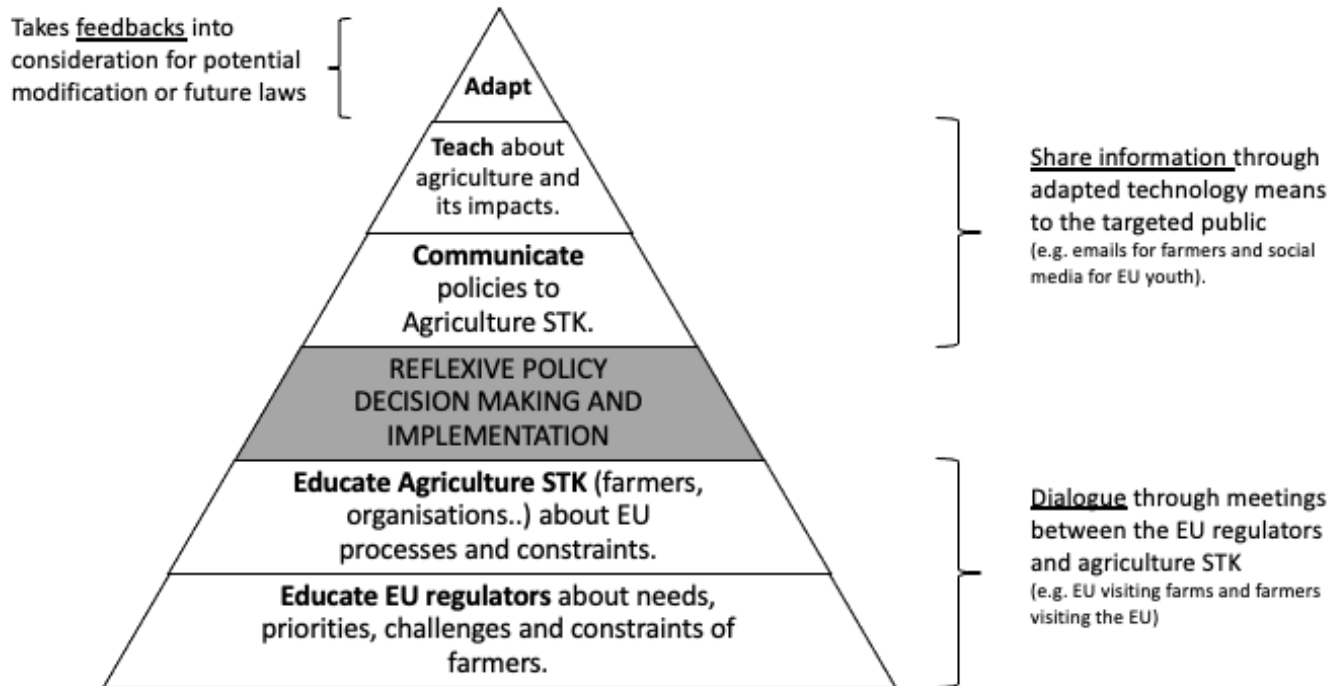


Image B: Communication Strategies to improve dialogue between all STK of Agriculture

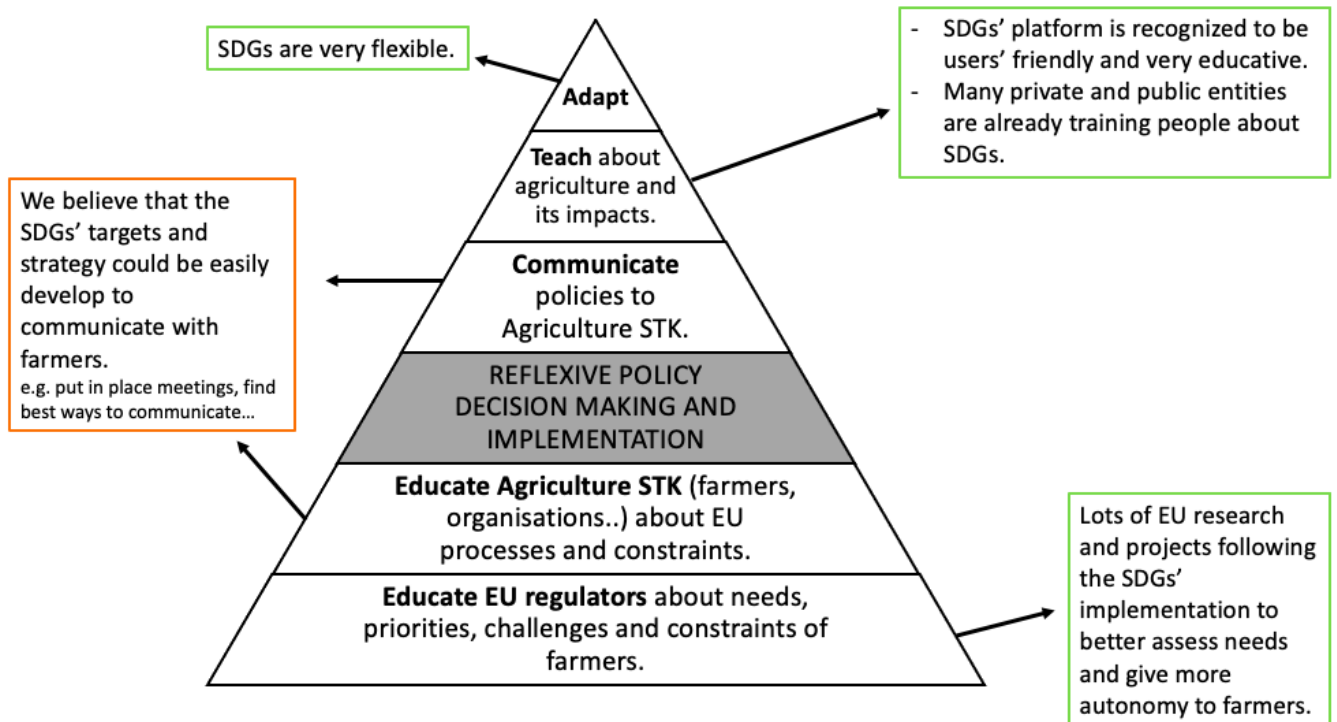


Image C: Why and How could the SDGs be the basis of the Policy Brief

## b. Discussion

Our findings showed the importance of taking small farmers and their challenges into consideration: even though there is work to do, the relationship between the EU and small farmers could improve by unifying for common goals. The SDGs would be the perfect tool.

However, they also strongly highlighted the breach that has deepened between the EU and small farms over the years. We wonder if it is worth trying to fix the current system - through adaptable laws and communication - or if it might be better to change it entirely.

All participants mentioned the importance of local communities and the need for autonomy and financial survival. On the eve of the climate crisis, the future of food and agriculture is the most important: without food, we all die. All farms are thus crucial for the future of humanity, but small farms represent 85% of EU farms: their survival and opinion are significant.

During the COVID-19 crisis, we observed that the role of countries and localities was enhanced (Council of Europe, 2020). We can safely assume that on the threshold of a similar global crisis, with food systems being central, the roles of institutions like the EU would also be diminished. We observed for COVID-19 that most decisions and strategies were national. The EU gave strong directions and helped out financially and socially when needed (e.g. vaccines) but his role was minimized. **Therefore, maybe all efforts and energy in agriculture should be redirected towards creating more autonomous and self-sufficient communities.**

Developing a more local farming system, with STK working together to find adapted solutions and processes, backed up by general EU guidelines, might be easier than improving the current one through adaptable laws and communication. Each locality would be able to make decisions that fit their own pressures and logics, improving the daily life of its farmers.

Moreover, those “counter-systems” already exist (e.g. through farmers’ associations). Thus, it would not be about creating them, but about **developing them** through social and financial means. The EU money towards agriculture could be redirected to localities and communities, based on defined criteria (e.g. number of farms, specific needs). Also, from our results, we can safely affirm that the majority of farmers and organisations have more trust in local decision-makers already. Low trust in the EU and difficulties of having common policies with so many

different interests considerably affect the potential improvement of the current system and the implementation of the SDGs. Whereas implementing the SDGs within local communities should be easier. We found that, when educated about them, farmers already have strong faith in the SDGs’ potential positive impact. Additionally, it might be faster to enhance the autonomy and funds of existing locals than to try and improve the current structure.

Therefore, we believe that the SDGs could be used as a tool, as in the policy brief, to guide the **transition from current EU common policies in agriculture to more local systems**. This system would follow EU directives, but each country would do its “sauce”, using the SDGs as the tool to go forward (e.g. COVID-19 crisis). Similar framework could be proposed by future research (cf. Image D).

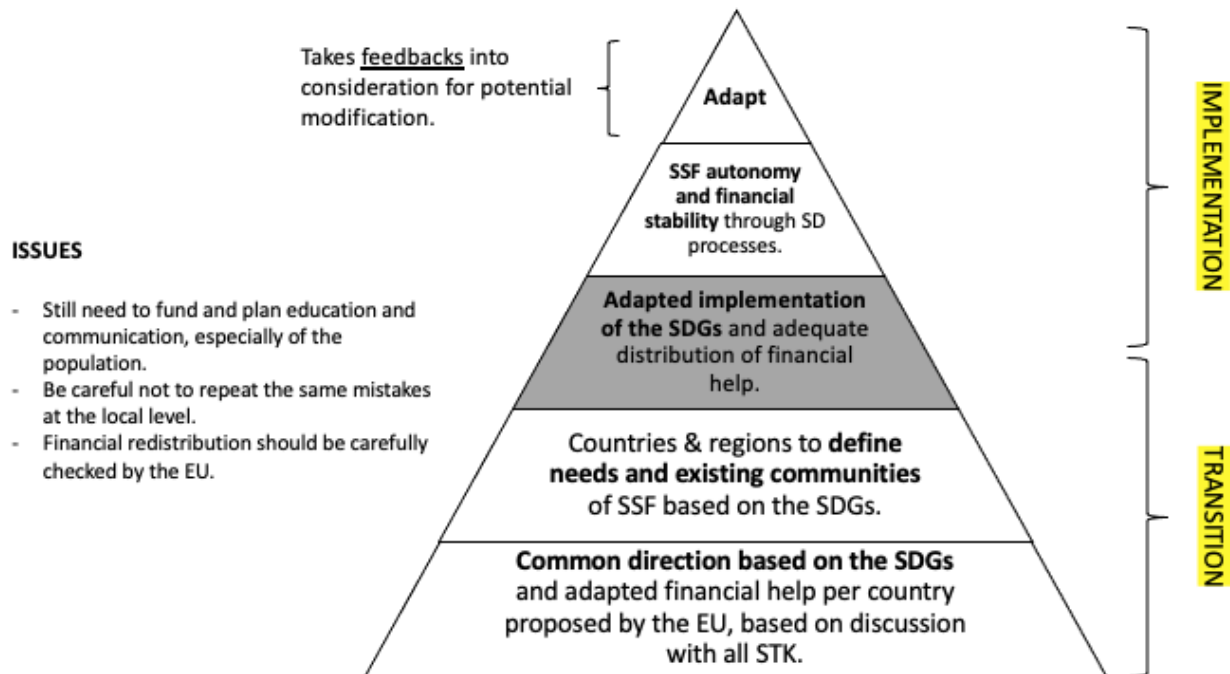


Image D: SDGs as a Tool to Transition to a Local System

## c. Limitations and Future Research

### i. Research Limitations

First, due to time restrictions and availability of our target participants, we did not interview a highly significant number of participants. Additionally, we presented only one target of each SDG in Study 2. Second, all the farmers we interviewed shared similar principles and farm structure. Also, most identified as male and were around the same age. Third, we unfortunately did not manage to interview anyone from the EU, which ultimately leads to biases. Finally, the pandemic limited the number of face-to-face interviews as well as our ability to do a focus group, which we think would have considerably deepened our findings. Moreover, all interviews took place on different platforms, making them less comparable, especially for Study 2. We wish for a better sanitary situation for future researchers!

Therefore, we believe that future research could geographically and numerically extend the number of participants, as well as the duration of interviews. It could also be more diversified in characteristics such as farm size, gender, age, background and principles (e.g. organic vs industrial). We believe that this would moderate our current results and help better understand the drastic opposite views between regulators and our interviewees. Moreover, in the continuation of our study, future research could research on the accuracy and usefulness of our policy brief among EU regulators and farmers (e.g. through focus groups).

### ii. Analysis Limitations

Using NVIVO, our analysis could have been deeper if we had more similar interviews and thus could have analysed the full scripts. We could have, for instance, created word maps or compared sentences' structures. Thus, for future research and use of similar software, it might be interesting to do more structured interviews or surveys.

Finally, our opinion on the topic is biased by the context in which we discussed with participants and our personal background. Future researchers might be more suitable if they have no interest in the subject or strong opinions opposed to our participants'.

## 6. Appendix

	Duration (minutes)	How	Jobs	Language
F1	42	Phone	Beekeeper	French
F2	22	Phone	Chicken Breeder	French
F3	40	Face to face	Winegrower	French
F4	40	Phone	Fruits & Vegetables Producer	French
F5	23	Phone	Cattle Breeder	French
F6	25	Phone	Fruits & Vegetables Producer	French
N1	22	Phone	Seeds Association	French
N2	45	Zoom	European Farmers Network	English
N3	25	Phone	Organic Fruits & Vegetables Collective	French
N4	28	Zoom	National Farmers' Association	English
N5	20	Zoom	National Farmers' Association	English
N6	22	Phone	SFF network	French
Average Organisations	27			
Average Farmers	32			
Total Average	30			

### Appendix 1: Study 1 - Interviews Details

	Duration (minutes)	How	Jobs	Language
F7	31	Zoom	Cereals Producer	French
F8	26	Zoom	Fruits & Vegetables Producer	French
F9	45	Phone	Cattle Breeder	French
F10	26	Phone	Goat Breeder	French
F11	35	Phone	Fruits & Vegetables Producer	French
Average Farmers	32,6			

### Appendix 2: Study 2 - Interviews Details

# POLICY BRIEF

## Title:

Trust and Communication to attain the European Union's Sustainable Development Goals for Agriculture.

## Executive Summary:

Based on our primary and secondary research, we concluded two potential barriers to the successful implementation of the SDGs.

First, we observed **lack of knowledge** from - and inclusion of - SSF STK in decision making for policies impacting their daily life. Additionally, we monitored a **lack of communication** about those policies (before, during and after implementation). Both lead to very **low trust in the EU**. Hence, many do not believe in the future SDGs' concrete implementation and potential positive impact. Second, the inadequacy and trade-offs of some EU policies for small farmers (e.g. not applicable to all sizes of farms, consequences against SD...) generates a tense context. Many SSF actors do not feel heard.

Therefore, as small farmers represent 85% of the EU agriculture (Eurostat, 2016) and that agriculture is the major driver of the EU negative impact on the environment (Recanati et al., 2019), we propose a framework that the EU could develop in order to improve its relationship with SSF STK. Based on the SDGs, it would encourage reflexive policymaking with all STK from agriculture, focusing on SSF (Timko et al., 2018; Moore, 2015; Kloke-Lesch, 2018; Kastrinos and Weber, 2020; de Jong and Vijge, 2021). **Dialogue, education and effective communication of all parties involved** would be set up through two main means: technological communications tools and intensified numbers of on-field meetings, both in farms and at the EU.

## Scope of Problem:

Agriculture being crucial in SD (Giller, Drupady, Fontana and Oldekop, 2018; Streimikis and Baležentis, 2020; Timko et al., 2018), the implementation of the SDGs in EU agriculture and within current and future policies is an important step.

Small farmers represent 85% of the EU agriculture and have low trust in the EU and their policies. Conditions of current regulations are highly criticized, for their negative impact on the environment and the financial and social life of farmers. Many choose willingly not to follow the EU regulations or to only take the money when eligible. They argue that their principles and vision are more in line with SD than any of the policies. Moreover, most are often not aware of the policies they might be eligible for. Consequently, on top of low trust and involvement in EU policies, we observe a **lack of knowledge and communication** about its policies and thus, the SDGs.

We observe that the lack of trust in and communication from the EU considerably impedes the successful implementation of the SDGs within EU agriculture and its policies.

## Policy Alternatives:

The EU mainly discusses with lobbying groups present in meetings, before taking decisions, most of them representing large scale farming (Schuh et al., 2019). Although some initiatives do exist to involve more small farmers and organisations working with SSF (e.g. BOND project), most of the current policies (SDGs excluded)

seem to be made for industrialized big structures, who represent 15% of the EU agriculture. The conditions for financial help and measures in favour of SD are based on size, innovation and productivity. Modern methods and the use of new technology is strongly valued (e.g. grant to buy new tractor).

The communication of the policies is done on the EU website and is very detailed. To apply for grants, many documentations need to be filled in.

### **Policy Recommendations:**

We recommend developing a communications strategy between decision makers and all the STK from the agriculture sector on **three different levels** - EU to STK, STK to the EU and EU with STK to the population - and on **two different phases** - dialogue and communication.

**Dialogue**, before making decisions, would be the first phase of reflexive policymaking. It is already in place within EU processes. We propose to enforce it when it comes to agriculture, not only to lobbying parties coming into the EU but also to more EU representatives going to farms, especially small ones, and meeting daily STK of agriculture. As SSF is underrepresented in lobbying parties present in EU institutions (Schuh et al., 2019), we think visits and participation in the institutions' infrastructures and processes should be organized. Technological means could be also used at that stage, to a lesser extent, to communicate and get feedback and opinions (e.g. questionnaires, online forums).

**Communication**, once decisions are taken, would be implemented through adapted technological means. We saw that current platforms sharing information are not easy to use and very time-consuming. Hence, the EU should research how to develop new ways to communicate efficiently with STK, especially small farmers (e.g. emails, websites, face-to-face meetings, focus groups). Additionally, the EU and STK, both at their respective levels, should keep educating the population about agriculture and its importance (e.g. social media, enhancement of local circuits, more EU financed agro-tourism).

For both stages, the **SDGs could be a strong basis**. Their implementation in EU agriculture is strongly dependent on bridging the existing gap between regulators and STK. The SDGs, with their recognized efficient communication and adaptable targets (Kastrinos and Weber, 2020), are a good support to initiate a change within the current system. All strategies could be based on and tested through the implementation of the SDGs: one stone two birds. Mainly, the framework used to develop flexible targets and indicators could be studied and tried out on existing/new policies in the CAP. Moreover, focus groups with farmers with opposed interests could be organized before policy making, enhancing the numerous solutions brought by the flexibility of the SDGs.

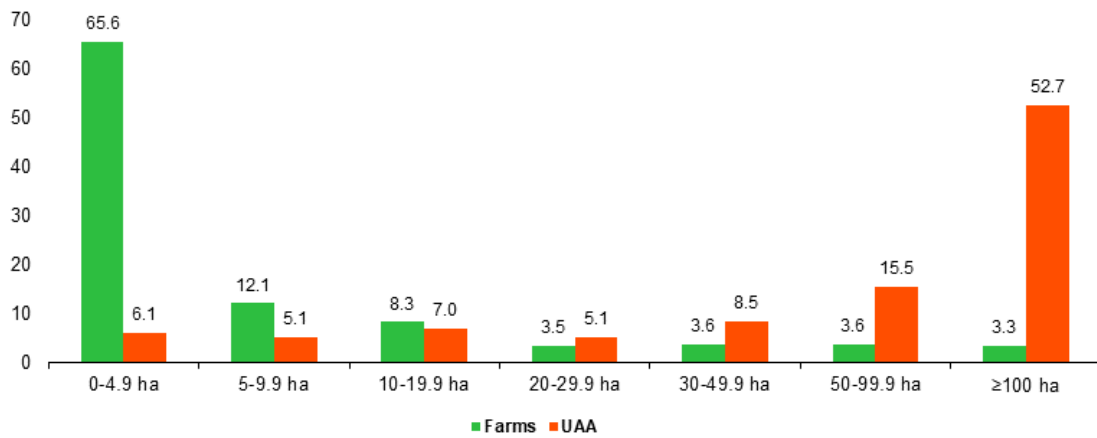
**The main objective is to improve dialogue and communication through the implementation of the SDGs.**

**Appendices:** see Images A, B and C.

Appendix 3: Policy Brief: Trust and Communication to attain the European Union's Sustainable Development Goals for Agriculture.

### Distribution of EU farms and utilised agricultural area according to farm size, 2016

(%)



Note: There are some differences in the threshold applied by some Member States, often to exclude the very smallest agricultural holdings which together contribute 2% or less to the total UAA excluding common land, and 2% or less to the total number of farm livestock units.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: ef\_m\_farmleg)

eurostat 

### Appendix 4: Percentage of SSF in the EU by EUROSTAT in 2016

<https://sites.google.com/view/masterthesis-agricultureeu/>

Appendix 5: Website Dissertation Marine Tourancheau

<https://www.producteurs-savoie-mont-blanc.com/>

Appendix 6: Website - Farmers in the Alps

## SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS – Script

### EU - Impact on SFF

	SFF	NGOs
EU impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the <b>impact of the EU on your daily life</b>? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• positive, negative, neutral? (from 0 to 10)</li> <li>• specific policies?</li> <li>• direct/indirect?</li> <li>• financially? environmentally? socially?</li> <li>• since when?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
Impact on SFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would you say your experience is representative of SFF?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In your opinion, what is the daily impact of the EU on SFF? from 0 to 10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct/indirect impact?</li> <li>• financially? environmentally? socially?</li> <li>• Since when?</li> <li>• positive, negative, neutral?</li> <li>• <b>which policies? how?</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
EU policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do <b>EU policies on agriculture affect your job</b>? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• positive, negative, neutral?</li> <li>• <b>which policies? how?</b></li> <li>• Direct/indirect impact?</li> <li>• financially? environmentally? socially?</li> <li>• Since when?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
EU policies trade offs - general	<p><i>When it comes to EU policies in agriculture, a lot of actors (farmers, officials...) have alerted policy makers about the considerable amount of trade offs between policies, especially when it comes to agriculture and deforestation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you think of any trade-offs SFF is facing due to EU policies?</li> </ul>	
EU policies trade offs - SFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which tradeoffs are you facing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What could the EU do about it?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
Solutions to trade offs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you take those trade-offs into account in your daily job? What solutions have you put in place?</li> </ul>	

## SDGs - Impact on SFF

	SFF	NGOs
SDGs in general	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you ever heard of the SDGs of the UN? and their implementation in the EU?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>if no, explain</b></li> <li>if yes                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>where, when, why?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
SDGs mission through EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do the EU policies in general help SFF participate in SD and “continue to feed the growing population with finite resources”? From 0 to 10</li> </ul>	
Impact of the SDGs on daily life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would you say they impact your daily life/your job?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>if yes                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>how?</li> <li>where?</li> <li>when?</li> <li>why?</li> </ul> </li> <li>if no                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you think they should impact you more?                       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>why?</li> <li>how?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
Since implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you see any difference in the impact of EU policies on your job/ SFF since 2015 (year of the implementation of the SDGs)? From 1 to 10               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>how?</li> <li>Direct/indirect?</li> <li>financially? environmentally? socially?</li> <li>Since when?</li> <li>how different from others EU policies</li> </ul> </li> <li>Do you see any difference in the impact of EU policies on your job since 2020 (reform of the CAP with SDGs)? From 1 to 10               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>how?</li> <li>Direct/indirect?</li> <li>financially? environmentally? socially?</li> <li>Since when?</li> <li>how different from others EU policies</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
Impact of the SDGs on EU policies for SFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you think SDGs impact the policies of the EU on SFF? from 0 to 10               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>if yes                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>how? positive, negative, neutral?</li> <li>direct/indirect?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• financially? environmentally? socially?</li> <li>• since when?</li> <li>• How different from other EU policies?</li> <li>• if no <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think they should? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• why?</li> <li>• how?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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## SDGs in the EU - Opinions & Suggestions

	SFF	NGOs
SDGs in the CAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you believe that the SDGs being integrated in the CAP <b>will change something in the long term for SFF?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• if yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• negative, neutral, positive impact?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
SD through SDGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you think the SDGs will improve EU policies on agriculture for SD in general? from 0 to 10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• positive? negative? neutral? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how?</li> <li>• direct, indirect?</li> <li>• why?</li> <li>• financially? environmentally? socially?</li> <li>• since when/starting when?</li> <li>• How different from before?</li> <li>• Do you think of a better solution?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
Better solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you could talk to the EU, what would you propose as a priority improvement for policies on SFF and more particularly for SDGs?</li> </ul>	
Trade-offs	<p><i>When it comes to the SDGs in agriculture, a lot of actors (farmers, officials...) have alerted policy makers about the considerable amount of trade offs between policies, especially when it comes to agriculture and deforestation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think will be the impact of SDGs on trade-offs in EU policies for SFF? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• neutral, positive, negative? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• why?</li> <li>• how?</li> <li>• What could the EU do about it?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

Most important thing to do right now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When it comes to SD and agriculture in the EU, what would you say is the most important thing for the EU to do right now on a social and/or env and/or eco aspect?</li> </ul>
Last comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• is there any other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improvement needed in policies you would think of?</li> <li>• benefits of EU policies?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Appendix 7: Study 1 – Script Semi-Structured Interviews

# POWERPOINT PRESENTATION IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS

1

## Groupe de discussion

Agriculture Paysanne & Développement Durable  
25 mars 2021

2

## Plan

- Présentation des ODDs
- Discussion autour des ODDs
  - 2
  - 13
  - 15
- Conclusion


5

## Objectif 2 - Faim Zéro

2.3 - Avant 2030, **doubler la productivité agricole et les revenus des agriculteurs paysans** à travers un accès égal et sécurisé aux terres et autres ressources, savoirs et aides financiers.

Indicateurs:

- Volume de production par unité de main-d'œuvre par classes de taille d'entreprise agricole/pastorale/sylvicole
- Salaire moyen des agriculteurs paysans



6

## Objectif 13 - Mesure relatives à la lutte contre les changement climatiques

13.2 - **Intégrer les mesures contre le changement climatique** dans les politiques, stratégies et plans nationaux.

Indicateurs:

- Nombre de pays ayant communiqué l'opérationnalisation d'un.e plan/politique/stratégie nationale augmentant leur habileté à s'adapter aux impacts négatifs du changement climatique et à adopter and foster la résilience climatique et le développement à faible émission de gaz à effet de serre d'une manière qui ne menace pas la production alimentaire.



3

## Objectifs de Développement Durable



4

## Objectifs liés à l'Agriculture

**2** FAIM ZÉRO

ÉLIMINER LA FAIM, ASSURER LA SÉCURITÉ ALIMENTAIRE, AMÉLIORER LA NUTRITION ET PROMOUVOIR L'AGRICULTURE DURABLE

**13** MESURES RELATIVES À LA LUTTE CONTRE LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES

PRENDRE D'URGENCE DES MESURES POUR LUTTER CONTRE LES CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES ET LEURS RÉPERCUSSIONS

**15** PRÉSERVER ET RESTAURER LES ÉCOSYSTÈMES TERRESTRES, EN VEILLANT À LES EXPLOITER DE FAÇON DURABLE, GÉRER DURABLEMENT LES FORÊTS, LUTTER CONTRE LA DÉSERTIFICATION, ENRAVER ET INVERSER LE PROCESSUS DE DÉGRADATION DES TERRES ET METTRE FIN À L'APPAUVRISSMENT DE LA BIODIVERSITÉ


7

## Objectif 15 - Préserver et restaurer les écosystèmes et la biodiversité de façon durable - focus sur les forêts.

15.a - Mobiliser et augmenter sensiblement les **ressources financières** de toutes provenances pour **conserver et utiliser durablement la biodiversité et les écosystèmes.**

Indicateurs:

- Aide publique au développement et dépenses publiques pour la conservation et l'utilisation durable de la biodiversité et des écosystèmes



8

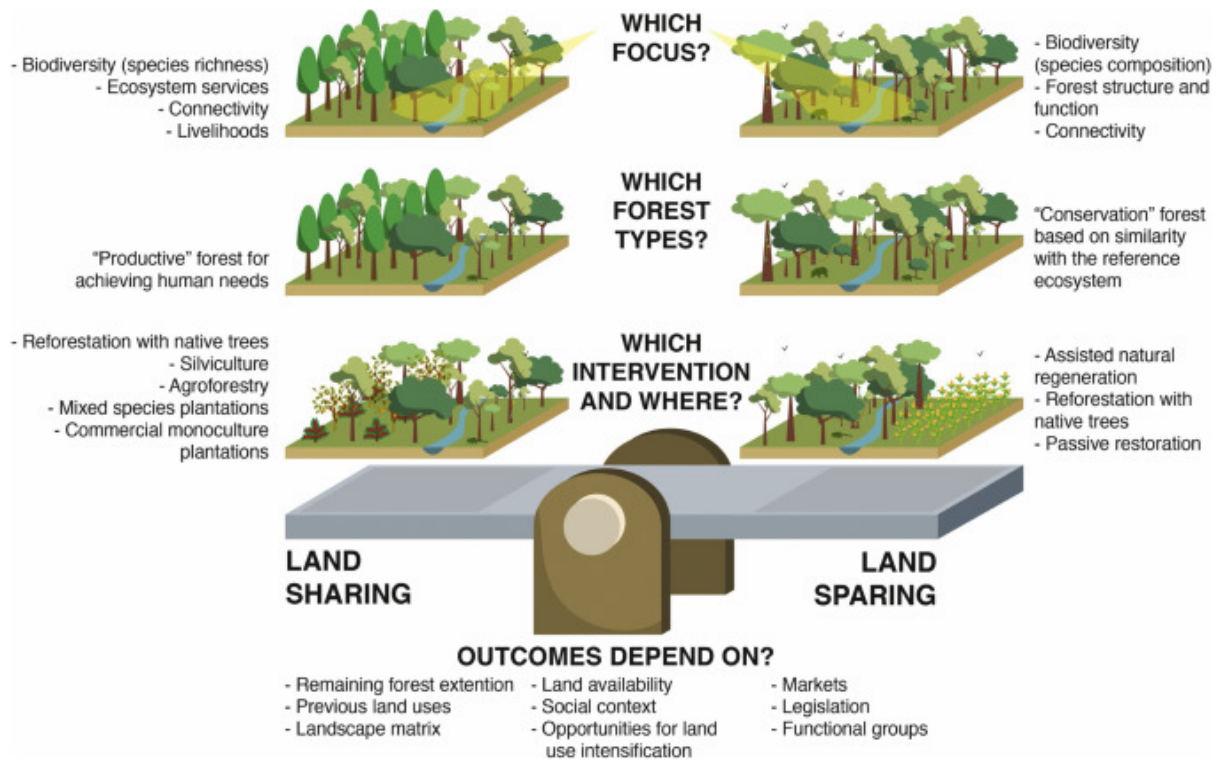
## Questions ouvertes

- Avez vous confiance que les ODDs et l'UE puissent changer les choses?
- Pour le futur et le développement durable, pensez vous que les ODDs soient la solution?

## Appendix 8: Study 2 - Powerpoint Presentation

<https://sdgs.un.org/topics/national-sustainable-development-strategies>

## Appendix 9: NSDS



Appendix 10: Land Sharing/Sparing by Meli, P., Rey-Benayas, J. and Brancalion, P., 2019. Balancing land sharing and sparing approaches to promote forest and landscape restoration in agricultural landscapes: Land approaches for forest landscape restoration. *Perspect*

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