

Generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship in Catalonia



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The rejuvenation of the agricultural sector and entrepreneurship in the rural world are a key vector in the new institutional initiatives of the Generalitat de Catalunya.

Farmers under the age of 40 represent only 11% of farms of the European Union (EU) and of these farmers, only 3% are young women. In the case of Catalonia, young male farmers represent only 7% of the total number of farm owners and, in the case of young female farmers, the figure is less than 2%. The installation of young farmers and generational renewal in the Catalan countryside is one of the main priorities of the Rural Development Programme of Catalonia. It is for this reason that we at the Rural Agenda Secretariat are making every effort to promote generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship in Catalonia.

In 2017, they created the Young Farmer Working Group, which is part of the Monitoring Committee of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) of Catalonia, with the aim of examining and debating in depth certain aspects of the strategy and execution of the RDP in this matter. A Young Farmers' Working Group composed of the agricultural organisations UP and JARC, the Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives of Catalonia (FCAC), the College of Agricultural and Forestry Technical Engineers of Catalonia (CETAFC) representing the professional associations in the agricultural area, the Association of Rural Initiatives of Catalonia (ARCA, Associació d'Iniciatives Rurals de Catalunya), a network that brings together the 11 local action groups (GAL) of Catalonia, the GAL Alt Urgell-Cerdanya Consortium and the Catalan Youth Agency.

Thanks to the work carried out by this Young Farmers' Working Group (Grup de Treball de Joves), we have already implemented several actions in Catalonia to strengthen the entry of young people into the countryside and agricultural entrepreneurship, such as young farmers' facilita-

tors, the El Planter young farmer office and the Young Farmers' Data Observatory.

In recent years, we have increasingly noticed the existence of different profiles that are entering and who also have different needs. Some profiles that are already known, such as that of the traditional farming community, that of the new farming community (which already represents one in three young farmers who have entered the sector in Catalonia), but also that of the "new farmers" with more of an agro-social profile which is explained in this edition of *DossierTècnic*. These profiles show certain dynamics that are both different and, at the same time, complementary. The new public policy approaches recognise that it is necessary to work holistically, addressing both the intergenerational relationships and the relationships between different young farmer profiles. Beyond the financial aid for initial installation, the true situation shows the need for other complementary measures that can guide, motivate and facilitate a pathway from the idea to the agricultural enterprise itself.

In order to respond to these new needs identified in the Catalan context, the Young Farmers' Working Group has developed a Catalonia Generational Renewal Strategy for Agriculture, which, at the proposal of the Department of Climate Action, Food and Rural Agenda (DACC), has been approved by means of a Government Agreement. This strategy establishes which articulates a new action framework to renew agricultural structures and to support the new generations. This strategic vision is rooted in the results of the Catalan Rural Agenda, which considers the rejuvenation of the agricultural sector and entrepreneurship in the rural world as a key vector for its dynamism and economic diversification, and for the generation of opportunities for young people.

In this edition of *DossierTècnic* our aim is to show you, simply and succinctly, all the actions we are developing in Catalonia in a coordinated manner to promote this agricultural renewal and the entry of young people into farming.

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Maria Josep de Ribot Porta, Imma Malet Prat, Annabel Teixidó Martínez and Josep Dadón Paz.

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Department of Climate Action, Food and Rural Agenda.

Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, 612-614, 08007 - Barcelona.

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<https://ruralcat.gencat.cat>

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e-mail: sia.daam@gencat.cat

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SITUATION OF AGRICULTURAL generational renewal in Catalonia

For some years now in Europe, a regressive trend has been noted in the number of people entering the agricultural sector, as well as an increasing number of active participants who retire without having a generational renewal in place for their agricultural company, which therefore does not guarantee a sufficient replacement rate.

The generational renewal of family agricultural businesses is at a crossroads. A combination of social, economic, environmental and cultural factors is affecting the health of the agricultural sector and placing many existing farms, which have not been able to plan for a natural succession in their activity, in a state of alert. This trend can be seen at different territorial scales and is considered a structural problem for Europe as a whole, in which multiple public and private entities are working to renew the support instruments for the new agricultural generations.

For some years now in Europe, a regressive trend has been noted in the number of people entering the agricultural sector, as well as an increasing number of active participants who retire without having a generational succession in place for their agricultural company, which therefore does not guarantee a sufficient replacement rate. A new emerging diversity of profiles of people who lead agricultural enterprises has also been detected, along



Photo: DACC.

with the urgent need to promote strategies that preserve the multifunctionality of agricultural activity and to create innovative instruments aimed at promoting generational renewal in agriculture, both within and outside the family.

A new generation of farmers is taking root: This is an emerging group closely linked to the land and local organic production that seeks its own autonomy and remains optimistic about the future of the agricultural sector.

An increasingly wide diversity of profiles has been identified among the people entering the agricultural sector, with backgrounds far removed from the family-based transfer of the agricultural enterprise. The focus on the newly arrived farming generations lies in an increase in people who, without direct agricultural origins, see farming as both an employment and personal opportunity. This non-family generation is introducing a set of renewal dynamics into the agricultural and rural setting that needs to be taken into account in the new frameworks of institutional support and guidance.

However, barriers have been identified that are slowing down agricultural renewal: access to land, the economic cost of the installation process, excessive bureaucracy, low profitability, access to credit, access to the market, little social prestige and the territorial disadvantages of rural municipalities.

In all, the actual data regarding young farmers who have entered the sector in Catalonia with the initial installation aid for young farmers since 2015 reflect this critical situation (Figure 1).

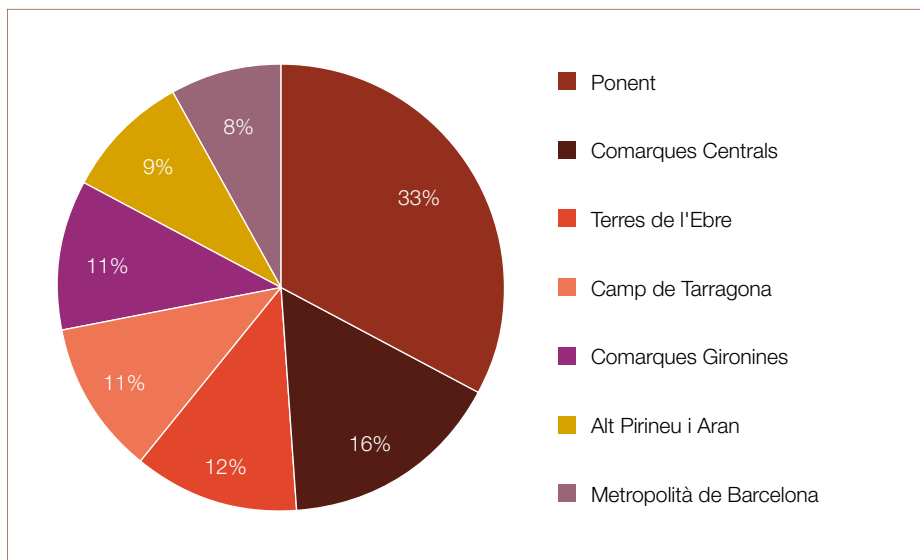
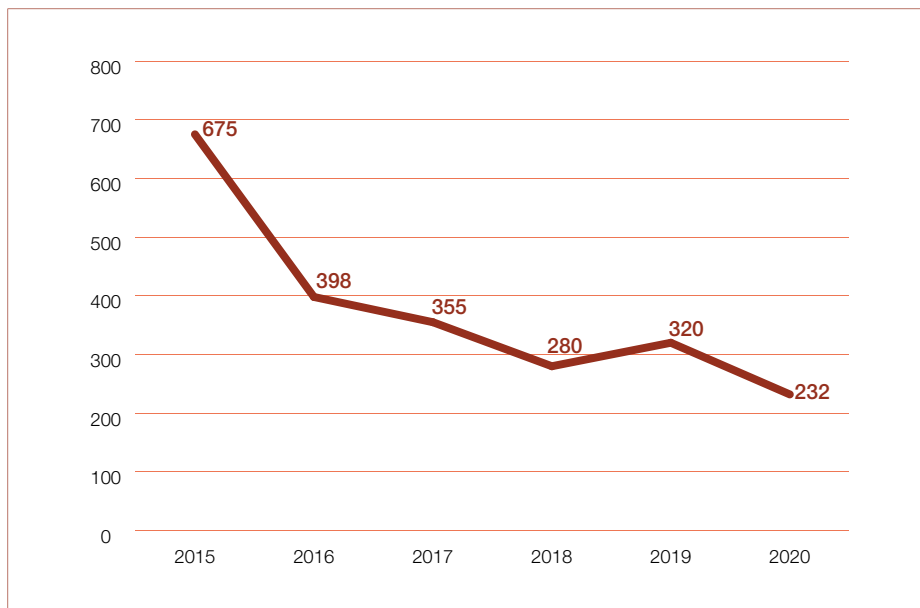


Figure 1. Young people entering the sector in Catalonia with the initial installation aid for young farmers since 2015. Source: Young Farmer Observatory, El Planter, 2021.

It has also been identified that approximately one in three entrants in the agricultural sector in Catalonia are new farmers, that is, those who do not have a family tradition in agricultural. If we look at the profile of young farmers entering the sector in Catalonia with the initial installation aid for young farmers since 2015, only 27.8% of them are women (who also join at a higher average age than men), 25.46% of young farmers do so as part of a company and 18% of farms perform organic agricultural production (Figure 2).

If we look at the education and training of the young people entering the sector in Catalonia, we see that the young newcomers tend to have more university training than those with an agricultural family tradition, whether in agricultural or non-agricultural training (Figure 3).

We can also see that the farms run by the young newcomers show higher percentages of organic certification and locally-sourced sales, while those of traditional agricultural families show more denominations of origin (Figure 4).

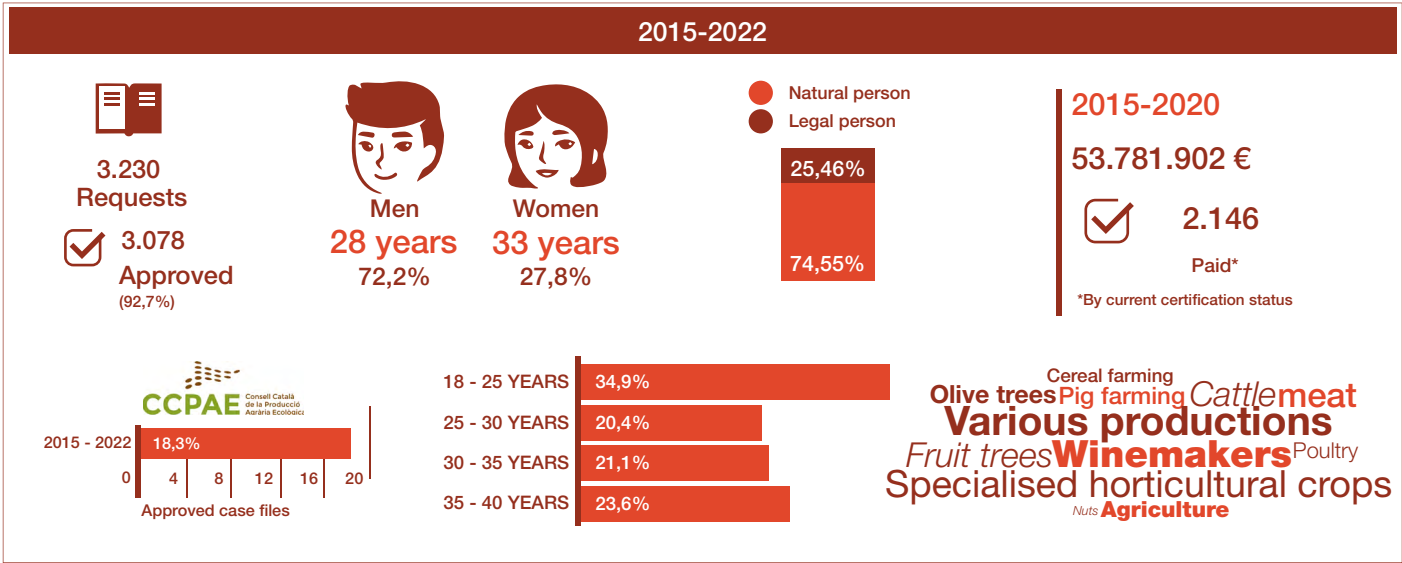


Figure 2. Profile of young people entering the sector. Source: Young Farmer Observatory, El Planter, 2021.

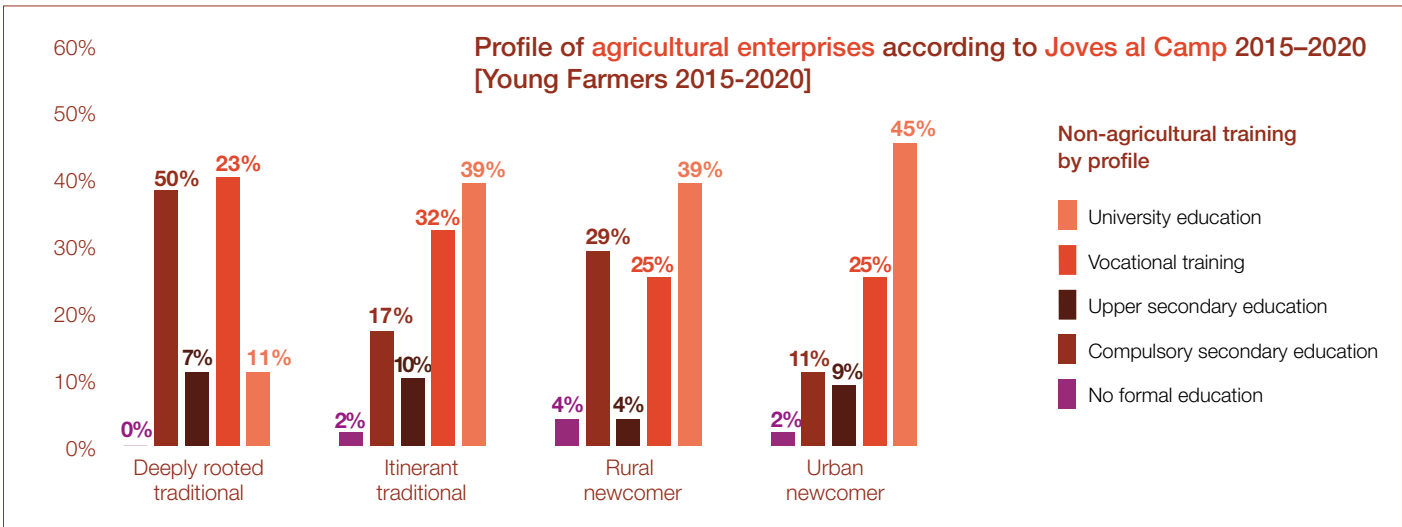
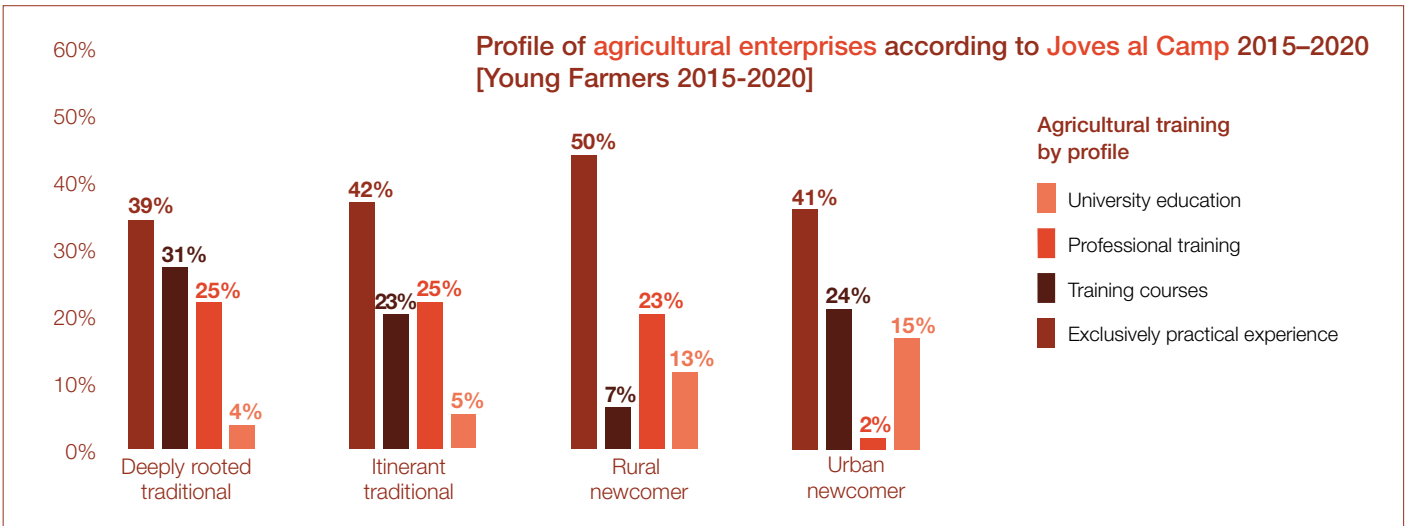


Figure 3. Training according to profile. Source: Generational renewal in agriculture strategy in Catalonia.

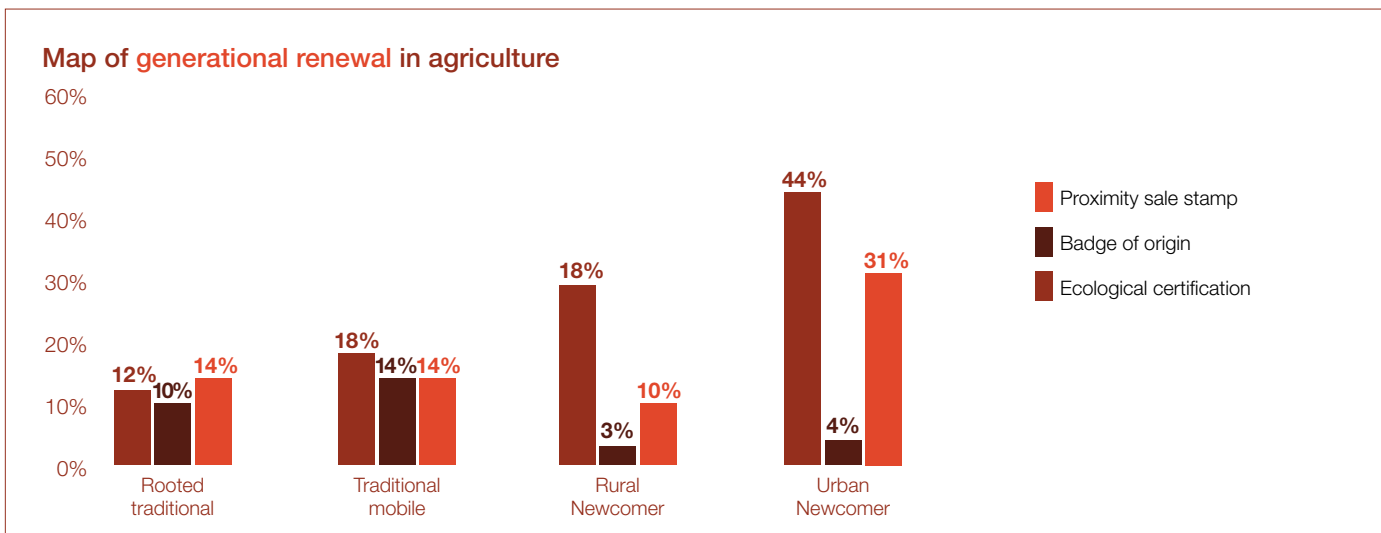


Figure 4. Certification according to profile. Source: Generational renewal in agriculture strategy in Catalonia.



Photo: DACC.

It is true, and historically it has also been the case, that it is in moments of crisis when changes occur and new opportunities open up, which may already be happening in our farming community. Currently in Catalonia, as can be seen in the graphs above, increasingly educated young people are entering the sector, but at the same time there is a new farming community taking root; this concept of “new farming community” is not a new farmer or a newcomer to agriculture, but rather a traditional farming community and/or newly arrived farming community that are working with a new agro-social paradigm. This is an emerging group closely linked to the land and local organic

production that seeks its own autonomy and remains optimistic about the future of the agricultural sector. The new farmers are young people, and some not so young, with a new way of understanding and experiencing agricultural activity and its link with society, based on the values of the new agro-social paradigm.

This new farming community, the diversification of the profiles of the people who are coming into the countryside, and also the change in the agri-food systems and in the policies that affect the food market, all highlight the need to consider the challenge of agricultural renewal with a systemic vision and as a national strat-

egy. The need to integrate cultural, territorial, legal, training and support issues is becoming more and more evident, in order to give institutional guidance to a new agricultural generation.

Authors



Laura Dalmau Pol
Deputy Director General of Rural Planning. DACC.
laura.dalmau@gencat.cat



Josep Dadón Paz
Rural Development Manager. DACC.
jdadon@gencat.cat

AGRICULTURE GENERATIONAL renewal strategy in Catalonia. 2023-2027 Action Plan



Photo: DACC

01. Introduction

The Generational Renewal in Agriculture Strategy was set up with the aim of reaching a consensus on a programmatic document that includes the main actions to be carried out to support a new agricultural generation in Catalonia, structure a new framework for action to renew agricultural structures and to support the new generations, both farming families and newcomers, who have the will to create economically, socially and environmentally viable enterprises. An Action Plan has been defined that structures the different programmes, projects and actions to be carried out by the entities that work for generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship.

The need for a strategy for generational renewal in agriculture in Catalonia

A combination of social, economic, environmental and cultural factors is affecting the agricultural sector and placing many existing farms, which have not been able to plan for a natural succession in their activity, in a state of alert. This trend can be seen at different territorial scales and is considered a structural problem for Europe as a whole, in which multiple public and private entities are working to renew the support instruments for the new agricultural generations.

For years, the European Commission has identified a regressive trend in the number of people entering the agricul-

tural sector, as well as an increasing number of active people who retire without having a generational succession for their agricultural company. This trend does not guarantee a sufficient replacement rate, which leads to the conceptualisation of what is known as the *young farmer problem* as a strategic challenge for the agricultural sector and for the rural sector as a whole in Europe.

The challenge of generational renewal is a complex and multidimensional issue, in which an approach that goes beyond economic incentives is necessary.

Among other aspects, the need to integrate cultural, territorial, legal, training and support issues is increasingly evi-

dent, in order to provide institutional support to a new agricultural generation. The diversification of the profiles of the people who are entering farming, and also the change in agri-food systems and in the policies that affect the food market, highlight the need to consider the challenge of agricultural renewal with a systemic vision and as a national strategy.

To respond to these needs, the Department of Climate Action, Food and Rural Agenda (DACC) of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Government of Catalonia) proposes to devise a strategy for generational renewal in agriculture, in which a new action framework is established to renew the agricultural structures and to support the new generations, both from farming families and newcomers, who have the will to create economically, socially and environmentally viable enterprises.

The Generational Renewal in Agriculture Strategy aims to respond to one of the strategic actions of the Rural Agenda of Catalonia, which is to “promote a national plan for generational renewal in agriculture that includes measures to improve the entry of young farmers, measures that encourage the mentoring of new farmers, among others”.

In addition, the Generational Renewal in Agriculture Strategy has several purposes, among which we highlight:

- To place the problem of generational renewal in agriculture at the centre of political action and social, cultural and economic interest.
- To facilitate the agricultural entry process for all those entrepreneurs who have a viable agricultural project, within the framework of sustainable agri-food systems, with various tools adapted to each entrepreneurial profile.
- To structure and coordinate the necessary tools to facilitate generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship for the different profiles of people who have entered the sector in eco-

nomically, socially and environmentally viable models.

- To generate an innovative ecosystem of inter-institutional support and guidance for generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship, for both traditional and new farmers.
- To respond to the main challenges and actions to promote generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship in Catalonia.
- To influence the prioritisation of policies and actions for generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship within the framework of the new programming period of European funds (FEDER, EAFRD, FSE, among others).

The process for defining a strategic vision for the future

The Generational Renewal in Agriculture Strategy was created, as we mentioned above, to reach a consensus on a programmatic document detailing the main actions to be carried out to support a new agricultural generation in Catalonia. A 2023-2027 Action Plan has been defined that structures the different programmes, projects and actions to be carried out by the Catalan entities working for generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship.

To do this, a diagnosis of the main strengths and weaknesses of the situation in Catalonia has been carried out, based on a review of the bibliography, the analysis of statistical data, the processing of a questionnaire for new entrants, the consultation for experts and group work with young farmers who have entered the sector. This methodology has compared the vision of different entities, both public and private, involved in agricultural renewal policies in relation to a strategic vision of generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship.

This work has made it possible to define a strategic vision based on 5 challenges, 15 objectives and 48 actions.

02. State of play

Agricultural entrepreneurship

According to the Newbie Research Project¹, which studies the entrepreneurial models of the new agricultural generations in Europe, four global trends are identified:

- Reduction in the number of farms,
- Increase in the size of the farm,
- Ageing of the agricultural population, and
- Growing interest of new generations in the agricultural sector, both among traditional and new farmers.

These four points very clearly describe the reality, both in European and Catalan terms, as regards the structure of the agricultural network.

The barriers that hold back agricultural renewal

There are eight basic barriers that impede generational renewal in agriculture:

- Access to land,
- High cost of installation,
- Excessive bureaucracy,
- Low profitability,
- Access to credit,
- Market access,
- Little social prestige, and
- Territorial disadvantages of rural municipalities.

The pathway into the agricultural sector

The entry of people into the agricultural sector differs depending on the family or territorial origin of those entering it. There are basically two types of entrepreneurial profiles, one based on traditional farming, of people with an agricultural background, and another based on new farmers, people without agricultural ties.

The distinction between traditional farmers and new farmers is important in re-

¹ <http://www.Newbie-academy.eu/>

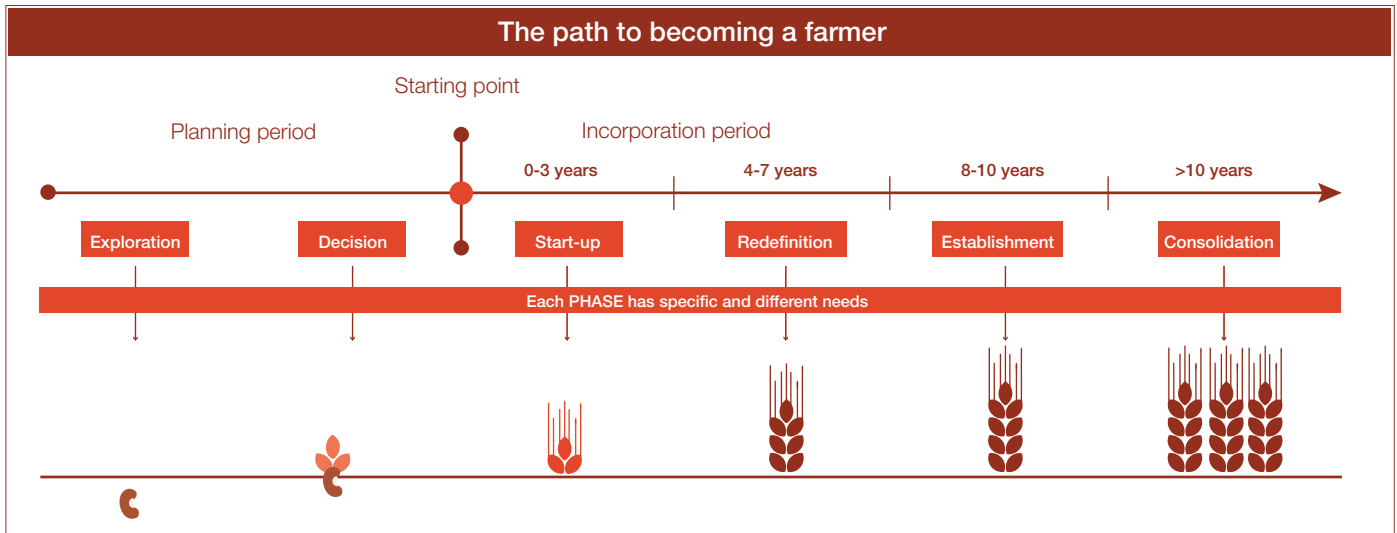


Figure 1. The pathway to becoming a farmer. Source: Monllor (2011) from *The Northeast New Farmer Network* (2009).

lation to the processes of entry into the activity and any barriers to entry into the sector, and the opportunities that can be structured within the various business models also differ.

There is a pathway to entering the agricultural sector from the moment the decision is made to join the sector until the agricultural activity is consolidated. This consists of two periods and six phases (Figure 1). Defining this pathway is essential to be able to design policies, plans and programmes.

A integrated and strategic approach

The recognition of a new scenario in relation to generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship is forcing entities with the power to act to reverse their intervention policies and make an effort to adapt them to reality. This need is identified in the new framework of the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) and in the new rural development programming.

Of the nine specific objectives of the CAP, two are aimed at agricultural renewal: Objective 7 on Generational renewal and Objective 8 of Vibrant rural areas. The goal is to attract and support a new agricultural generation and facilitate

an entrepreneurial pathway for them in rural areas.

03. Development of the Strategy

For the development of this Strategy, the most representative quantitative data that best describes the people setting up in the agricultural sector in Catalonia in recent years have been analysed; with priority given to data most directly related to the factors that have an impact on generational renewal in agriculture.. Interviews were also carried out with key agents regarding matters of generational renewal in agriculture. Some of the interviews were conducted with more than one person, with the total number of people participating in the study being 37. The following profiles of the people interviewed were defined: 1) tutor for the entry of young people coming from an agricultural school, 2) district office technician responsible for young farmer aid, 3) technical facilitator in charge of young farmer aid, 4) facilitation technician on generational renewal in agriculture, 5) academic profile with knowledge of the young farmer entry policy, 6) management profile from a local entity with knowledge of agricultural renewal, and 7) others. Additionally, a

study was carried out of 210 young people entering as young farmers during the period 2015-2019, through the completion of a questionnaire in order to collect information on the profile of the individuals and enterprises established with aid from the RDP.

04. Diagnosis

The approach to the Catalan reality in relation to generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship has made it possible to identify the most relevant elements in terms of the diagnosis of current dynamics, and also to explore the possible actions that the Renewal Strategy must include generational renewal in agriculture.

The main themes identified are:

- A new governance that facilitates the pathway into the agricultural sector
- The new needs for agricultural enterprises of new farmers
- Innovation for agricultural entrepreneurship rooted in the territory
- A diverse territory requiring urgent attention
- The essential role of citizens in sustainable food

In order to structure the key elements to define the Generational Renewal in Ag-

riculture Strategy, the information gathered has been entered into a SWOT matrix, detailing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats..

05. Strategic vision

The strategic vision is based on the definition of the mission, the vision and the values on which the Catalan Generational Renewal in Agriculture Strategy is based and rooted.

The mission is to facilitate the process of agricultural entry for all those entrepreneurs who have a viable agricultural project and to structure and coordinate the necessary tools to facilitate generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship.

The vision is to generate and consolidate an innovative ecosystem of inter-institutional support and accompaniment for generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship that facilitates the process of agricultural entry for all those entrepreneurs who have a viable agricultural project.

Strategic challenges and actions

The strategic vision is based on five challenges:

1. Coordination / governance: structure an inter-institutional support and guid-

ance system for generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship.

Coordinate all the agents, entities and institutions providing support, advice and guidance in the process of generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship to work together in the same direction, without the duplication of actions. This coordination will require governance that should be led by the competent body, which is the Department of Climate Action, Food and Rural Agenda.

2. Rejuvenation / new farmers: facilitate access for both traditional farmers and newcomers to economically, socially and environmentally viable agricultural enterprises.

Rejuvenate Catalan farming with a natural generational succession of family-run farms, while encouraging the transfer of farms without family continuity and the creation of new agricultural enterprises that support a new farming linked to the land and local sustainable production.

3. Strengthening / innovative network: support agricultural enterprises with innovative production and marketing models.

Strengthen agricultural enterprises led by young farmers by advising them and guiding them with specific, personalised

support, creating an innovative network based on sustainable agri-food and bio-economy models, integrating the gender perspective and promoting cooperative models, which incorporate the concepts of social responsibility.

4. Rooting / territory: develop a welcoming ecosystem in rural areas that allows the new generations to take root in the territory.

Ensure that young people become established in rural areas by facilitating access to housing, basic services, and digitalisation, so that these territories are welcoming places, filled with life.

5. Awareness / citizens: raise awareness among citizens of the essential role of farming and its link with sustainable food.

Promote understanding of the essential role of farmers as producers of sustainable, healthy, quality and local food, and that they are the stewards of the territory, who care for the environment. This way, citizens will come to understand the importance of this profession.

These challenges are based on several 15 objectives and 48 actions, with some actions also linked to the Strategic Food Plan of Catalonia 2021-2026 (PEAC) and the INNOVA 2023 Plan, as shown in Table 1.



Organic pork. Photo: DACC.

Challenge 1. Coordination / governance
Coordinate the network of Catalan entities that work for generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship
Create and facilitate an inter-institutional coordination system
Support the territorial working groups established by local entities
Develop tools for agricultural entrepreneurship through local entities
Support local entities in implementing agricultural facilitation tools at local level area
Train the technical staff of local entities working on generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship
Communicate and disseminate the tools available for generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship
Agree on a communication plan, with a gender perspective, in relation to generational renewal and agricultural entrepreneurship with Catalan entities working in the network
Strengthen the virtual platform “El Planter” within on the Rural-Cat portal

Challenge 2. Rejuvenation / new farmers
Offer specific and personalised support to new agricultural entrants
Adapt the initial installation aid for young farmers to the new entrepreneurial profiles
Implement the figure of the person who acts as a facilitator for young farmers full-time throughout Catalonia
Coordinate existing support tools from different sectoral and territorial entities
Review the role of the current collaborating entities towards a model of a recognised advisory entities for young farmers
Facilitate their gradual entry into the agricultural sector
Establish an inter-institutional support system for those entering farming
Strengthen the Land Bank network by providing a fund of land beyond unused farms / Promote the Land Bank to promote access to land in coordination with the Agricultural Generational Renewal Programme of agricultural cooperatives (ES24.2 of the PEAC)
Support the Catalan network of agricultural test sites / Promote agricultural test sites as an innovative way to facilitate the gradual entry of new people into farming (TR11.9 of the PEAC, 2030 INNOVA Plan)

Support the transfer processes of agricultural enterprises
Structure a pilot programme for the transfer of the agricultural company / Facilitate and guide the transfer of an active farm when the owner retires, encouraging the continued use of agricultural land in mountain areas and in areas with natural or other specific limitations (ES27.1 of the PEAC)
Create and manage a dynamic directory of agricultural enterprises that are about to close and of young people who want to join the sector

Challenge 3. Strengthening / innovative network
Offer specific and personalised support to innovative agricultural enterprises
Provide advisory tools for the innovative network based on bioeconomy models / Cross-cutting programme of sustainable agri-food systems (INNOVA 2030 Plan)
Establish a network of mentors in different sectors and territories / Promote a mentoring programme aimed specifically at new comers to farming and fisheries (FO2.2 of the PEAC, 2030 INNOVA Plan)
Improve financing tools / Promote the establishment of an agile and effective financing system for the entry of young farmers in collaboration with the Catalan Finance Institute (TR8.5 of the PEAC)
Encourage the participation of agricultural enterprises led by young people in innovation and knowledge generation projects / Activate the HubLlavor support programme for young people and entrepreneurs: Network of Living Labs and validation spaces; Innovation Office (2030 INNOVA Plan)
Design training programmes to equip and support professionals in the agri-food sector and other stakeholders involved in this field (FO1 of the PEAC)
Promote the application of emerging technologies in the agri-food sector to enhance the process of technological and digital transformation (TR9 of the PEAC) / Innovation Office (2030 INNOVA Plan)
Provide support of agricultural enterprises led by women
Integrate the gender perspective in all the actions of the Generational Renewal in Agriculture Strategy
Raise awareness about the specific needs of women
Encourage and increase the presence of women in rural and maritime associations and in decision-making bodies (ES25.1 of the PEAC)

Identify the needs that women have balancing productive activities in rural and maritime areas, and which affect their access to holding leadership roles in organisations (ES25.2 of the PEAC)
Promoting cooperative production and marketing models
Promote the figure of the “cooperative facilitator” in different agricultural cooperatives in Catalonia / Promote generational renewal in agricultural cooperatives (ES24.3 of the PEAC)
Promoting cooperative structures for new agricultural entrants
Incorporate the social and solidarity economy into the business plans of new entrants to farming
Make cooperative structures attractive to women
Develop a Catalan network of local agri-food facilities
Create a directory of local agri-food facilities (slaughterhouses, markets, logistics centres, etc.), such as the network of shared workshops
Support the creation and/or facilitation of local agri-food facilities / Promote small-scale installations and infrastructures adapted to the needs of professionals in the territory (for example, low-capacity slaughterhouses) (TR11.14 of the PEAC)
Establish spaces for meetings, coordination and cooperation to promote common projects between stakeholders at different points of the food chain (TR12.1 of the PEAC) / Agri-food innovation mornings, Office of Innovation (2030 INNOVA Plan)
Promote shared infrastructures (workshops, wineries, cleaning and disinfection centres for transport, pool of fishing boats, etc.) (TR11.13 of the PEAC)

Challenge 4. Rooting / territory
Create local ecosystems to stimulate local agricultural activity
Coordinate local stakeholders with a roadmap for local agricultural development
Support pilot projects / transformative projects on a territorial scale (2030 INNOVA Plan)
Make rural areas a welcoming place where people can put down roots
Establish reception points in the rural and agricultural area at the local level
Schedule networking activities that facilitate the reception of new farmers
Develop the cultural offer in rural areas
Ensure access to basic services for the rural population
Innovate measures to improve access to housing
Deploy the necessary infrastructure for digitalisation and access to new technologies

Promote projects aimed at ensuring that the rural population has access to essential infrastructures and services (ES26.1 of the PEAC)

Challenge 5. Awareness / citizenship
Generate a positive image of the farming profession
Work in schools and institutes to raise awareness among teachers and new generations, both urban and rural, about the farming profession / Promote a school fair programme to talk about jobs in the primary sector so they are better-known and serve as a lever to attract new generations (ES28.2 of the PEAC)
Create informative materials about the farming profession to raise awareness among the population regarding the importance of the profession
Create joint educational projects between rural and urban schools to share differences and similarities between both areas (FO4.3 of the PEAC)
Raise public awareness of the importance of consuming local and sustainable products
Promote high-impact communication campaigns and complementary dissemination actions (CO1. of the PEAC)
Incorporate structured and systematic training on healthy lifestyle habits, food origin and production, sustainability, cooking and gastronomy in all formal teaching plans (FO4.6 of the PEAC)
Promote innovative actions to bring production and sustainable consumption closer together
Food channel (2030 INNOVA Plan)

Table 1. Challenges, objectives and actions of the Generational Renewal Strategy. Source: DACC.

Authors



Laura Dalmau Pol

Deputy Director General of DACC Rural Planning.

laura.dalmau@gencat.cat



Gemma Taña Pedrola

Technical Officer, General Directorate of Rural Planning. DACC.

gemma.tana@gencat.cat



José Dadón Paz

Rural Development Manager. DACC

jdadon@gencat.cat



ACTIONS IMPLEMENTED BY THE DACC to strengthen the entry of young farmers in Catalonia

01. Young farmer facilitatorss in Catalonia

The young farmer facilitator is a technician specialising in generational renewal in the different territorial areas and who works in a network with the other professionals involved in the process of entering the farming sector: the technician from the collaborating entity, the technician from the DACC regional office and the training tutor.

The main pillars of this facilitation are:

- Networking with the various actors involved in the entry process.
- Supporting young people to guide and motivate them.
- Identifying young people most in need.
- Personalising the support, adapted to each young person and project.
- Connecting the young person with a famer or expert farmer: mentors.
- Monitoring the young person until the correct execution of their business plan.

The aim is to coordinate and direct communication between the different agents involved in the entry process of the young farmer in order to improve the support received.

Young farmer facilitation began as a pilot project that the DACC has been carrying out since 2019, in the counties Camp de Tarragona and Girona, to strengthen the entry of young people into farming.

In 2021, due to the characteristics and unique needs of the territory, and the



Meeting of installation tutors at the EA Pirineu agricultural school. Photo: DACC.

increased pressure on farms, it was extended to the following territories:

- Counties of Alt Pirineu and Aran
- Counties in the peri-urban area of Barcelona
- Counties of the Terres de l'Ebre

By 2023, it will also reach Central and Western Catalonia, meaning it will have been implemented throughout Catalonia and any young person wanting to enter as a young farmer will have the support, advice and guidance of the young farmer facilitator to successfully complete their entry into the sector.

Anna Carmona, young farmer facilitator in Alt Pirineu and Aran

The invitation to join the young farmer facilitation team in 2021 I saw as a challenge and an opportunity that I approached with a holistic and personal-

ised view. My field of action is Alt Pirineu and Aran, which comprises the counties of Alta Ribagorça, Alt Urgell, Cerdanya, Pallars Jussà, Pallars Sobirà and Vall d'Aran. As it is a mountainous and rural territory, this shapes the way young farmers establish themselves; mainly, they set up small or medium-sized family farms, managed traditionally

Of the new entrants, those who take over from their parents are the predominant group, but there are more and more cases of new farmers, who are generally the ones who need the most support and guidance. Despite the difficulties involved in being a farmer in a mountain area, mainly those of access to land or housing, the Pyrenees is considered an attractive destination.

In these two years of experience, I would highlight supporting a young entrepreneur who was not from a farming family

and until recently was living in a neighbouring country with a different economic and legal system. He applied for the Young Farmers' First Installation Aid in 2022. Starting from scratch, he set himself up in a newly built laying hen farm and, moreover, he had no agricultural training. He has been working against the clock to meet deadlines and commitments set by the aid, while dealing with seasonal constraints when obtaining the building permit, registering with the Livestock Activities Register, training, constructing and equipping the facilities, as well as unexpected issues encountered along the way that have forced him to modify the building design. To help him finalise his project and acquire more knowledge of the poultry sector, we organised a visit to a laying hen farm, thanks to the district office veterinarian.. The owner is a young farmer who established his farm nine years and is the winner of a Pita award for his innovative project. The meeting was so beneficial and instructive that, as a result and with the involvement of the young farmer tutor, both became part of the young farmer mentoring project promoted by the agricultural schools. They are scheduled to begin shortly, and I am sure that these weeks of learning and advice from an expert who has already gone through a similar process will be very enriching for the young farmer.

Anna Pararols, young farmer facilitator from Girona

I joined this project since it emerged in 2019 as a pilot plan in the counties of Girona and Tarragona with the idea of seeing how it works and, once well established, apply it to the rest of Catalonia. However, with the pandemic, all the ideas that we had came to a standstill. However, different territories have been added.

The main idea is to advise and support young people who want to enter the agricultural sector. It is important to take into account the fact that each case is

different according to the conditions and characteristics, even if the entry is into the same type of farm, and therefore the details of each case vary. For this reason, advice is provided both jointly and individually. In Girona, there is a great diversity of types of production, both agricultural and livestock-related, especially on the plains with farms working with sweet fruit, orchards, cereals, intensive livestock, etc. Whereas, in the mountainous areas, beef cattle farms predominate.

With experience, I have seen that Girona is a territory where many young people set up enterprises, especially when the farms are family-run and livestock-oriented. Also, it should be noted that women establish themselves at a later age, and their projects include diversification..The most typical is rural tourism, but we also find others such as rural classrooms, farm visits, workshops, all related to the farm.

This project could be improved by creating a stronger network and interaction between young farmers as well as providing more individualised support according to the difficulties that each one is encountering, the type of farm they want to establish, their origin (farming or not), etc.

Providing advice and support to young farmers is the part that provides a greatest satisfaction, since these people are building their future and being able to help them in a more or less direct way is very important.

Elisabet Masip, young farmer facilitator at Camp de Tarragona

In 2019, as technicians of the DACC, we started a pilot plan called "Young Farmer Facilitation", in Camp de Tarragona and in Girona, with one objective: to help young farmers successfully establish themselves.

We are aware that this is a not an easy process. You need to be clear about the

project, look for the tools to carry it out (land, farm infrastructure, etc.), receive training, submit the relevant paperwork with the different administrations, handle the day-to-day life on a farm etc. This is why guidance, identifying young farmers' needs, advice, and so on are all vital. In this pilot plan, which added additional territories in 2021, we work in a network with all the stakeholders who in some way are involved in the entry process to provide this support.

Over the years we have met with young farmers starting up in all sectors. Some set out on this path knowing what it was to be a farmer, and others discovered a new reality; but all did so with the enthusiasm of moving forward with a project.

We were able to capture the dynamism of the farms and the young farmers who run them: many of these projects no longer focus only on production, but also on processing, adding value to the product, and marketing it.

We have seen the drive to make the farms work and the desire to do a good job.

All these experiences taking place in farms all over the territory make up a sector that, despite the current situation, is very much alive.

We continue to do our work with the aim of providing help in everything that is needed so that these projects can become a reality, last over time and so we can have a young and strong sector.

Miquel Baldi, young farmer facilitator at the Territorial Services of Barcelona

The installation aid for young farmers aims to facilitate the entry of new entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector and provides financial support for the execution of the business plan proposed by the young farmer. The aid is important in starting the activity, but also has demanding requirements and commit-

ments: execution of the business plan, tax and Social Security registrations, training, consolidation of the planned workforce, compliance with the requirements of a professional farmer or EAP, etc. All these requirements arise at the start of the activity when the entrepreneur has to face many other challenges when establishing their new enterprise.

All support is welcome to overcome this moment, and the young farmer facilitation team in Barcelona focuses on following up and giving the best information to young farmers.

For this reason, future applicants are invited to an informational meeting before submitting their application, to receive the best possible guidance. In this initial phase, immature or non-viable projects are identified and support is provided to improve them and thus ensure their viability.

Once the application for the aid has been submitted, a joint meeting with the training tutor and district office technicians is held, to inform the young farmers of the training pathway and the procedures to be followed during the five years of commitment under the aid. The aim is to remind applicants of the commitments and documentation to present to avoid incidents and facilitate contacts, so we make ourselves available to young farmers to resolve any doubts they may have.

Finally, and especially for applicants not from the agricultural sector, what we refer to as non-family entrants, we carry out a follow-up call when they receive the aid decision and another after the payment, to check that they are complying with their business plan and identify any possible incidents that could jeopardise the payment of this aid in time.

In the counties of Barcelona, we are highly influenced by the proximity of the city of Barcelona and the metropolitan area, which exerts a very strong urban planning and infrastructure pressure on agricultural land, while at the same time offering a certain easy access to the final consumer.

These factors generate projects with limited surface area and products with high added value, including: organic vegetables marketed via box schemes, organic eggs, honey, sheep and goat farming with grazing for fire prevention and cheese production cheeses, kiwi fruit production, etc.

Miquel Ulldemolins, young farmer facilitator at Terres de l'Ebre

From the first day I started working at the Department (several years ago), I have been involved in processing modernisation cases, and then, global contracts. I have worked with hun-

dreds of young people who have shared their ideas, their projects (real life projects in many cases), their dreams and even their fears. I have always tried to inform them as clearly as possible of the commitments, the risks, the potential problems and so forth, and in some cases I have advised them not to go ahead with their plan, as it was not a viable project.

I started working in Terra Alta and have now been in Ribera d'Ebre for seven years. In both counties, the main activity is agriculture (in Ribera d'Ebre the industrial and service sectors are larger than in Terra Alta) with it following a traditional Mediterranean model: vineyards, almond trees, olive trees and sweet fruit; extensive livestock farms (sheep-goats), intensive integrated pig and chicken farms, and a small number of closed-cycle farms. In Baix Ebre and Montsià, agriculture and livestock also play an important role, with the same crops (apart from the vineyards) and the addition of horticulture, citrus fruits and rice.

Across the four counties, traditional generational succession predominates: the transfer of farms from parents to children with the maintenance or expansion of existing crops, with few newcomers and young farmer start-up projects tend not to vary the typical Technical-Economic Orientations (vine, fruit, citrus etc.).



Anna Carmona Xarles
Young Farmer Facilitator
Alt Pirineu - Aran

anna.carmona@gencat.cat



Anna Pararols Martí
Young Farmer Facilitator
in Girona

apararols@gencat.cat



Elisabet Masip Miquel
Young Farmer Facilitator
in Camp de Tarragona

emasip@gencat.cat



Miquel Baldi Coll
Young Farmer Facilitator
in SSTT Barcelona

mbaldi@gencat.cat



Miquel Ulldemolins Giné
Young Farmer Facilitator
in Terres de l'Ebre

mulldemolins@gencat.cat

Acting as a facilitator in the four counties of Terres de l'Ebre has allowed me to become familiar with other crops: citrus fruits and rice, which despite the geographical proximity were completely unknown to me, and also to new projects. They have come to me with suggestions on starting up a farm for mushroom cultivation, laying hens producing coloured eggs and even a livestock farm focused on protein for animal feed... Furthermore, I have been in contact with young people who, despite having entered a typical vineyard operation, talk about biodynamic, regenerative agriculture. All of this has connected me to a new kind of

agriculture, a new way of producing and doing things, different from the one I had been processing in cases year after year. This gives me hope for the future of a fundamental profession for a society that does not always know how to appreciate the work and effort involved in producing quality food.

02. El Planter – Young people in farming

On 6 May 2020, El Planter was launched on RuralCat (https://ruralcat.gencat.cat/web/guest/el_planter), a new virtual office dedicated to young farmers en-

tering the agricultural sector. El Planter is a meeting point and information hub for all young people who decide to take up agricultural activity in Catalonia, with special attention to those who have no previous experience in the sector.

The virtual office gathers, in a single space, all the information on the entry of young people in the agri-food and rural sector, from aids, training and shared experiences, to support and advice.

With sections like:

Ser pagès/a? (Why become a farmer?), aimed at young people who have no pre-

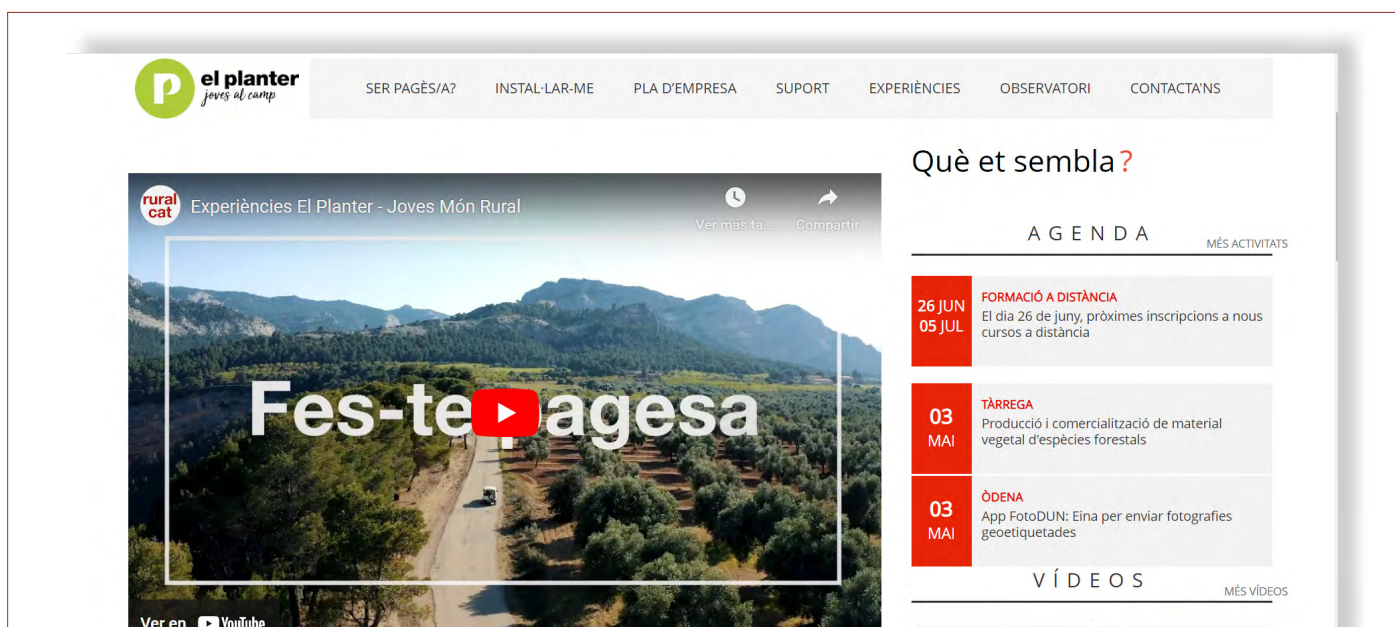


Photo 1. Homepage of the El Planter virtual office. Source: https://ruralcat.gencat.cat/web/guest/el_planter

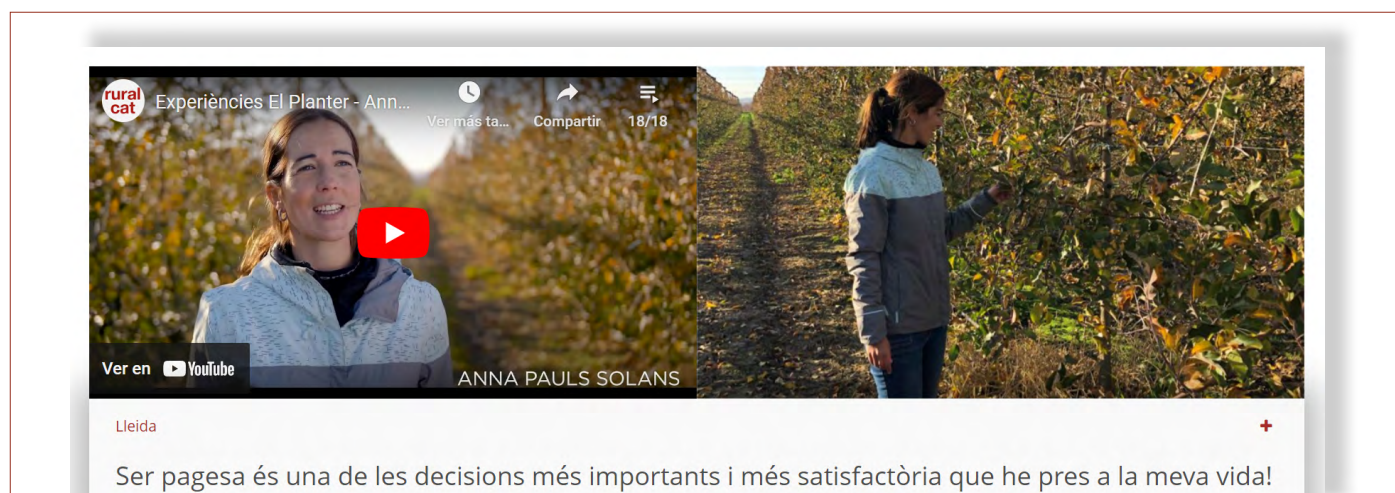


Photo 2. Screenshot of the Experiences section of the El Planter virtual office. Source: www.ruralcat.cat.



Photo 3. Header of the Young Farmer Observatory page. Source: www.observatoridejoves.cat

vious experience in the sector and without an agricultural background. This section contains some guidelines and basic considerations that must be taken into account before and during the process of becoming a farmer.

Instal·lar-me (Getting established), which provides all the information on the support provided under the Integrated Farm Contract (CGE), within the second pillar of the CAP, including aid for the initial installation of young farmers, to improve the competitiveness of farms, to mitigate climate change on farms and for agricultural diversification, as well as agro-environmental aid and organic agricultural production. There is also information on the first pillar of the CAP, with basic income support for sustainability, access

to the National Reserve, as well as a young farmer supplement, redistributive income support and eco-schemes.

Pla d'empresa (Business plan), where there is an explanation on how to draw up a business plan, with a simple mobile infographic and a more detailed complementary document.

Suport (support), administrative and legislative support for completing various procedures, as well as advice through agricultural schools, regional offices of the DACC, collaborating entities and the figure of the young farmer facilitator.

Experiències (experiences), testimonials from young farmers (women and men) from each area who have already suc-

cessfully established themselves in different productive orientations, including organic, sustainable or conventional agriculture and/or animal husbandry.

Contacta'ns (Contact us), which allows all young people to submit any type of enquiry about entering the agricultural sector and receive a response within 24 to 48 hours.

The virtual office also offers the direct link to the Young Farmer Observatory <https://observatoridejoves.cat/>, a consultation tool for young farmers who have entered the agricultural sector since 2015 and have received the initial installation aid for young farmers, the sustainability aid requested by young farmers and/or the direct aid from the CAP.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of DUN declarants	55.287	53.279	51.257	50.330	48.891	49.462	48.419	47.917
Direct payments	130.316	102.483	93.358	94.050	92.326	92.086	90.169	88.865
YOUNG FARMERS								
CAP direct aid	11.181	12.138	12.057	12.164	10.931	10.982	10.381	9.768
Young farmer beneficiaries	3.730	4.349	4.139	3.951	3.737	3.519	3.374	3.175
% of young people benefiting from DUN over total DUN declarants	6,75%	8,16%	8,07%	7,85%	7,64%	7,11%	6,97%	6,63%
Sustainability aid	2.801	3.103	3.090	2.957	2.835	2.597	2.490	2.361
Young farmer beneficiaries	2.086	2.241	2.206	2.074	1.992	1.833	1.769	1.661
% of young people benefiting from DUN over total DUN declarants	3,77%	4,21%	4,30%	4,12%	4,07%	3,71%	3,65%	3,47%
First installation applications	811	544	448	362	357	249	327	222
Young farmer beneficiaries	677	399	350	262	263	195	279	212
% young applicants out of total DUN declarants	1,47%	1,02%	0,87%	0,72%	0,73%	0,50%	0,68%	0,46%

Photo 4. Screenshot of the Young Farmer Observatory website. Source: www.observatoridejoves.cat

In addition, users can consult the most relevant news items related to young farmers as well as links of interest to the young farmers' associations, training, events, PITA awards in the Young Innovative Entrepreneurs category, or the Leader and Odisseu projects, among others.

In its first two and a half years, El Planter has received 13,034 visits from 11,127 users, with 31,710 page views and 21,659 views of the videos of experiences of young established farmers, and has become a reference point across Spain.

03. Young Farmer Observatory

The Young Farmer Observatory (www.observatoridejoves.cat) is a tool for consulting data on young people who have entered the agricultural sector since 2015 with the initial installation aid for young farmers, direct aid from the CAP and/ or those who requested sustainability aid, which includes agro-environmental practices.

The Observatory is continuously updated and allows comparison of all the profiles of young farmers installed by region,

productive orientation, sex and organic production. It serves to monitor the evolution or trends among young farmers established in Catalonia.

The Observatory also provides an overview of the evolution of young farmers compared to the total number of applicants under the DUN (National Single Declaration) (photo 4).

The sections

There is currently information on three types of aid, organised into sections



Photo 5. Sections on the Young Farmer Observatory website Source: www.observatoridejoves.cat

SUMMARY TABLE						
NAME	Total aid	%	Aid for young farmers	%	Young farmers	%
Grants paid out	783.653	100%	90.602	11,56%	7.136	
Amounts paid	2.092.738.414 €	100%	288.801.456 €	13,80%		
GENDER	Total aid	%	Aid for young farmers	%	Young farmers	%
Men	467.292	59,63%	67.140	74,1%	5.594	78,39%
Women	230.159	29,37%	15.160	16,7%	1.542	21,61%
Legal person	86.202	11,00%	8.302	9,2%		
TOTAL	783.653	100%	90.602	100%	7.136	
BLOCKS	Total aid	%	Aid for young farmers	%	Young farmers	%
Basic payment	271.690	34,67%	29.642	32,72%	7.663	25,85%
Practices beneficial to the environment (Greening)	271.211	34,61%	29.670	32,75%	7.664	25,83%
Complementary payment for young farmers	9.700	1,24%	9.096	10,04%	2.726	29,97%
Small farmers scheme	65.074	8,30%	2.203	2,43%	756	34,32%
Associated grants (agricultural/livestock)	165.978	21,18%	19.991	22,06%	4.243	21,22%
TOTAL	783.653	100%	90.602	100%		

Photo 6. Screenshot of the Young Farmer Observatory website. Global vision of direct aid from the CAP 2015-2022 Source: www.observatoridejoves.cat

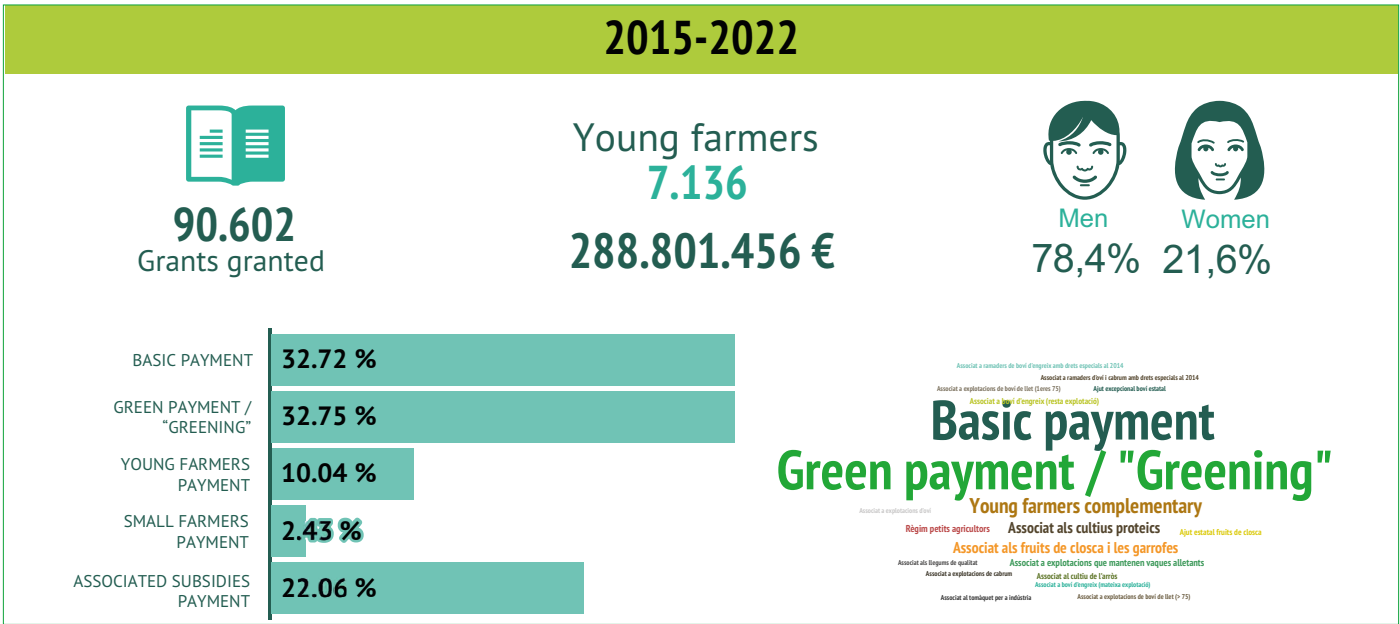


Photo 7. Infographic summary of direct aid from the CAP 2015-2022 on the website. Source: www.observatoridejoves.cat

(photo 5), from which we can obtain an overview and/or adetailed query by year.

The overview groups the informa-tion into a summary table (photo 6), with graphs and evolution tables and an

infographic (photo 7). From this section, it is possible to access a detailed query which allows personalised searches of the data, as well as the option to down-load the information consulted in table format.

In addition to the ongoing data updates, improvements and consultation options are being added, such as the map query functionality, making it possible to visualise the geographical distribution of the pro-ductive orientations of the 100% certified calls for applications from 2015 to 2023 (photo 8).

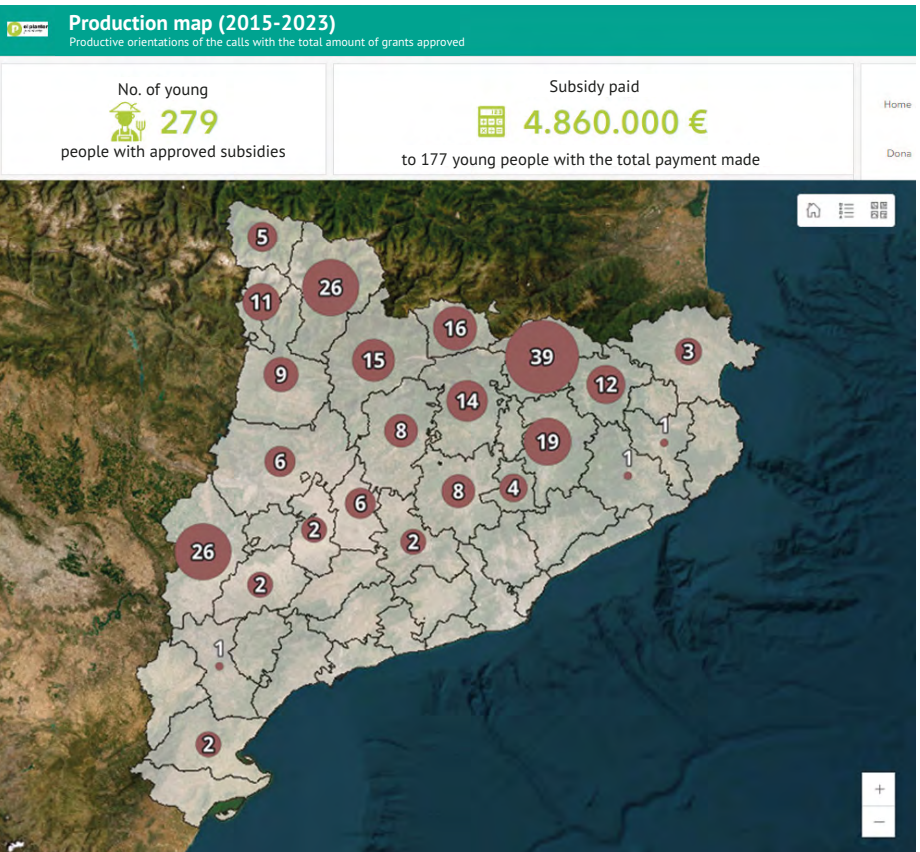
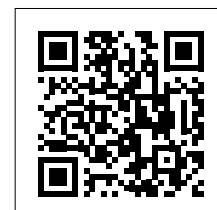


Photo 8. Example of query on map (Young farmers installed in beef cattle 2015-2021). Source: https://observatoridejoves.cat/ajuts-primera-installacio/mapes_1a_inst/

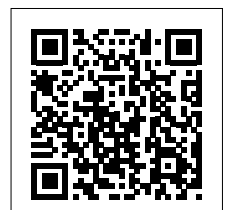
Authors

Josep Dadón Paz
Rural Development Manager
Coordinator of the El Planter virtual office at Ruralcat.
DACC.
jdadon@gencat.cat

Fermí Garriga Serra
Technician in Geographical Information and New Technologies. CTFC.
fermi.garriga@ctfc.cat



Youth Observatory website



El Planter website

AGRICULTURAL TRAINING

in Catalonia: three proposals aimed at training young farmers

01. The mentoring programme, a new format so young farmers who join the agricultural sector can acquire the knowledge to run viable businesses

One of the actions planned within the Generational Renewal Strategy of Catalonia for the period 2023-2027 is mentoring training.

The Agricultural Training Service (SFA), which manages the 15 agricultural schools in Catalonia, launched the Mentoring project for young farmers in 2023. The new initiative is aimed at young farmers who apply for the initial installation aid, and this pilot programme has been available to those who applied in 2022. The aim is to guide and advise young people with viable business ideas in the agricultural sector.

Mentoring is based on broadening the learning of young farmers – called mentees – who are starting their professional activity in the agricultural sector and have a viable project. They are committed people, eager to learn, and they participate voluntarily in the programme. These mentees are guided by professionals – called mentors – with notable work histories and businesses similar to those of the young farmers.

The mentors who advise and guide the young farmers during this period stand out for being empathetic, effective communicators. They are professionals with expertise, who can provide the young

mentees with knowledge, both technological or related to business management. They help the mentees to focus on their business projects and to resolve situations and possible problems that may arise in the running of their new company.

The mentoring programme has the collaboration of professionals with extensive careers in the agricultural sector, who provide young farmers with knowledge and help them focus on their business projects

Another key aspect of mentoring is that the relationship of trust established between the mentor and the mentee which can continue in the future. The programme started in January 2023 and runs until November. In the first phase, and for a period of two or three weeks, the young farmers work and share their day-to-day life in the enterprises of their respective mentors, so that the mentee can direct hands-on experience. It allows them to learn from the successes and also from the difficulties and possible failures, so that they can later apply this learning in their own business. Throughout this period, the young farmer works to achieve the goals established at the beginning of the programme. It is as if we were comparing a teacher and a learner, where the mentee can ask everything they need to know, and the mentor has to give them reasons and motivations so that they can learn.

During this whole process, the work of the new installation tutors of the agricultural schools participating in the project and coordinated by the SFA is essential. They are a crucial pillar, both for promoting the programme and for selecting young farmers and the mentors, planning the placements and monitoring the activities. They give support and facilitate the mentoring so it can be as beneficial as possible for the young farmers.

Pilot project

Nine agricultural schools participate in this project (Amposta, Espiells, Gandesa, Manresa, Mas Bové, Pirineu, Santa Coloma de Farners, Solsonès and Tàrraga), which have selected 12 young volunteers – seven women and five men – from different regions of Catalonia and with very different orientations.

The production orientations of the mentees' enterprises are varied: six livestock (meat and milk sheep, beef cattle, horse-meat and laying poultry) and six agricultural (sweet fruit, dried fruit, garden vegetables, vineyards, olive trees and ornamental plants). In total, eight of these projects focus on organic production

When the training period is over, all three of them (mentor, mentee and new entry tutor) evaluate the learning achieved, with a view to repeating the programme again in the coming years.

Finally, it should be remembered that the Agricultural Training Service, through its schools, has a training programme for the entry of young farmers into the sector which is based on the guidance



Mentor and mentee. Photo: DACC.

of the new entry tutor. In addition, the 15 agricultural schools offer a series of continuing education courses in different areas, such as training in new technologies applied to the agri-food sector at the Cabrils agricultural school.

02. The New Agricultural School of Horticulture and New Technologies

Through its network of agricultural schools, the Agricultural Training Service offers a training programme to support the entry of young farmers into the agricultural sector, based on guidance and support from an installation tutor, as described above. In addition, the 15 agricultural schools offer a wide range of continuing training courses across different agricultural fields.

In this context, in 2023 the DACC launched the new Agricultural School of Horticulture and New Technologies in Cabrils (Maresme), with the aim of promoting training in digitalisation and new technologies in agriculture, responding to the needs of the agricultural sector, and fostering the creation of new jobs that are attractive to young farmers. The initiative seeks to support generational renewal and attract young farming talent to rural areas.

The new Agricultural School aims to be a model of open innovation, with strong collaborative interdependence with the private sector, horticultural professionals, and representative entities and organisations within the agricultural sector, in order to capture both current training needs and emerging trends.

The creation of the new School responds to the need to offer continuous agricultural training in the fields of new technologies and horticulture.

With regard to horticulture, this need has been expressed for years by the sector itself and its representative organisations.

From a technological perspective, the implementation of new technologies in agriculture is seen as essential to strengthening the sector and making it more competitive, efficient, sustainable, and technologically advanced.

Overall, the main objectives of the Agricultural School of Horticulture and New Technologies include improving professional skills within the agricultural sector (by enhancing and attracting talent and supporting the entry of young farmers into agriculture), with a clear specialisation in horticulture, as well as promoting digitalisation, the adoption of new tech-

nologies, and agricultural technology transfer projects.

03. Fifteen Years of the School of Shepherds and Shepherdesses of Catalonia

The School of Shepherds and Shepherdesses of Catalonia was founded in 2009 as a training initiative aimed at ensuring generational renewal in extensive livestock farming in Catalonia. It was established with a local focus in Pallars Sobirà, but quickly expanded across the territory, as it responded to a widespread and shared need. From the outset, the initiative has had the support of the Pallars Agricultural School, which enables the training to be officially validated and recognised as part of the compulsory training required to apply for the initial installation aid for young farmers.

Fifteen years on, although the initiative has evolved, it remains faithful to a model of small-scale farming, based on agroecology and human-scale projects that seek to be both economically and emotionally viable. It is now known as the School of Shepherds and Shepherdesses. A change that may seem minor, but it is one which aims to highlight and reclaim the role of women in extensive livestock farming.

The training programme currently lasts six and a half months, consisting of two and a half months of theoretical training and four months of practical placements. The theoretical component covers the core knowledge required to practise the profession and explores in greater depth those areas considered essential or representing key opportunities for new farming entrants: animal feeding, livestock management and health, silvopasture, mountain grazing management, on-farm processing, and farm business management. The programme comprises 320 hours of theoretical and practical training, complemented by hands-on experience through placements on active farms.



Maria and Roger, examples of entry into the agricultural sector and former students of the School of Shepherds and Shepherdesses. Photo: School of Shepherds and Shepherdesses.

These placements are carried out alongside farmers who, in addition to running their own agricultural projects, voluntarily participate in the initiative and take on the role of trainers, supporting the learning process of those who wish to work with livestock. The School would not be possible without this collaboration.

Over these fifteen years, 247 people have been trained, with an average age of around 30, coming from both rural and urban backgrounds. The majority hold upper secondary or higher education qualifications (52% and 38%, respectively).

Over these fifteen years, 247 people have been trained, with an average age of around 30, coming from both rural and urban backgrounds. The majority hold upper secondary or higher education qualifications (52% and 38%, respectively).

The number of women participating in the programme has steadily increased since its beginnings up to its 15th edition, in which women outnumber men. This reality reflects how, little by little, female role models in the sector are gaining visibility and encouraging others to follow the same path.

The dropout rate is very low, at 12.6%, while the rate of entry into the sector is notably high: almost 60% are currently working in the sector, and a further 20% are in the process of doing so. These figures clearly indicate that the training is effective, generates interest, and is of sufficient quality to meet students' expectations.

Among those working in livestock farming, 62.8% have their own agricultural project, while 37.2% are employed by third parties.

As always, the best way to understand an initiative is through the people involved:

- Álex, a 2017 participant, had the opportunity to take over the dairy goat farm and cheese dairy where he completed his placement.
- Cristina, who attended the programme in 2014, together with Marc, a 2011 participant, manage a Rasquera goat

herd in Begues, focused on the management and maintenance of firebreak areas — a form of targeted grazing for wildfire prevention.

- Maria, who completed the programme in 2016, has worked continuously in Pallars Sobirà ever since and has become one of the initiative's strongest ambassadors thanks to the quality of her work in the sector.
- Roger, a 2021 participant, shepherds grouped herds in the Boldís mountain area, allowing farmers to focus on hay-making during the summer months.

These are just some examples of the people who have passed through the School and who are now active members of Catalonia's primary sector.

Authors



Joan S. Minguet Pla

Head of the Agricultural Training Service DACC.
jsminguet@gencat.cat



Laia Batalla Carrera

Head of the School of Shepherds and Shepherdesses of Catalonia
laia@rurbans.org

TOOLS AND INITIATIVES

for agricultural entrepreneurship

01. The Catalan Land Bank Network: a collective project to safeguard the future of the agricultural sector

Protecting local agriculture is essential to ensure the production of healthy, safe and sustainable food. In this article, we explain some of the initiatives promoted by the Barcelona Provincial Council to secure the future of the agricultural sector in the territory, and in particular the Catalan Land Bank Network.

With the steady increase in the world's population, food production would need to grow by 70% in the coming years, according to FAO data. In this context, it is essential to adopt measures that enable territories to ensure food production and even increase it. However, this increase in crop productivity must guarantee economic viability, environmental health, and social and economic equity. In other words, food production must be sustainable, so that it can meet not only the needs of current generations but also those of future generations.

In Catalonia, however, the agricultural sector contributes less than 1% to gross domestic product, according to data from Idescat. This very low figure highlights the importance of promoting policies that support activity in the primary sector if we are to follow FAO recommendations and increase food production. In addition, the reduced weight of agriculture and livestock farming in Catalonia also entails other challenges, such as the progressive loss of farmland or the lack of generational renewal. This affects the biodiversity of agricultural ecosystems, the conservation of landscapes and forests, and quality of life in rural areas.

Specifically, in the Barcelona province, the loss of agricultural land is a serious problem that affects the capacity to produce local food and to maintain ecosystems. Over the last six decades, 120,500 hectares of farmland have been lost¹, an area similar in size to the combined area of Barcelonès, Baix Llobregat and Alt Penedès. In addition, 60% of the agricultural land that has disappeared has become forest, which has led to a decline in the traditional agroforestry mosaic landscape and an increased risk of large-scale forest fires. The remaining farmland has disappeared as a result of urban expansion, a reality that highlights the importance of preserving and properly managing fields, grasslands and forests if we want to guarantee the production of healthy and sustainable food and maintain ecosystems in balance.

To address all these challenges, BCN Smart Rural has emerged. This initiative was created by the Barcelona Provincial Council with the aim of supporting local authorities that wish to promote more sustainable, healthy and locally based agricultural and food systems. The project was initially co-financed by the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and has now been consolidated as a permanent and stable support programme.

BCN Smart Rural is structured around two main lines of action. The first focuses on promoting food strategies in the towns and cities of the Barcelona area. The second line of action focuses on preserving and managing agricultur-

al areas in the counties of the Barcelona province and, to this end, promotes the creation of agricultural and rural parks. These parks are a form of protection and public-private governance that is essential for maintaining agricultural activity.

The actions developed in the agricultural and rural parks of the province are diverse and take into account the specific characteristics of each territory. In general, however, they aim to facilitate generational renewal and access to land. In this context, the Barcelona Provincial Council is already working on the drafting of the Action Plan for Agricultural Generational Renewal. This is a detailed roadmap intended to facilitate the transfer of farms led by people approaching retirement age, and it is expected to come into operation in 2024. For the past five years, the provincial authority has also been promoting the Catalan Land Bank Network.¹ This initiative, a pioneer in Europe, seeks to ensure the continuity of agricultural activity through the identification of unused or abandoned plots of land. Once registered, the plots become part of a database managed by the Barcelona Provincial Council in the territories under its remit. The database also includes similar initiatives in other counties of Catalonia, such as Baix Camp, Les Garrigues and Priorat.

The Catalan Land Bank Network is one of the most prominent initiatives of the BCN Smart Rural programme and addresses several challenges. First, it aims to protect natural and ecological heritage by restoring the agroforestry mosaic and promoting agricultural and livestock activity. Second, it seeks to revitalise the land market and make land accessible to new entrepreneurs through the creation of an open online platform for interested

¹ <https://www.diba.cat/web/bcn-smart-rural/-/terres-amb-futur-una-mirada-als-usos-del-s%C3%B2l-a-la-demarcaci%C3%B3-de-barcelona>

parties: www.bancdeterres.cat. It also aims to facilitate cooperation between territories and to increase the total area offered through land banks.

The services offered by the land banks directly managed by the Barcelona Provincial Council are free of charge. They include facilitating contact between the two parties, technical support, legal advice, continuing training, the preparation of business plans, individualised support and the creation of collaborative networks, among other actions. These services benefit both landowners and people seeking agricultural land.

At present, more than 55,000 hectares could be recovered for food production in the province of Barcelona². Many of these hectares are ideal for extensive livestock farming projects. Through the Land Bank, a total of 16 contracts have been signed, using lease arrangements, land-use agreements and grazing agreements.

In summary, the initiatives presented in this article highlight the crucial role of the Barcelona Provincial Council in protecting the agricultural sector in the territory. They also underline the importance of land banks in guaranteeing the production of healthy and sustainable food for the entire population and in ensuring a future generation of farmers.

02. Network for Generational Renewal

The Network for Generational Renewal (XRA) is made up of a group of entities that share the mission of encouraging, facilitating, and transforming generational renewal, while promoting new economically viable agricultural models that contribute to nature conservation and social justice. The XRA was established in 2021 with the support of five founding entities: ADRINOC, ARCA, the School of



Agroforestry landscape in Piera. Photo: Patxi Uriz 2021, Barcelona Provincial Council.

Shepherds and Shepherdesses of Catalonia, Neus Monllor, Terra Franca, and the Network for Nature Conservation. In the long term, the goal is for the XRA to become the reference network that drives generational renewal processes in the agricultural sector, by facilitating the various professional and life stages of those involved.

Currently, the XRA provides the means and space for member entities to share and advance initiatives being carried out in each territory. The aim is to gradually include more entities in the XRA and ensure that the work being done can serve as inspiration for other organisations and regions. Some ongoing initiatives include the Working Group for Generational Renewal in the Pyrenees, led by the School of Shepherds and Shepherdesses of Catalonia, and the Steering Group for Generational Renewal in Garrotxa, led by ADRINOC.

1. Working Group for Generational Renewal in the Pyrenees

Since late 2021, a total of 11 entities in the Pyrenean region have been working together to facilitate the transfer of agri-

cultural farms in the Alt Pirineu and Aran counties. So far, the activities carried out are mainly aimed at raising awareness and supporting outgoing farmers considering transferring their agricultural operations. Some of these activities include:

- A video forum with the documentary “A Village Without Livestock is a Dead Village. The Transfer in Gavàs”, aimed at outgoing farmers and the general public.
- Awareness sessions on the emotional aspects of farm transfers, aimed at potential outgoing farmers.
- Training for outgoing farmers on the different types of transfer and important considerations with regard to legal, fiscal, economic, and CAP rights.
- Individualised advice for those who have decided to transfer their farm, provided by the experts who led the previous training.
- Sessions on “The Transfer of a Farm Explained to the Successor”, highlighting the key aspects that the incoming farmer should consider when taking over a farm.

² <https://www.diba.cat/web/bcn-smart-rural/-/totalx%C3%B2-pot-ser-teu>



Goat herd in Sant Vicenç de Castellet Photo: Patxi Uriz 2021, Barcelona Provincial Council.

2. Steering Group for Generational Renewal in Garrotxa

In 2022, the entities that make up the XRA promoted a diagnosis to support new generations of farmers, both family and non-family, titled “Exploration, Identification, and Articulation of Key Elements for Innovation in the Generational Renewal Strategy in Garrotxa.” This work defined a generational renewal pathway with five phases: inspiration, definition, landing, rooting, and completion, along with a set of tools linked to each phase. Several proposals also emerged, such as the creation of a working group and the implementation of transversal actions for monitoring, awareness, and communication.

Once the diagnosis was completed and the results presented, a Steering Group for Generational Renewal in Garrotxa was created at the end of 2022, led by ADRINOC and made up of various local entities, with the aim of addressing generational renewal from a local perspective.

Currently, the Garrotxa steering group is promoting several initiatives, including:

- The consolidation of a stable working group of entities seeking to facilitate generational renewal in Garrotxa, promoting networking and collaboration.
- The creation and dissemination of a Local Generational Renewal Database, connecting those wishing to enter the agricultural sector with those nearing retirement.
- The mapping of existing local tools to promote generational renewal, as well as designing the necessary supports to provide guidance throughout this process.

03. Agricultural test spaces

What are they?

Agricultural test spaces are support and mentoring schemes in the phase prior to the launch of an agricultural project, offering a new service of guidance and advice for future entry into the agricultural sector, which currently does not exist and for which demand is steadily increasing.

An agricultural test space is defined as a programme facilitating the progressive installation processes of new

agents in the agricultural sector, coordinated through structured governance agreed upon by all involved parties. The agricultural test space is structured with legal support, physical support, and comprehensive support (Megias and Monllor, 2022).

In this sense, a person with an agricultural project can access this type of scheme to test their business model for a defined period of time. During their stay at the agricultural test space, this person can begin to consolidate their project, redirect it, or abandon the activity if it is not sustainable, in an environment that provides support at different levels and enhances both technical and personal skills and competencies.

Its creation and development address the challenge of promoting and increasing generational renewal in agriculture and facilitating the entry of new young farmers into the sector. Its structure also enables the creation of territorial dynamics among the various agents committed to generational renewal, to support the new young farmers.

How do they work?

Agricultural test spaces are structured around physical support, which consists of a farm or plot where the productive purpose, infrastructure, tools, and machinery necessary to carry out the agricultural activity have been determined. In this context, the entrepreneur must adapt their agricultural project to the farm or plot and can implement their business proposal. In addition, agricultural test spaces offer legal support through which the entrepreneur can carry out their agricultural activity without compromising any potential aid they may request at the definitive time of their installation, should it occur. Finally, agricultural test spaces provide support, training, and individualised advice to help the entrepreneur make the necessary decisions to approach their future in the most viable way.

When an agricultural test space has a vacancy, a call is launched with rules defined participatively among the governance agents, and the most suitable project is selected through a selection process. The chosen entrepreneur can test their project for a maximum of approximately three years with continuous support.

Where are they?

In Catalonia, there is evidence of a total of eleven agricultural test spaces being created, with various situations and different productive purposes.

Currently, six are in operation:

- For horticultural crops, there are two: at the agricultural test space in Sant Vicenç dels Horts, and at the Rufeà site in Lleida within the framework of the Ponent agricultural test space.

- In extensive livestock farming, there are two: at the Gandesa agricultural test space (meat goats) and the Vall del Ges agricultural test space (Sora farm) (dairy and meat goats).
- Linked to the preservation and professionalisation of the local Belltall garlic variety, there is one at the Passanant and Belltall agricultural test space.
- Linked to farm transfer and generational renewal, there is one associated with the Ponent organic ADR and within the Ponent agricultural test space.

The agricultural test spaces in the process of being created are:

- Falset-Marçà/Priorat Cooperative ET: various possible production types.
- Cabacés ET: livestock orientation.
- Lluçanès ET: dairy goat orientation.
- Vallès Oriental ET: horticultural orientation.

- Vall del Ges Orís and Bisaura, on a farm located in Sant Pere de Torelló: sheep/goat milk and meat.
- Sant Martí de Riucorb ET: dairy sheep orientation.

Who can apply?

Agricultural test spaces are open to anyone with a minimum level of agricultural training and a business project. To apply for entry, applicants must respond to the various calls published according to the available test spaces.

For more information and announcements, please visit www.espaciostestagrarios.org.

Authors



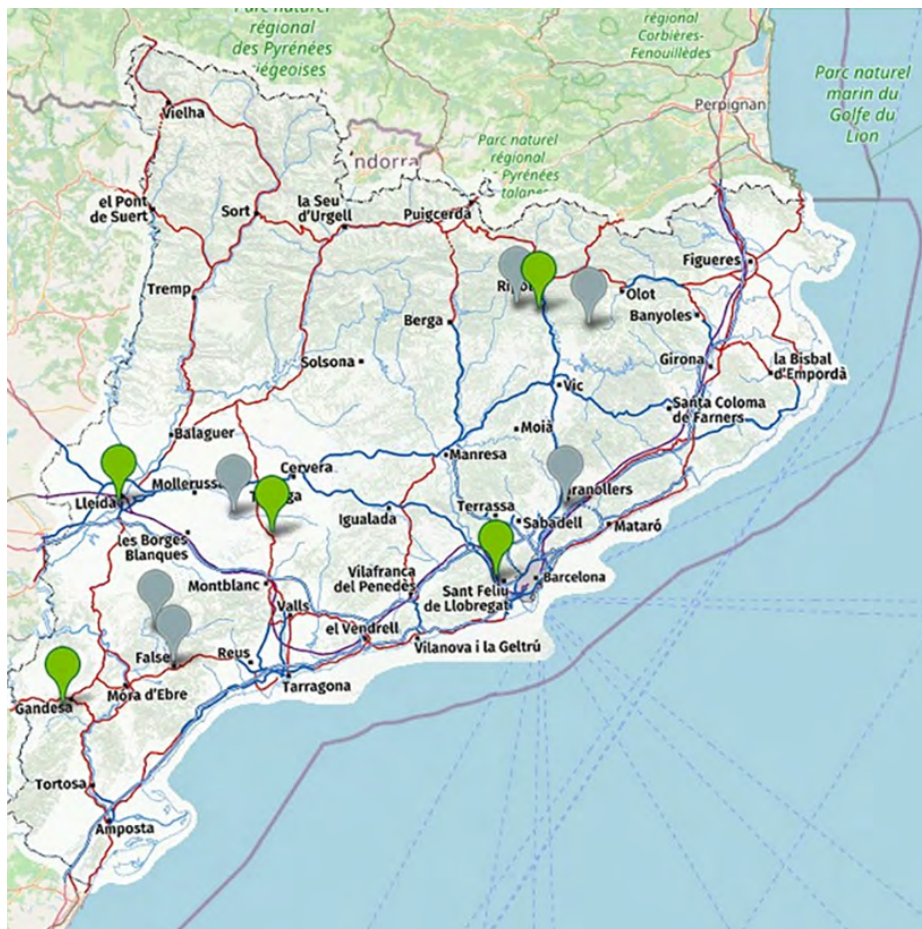
Pere Navarro Maroto
Land Bank Technician,
Barcelona Provincial Council
navarrompr@diba.cat



Jordi Terrades Burniol
Manager, Local Action Group
ADRINOC
jterrades@adrinoc.cat



Laura Megias Garriga
Agricultural Test Spaces
Technician, ARCA
espaistest@arca-dr.cat



Location of agricultural test spaces Green: operational test spaces. Grey: test spaces in the process of creation. Source: Laura Megias

IMPULSCOOP, a project aimed at transforming Catalan agri-food cooperativism

The demographic challenge is one of the main issues facing our society and country, especially in rural areas and in the agricultural sector. The ageing of farmers due to demographic decline is a widespread trend across the European Union and is particularly significant and worrying in Catalonia. According to data from the European Commission, 57.6% of agricultural farms are managed by farmers over 55 years old, and only 12% of holders are under 40. Overall, the trend in European agriculture is concerning because, over the last 15 years (2005–2020), there has been a sharp decrease in farms (37%), a significant increase in land concentration, which makes access to land more difficult for young farmers, and the agricultural wage in the EU is 53% lower than in other economic sectors, which represents a major barrier for young people.

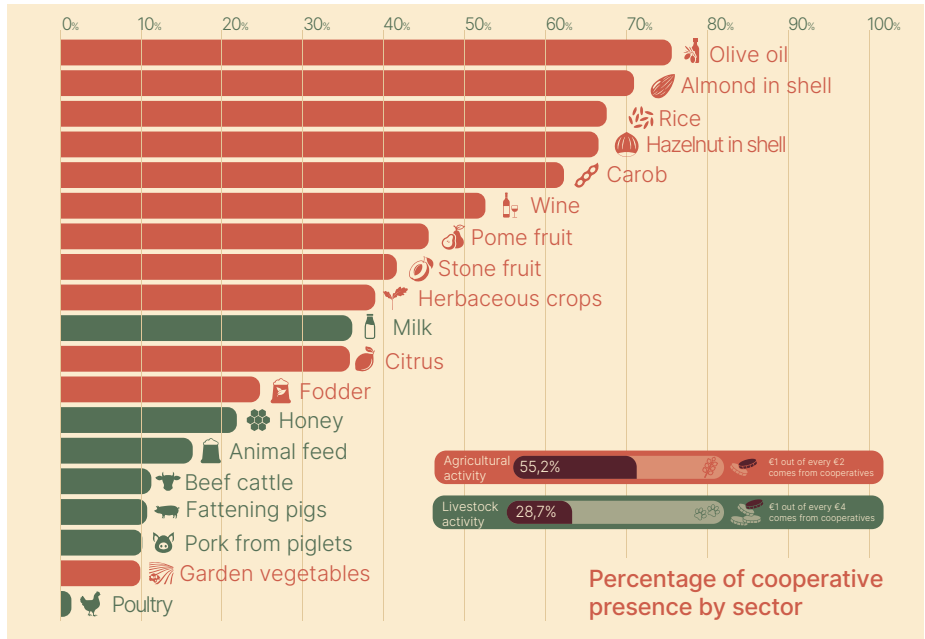
Possible solutions to these problems require a new vision and the implementation of measures targeting the areas most affected by territorial inequality: small municipalities and rural areas. This is reflected in the European Parliament's plenary and its report "Generational Renewal in EU Agricultural farms of the Future", which considers that one way to address this issue is to promote cooperativism. The report highlights that cooperatives can be a hub for attracting talent and encouraging the incorporation of young farmers and women into the sector.

Cooperatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity.

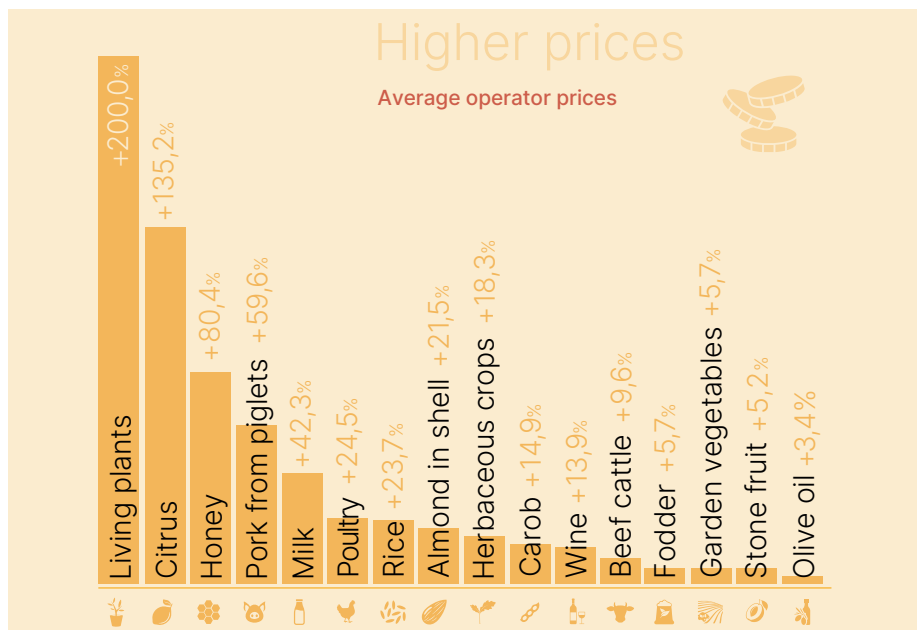
They are a model that achieves the sustainable development of their communities across economic, social, cultural, and ecological spheres, through policies approved by their members. Moreover, in the agricultural sector, cooperatives play an indisputable role, representing 33% of final agricultural production and forming the basis of territorial structuring and cohesion. Currently, cooperative enterprises are leaders in many areas of the agri-food sector. The production of agricultural cooperatives accounts for more than half of Catalonia's total production and has a strong presence in the olive oil, almond, rice, hazelnut, and carob sectors. There is also notable participation in stone-fruit and pome-fruit sectors, herbaceous crops, citrus, milk, and honey, as shown by the following data:

The ImpulsCoop programme integrates the transfer of land from retiring members to new or existing members to increase cooperative activity.

However, it is also important to consider the difference between cooperative selling prices and the national average. In most productions, the prices achieved by cooperatives are higher than the average prices of operators in Catalonia. The difference between cooperative prices and the rest of Catalonia is greatest in sectors where cooperatives play a clear



Weight of cooperativism in Catalonia's agri-food activity. Source: Federation of Agrarian Cooperatives of Catalonia.



Difference between cooperative sales prices and the Catalan average. Source: Federation of Agrarian Cooperatives of Catalonia.

role in creating added value, through processing, innovation, the production of high-quality products, the high professional standards of their staff, or the use of a sales channel closer to the consumer, among other factors.

These figures make it clear that supporting cooperatives is supporting society.

On this premise, the programme promoted by the Department of Climate Action, Food and Rural Agenda was created: ImpulsCoop, a project aimed at transforming Catalan agri-food cooperativism by promoting environmental, social and economic sustainability, digitalisation, the promotion of agri-food products, and strengthening the cooperative network,

as well as improving competitiveness and stimulating intercooperation among different actors in the system.

The programme focuses on granting aid that encourages intercooperation among cooperatives in its various forms, such as mergers, the creation of new enterprises, and other forms of cooperation and collaboration. It is structured around the following lines:

- L1. Encourage the establishment of links, with the main objective of promoting integration processes through advisory services.
- L2. Encourage intercooperation, with the main objective of promoting cooperation within the agricultural sector.
- L3. Encourage mergers, with the main objective of creating groups and organisations within the agricultural sector.
- L4. Encourage the creation of new enterprises with the main objective of generating groups and organisations within the agricultural sector.

Additionally, the aid lines must meet at least two of the following four challenges, one of which must be either R1 or R2, and they must be justified through a business plan:

- R1. Environmental, social and economic sustainability.
- R2. Digital transformation.
- R3. Promotion of agri-food products.
- R4. Strengthening the cooperative network.

Beyond the technical specifications, what is important to highlight about this programme is that it is based on two major innovations. First, it focuses on supporting generational renewal within cooperatives through the incorporation of new members, preferably young people and women, who, in addition, become key figures in the cooperatives' decision-making bodies, such as the governing councils. Second, it seeks to increase the scale of cooperativism by incorporating new farms and expanding existing ones.



Agro-shop. Photo: Empordàlia.

ImpulsCoop seeks to increase the scale of cooperativism by incorporating new farms and expanding existing ones.

Thus, newly incorporated farms into the cooperative system will receive specific support, provided they contribute their entire production and commit for a minimum period of 10 years. Existing farms already linked to cooperatives that significantly increase their activity (by more than 25%) will also receive financial support during the first three years following the increase in scale.

Although generational renewal will take place over the long term and possibly span two generations, as explained in the European report, the programme lays the foundations to begin fostering cooperation between young people and those wishing to transfer their activity, intergenerational advisory, and the facilitation of succession and transfer of agricultural farms within already existing productive structures. In addition, the programme ensures that members transferring their farms to another farm joining a cooperative, or already part of one, also receive support to facilitate and accelerate their decision.

The ImpulsCoop programme is therefore a comprehensive strategy that integrates the transfer of land from retiring members to new or existing members, promotes generational renewal in a harmonious way—including land, the incorporation of young people and women onto governing councils—and simultaneously uses cooperatives as structures for production and advisory support.



Agro-shop of the Conca de la Tordera cooperative. Photo: Conca de la Tordera.



Agro-shop. Photo: Arbequina i Secció de Crèdit SCCL.



Llet Nostra plant in Vic. Photo: Lleters de Catalunya Llet Nostra SCCL



Facilities of the Vallès Regional Agricultural Cooperative. Photo: Agrària del Vallès SCCL.



Facilities of the Conca de la Tordera Cooperative. Photo: Conca de la Tordera SCCL.

Authors



Carme Urdillo Ruiz
Head of Agricultural
Associations.
DACC.
curdillo@gencat.cat

EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG FARMERS set up in Catalonia

Alt Pirineu and Aran

“I sell raw Montsec honey, 100% pure, with no processing”



Xavier Ferro

I am Xavier Ferro Falgueras, a biologist specialising in ecosystems and biodiversity.

Originally from Pont de Montanyana, on the border between Pallars Jussà and Baixa Ribagorça. From a young age, herding in the meadows and mountains of the Montsec range, I learned the trade of shepherd from my grandfather and gained a deep knowledge of the area.

In 2019, I decided to enter agricultural activity as a beekeeper, applying for the young farmer initial installation aid and the aid to improve the competitiveness of agricultural farms. Thanks to these two aids, managed through the Pallars Jussà County Office, I was able to purchase hives, frames, and much of the equipment necessary to start my business and life project.

By combining technical knowledge, experience, and CAP aid, I have been able to turn my passion for bees into a profession, with the great fortune of doing so in the environment where I was born and for which I have deep love and respect.

I founded the company Apiferro, through which I sell raw Montsec honey, 100% pure, with no processing, to preserve all its properties. I also offer personalised experiences in the heart of

nature with views of the Mont-rebei Gorge. This allows me to introduce people to the wonderful world of bees and the role they play in the ecosystem. I offer the chance to be a beekeeper for a day, teaching about the hive and the bees up close, and I conclude the experience with a tasting in nature of the different types of honey I harvest throughout the year, accompanied by local products.

For more information, you can find me online:

Web: www.apiferro.cat

Instagram: [apiferro@melcruadelmontsec](https://www.instagram.com/apiferro@melcruadelmontsec)

Facebook: Apiferro – Mel Crua del Montsec

Camp de Tarragona



Xavier Ferro working with his bees.

“I come from a family of farmers, shopkeepers, carpenters; grandmothers and grandfathers who, in addition to their work, always farmed the land.”

I am Arnau Sabaté, from Vandellòs. I come from a family of farmers, shopkeepers, carpenters; grandmothers and grandfathers who, in addition to their work, always worked the land. I studied Environmental Sciences, and I have worked in many jobs, including as an environmental officer. Around the age of 30, my wife Lidia and I decided that taking up agricultural activity professionally was what we wanted to do to make a living.



Arnau Sabaté

In Almadrava (Baix Camp), we had a four-hectare family farm: olive trees, carob trees, and a patch of woodland, close to the sea. On this plot, we designed our project: a farm for organic chickens. We raise Penedesenca breed chickens according to the principles of organic farming, trying to be as respectful as possible towards our social and environmental surroundings. The farm runs entirely on self-produced energy from solar panels. We buy what we need from local businesses and/or cooperatives and make use of ethical and/or cooperative banking.

We visited farmers and livestock breeders who had been in the sector for years, sought technical advice, calculated and recalculated our finances, requested quotes here and there, navigating the very entertaining bureaucracy. With the support of IDETSA, the business incubator of Vandellòs and L'Hospitalet de l'Infant, we finalised the business plan. Once everything added up, I applied for the first-installation aid for young farmers and the competitiveness-improvement aid for agricultural farms. With this financial support, we were able to launch our project. We built the chicken coops and pens, planted the feed silos, installed water tanks, and fenced the perimeter of the farm.



Penedesenca breed chickens.

We now have a farm with capacity for 2,000 chickens. We manage the entire process of raising and distributing the chickens; we receive them at one day old, and four months later, we deliver them to shops, restaurants, and private customers in the region. We sell all our products under our own brand, AVIAT. In addition to the chickens, we manage seven hectares, mainly of carob and olive trees; we produce our own oil from the olives and sell it retail. More information about us can be found on our website www.aviat.cat or on our Instagram profile <https://www.instagram.com/pollastresaviat/> You can also visit us and see first-hand how we work (www.aviat.cat/visita-ns).

Five years after starting the adventure, Noah arrived along the way, making everything a bit brighter. And we continue dancing through it all, which is no small feat, striving to make a living as farmers.

Central Catalonia



Clara at her organic cattle farm..

“The activity I carry out involves forest management and maintaining a balance in undergrowth grazing.”

I am Clara Ballarà Sampera, from Cardona (Bages), and my roots are in farming and livestock.

My first choice was to study a degree in Primary Education at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), but once I finished my studies and with my father's retirement approaching, I considered continuing the family activity, an idea that had always appealed to me. For this reason, I decided to train in Agricultural Business Management and Organisation at the Solsonès Agricultural School.



Clara Ballarà

On our farm, we focus on extensive cattle farming. My father was one of the pioneers in organic production, and I have continued with this production system.

In 2015, I applied for the young farmer incorporation aid and a competitiveness-improvement grant for the installation of water points, building a feeding shelter, and acquiring feeders and machinery. These investments helped me optimise farm management and make handling the operation easier, allowing me to carry out some tasks without external help.

Currently, we have a herd of 40 cows and we fatten our own calves. All the feed is based on pasture and forage crops produced on the farm, supplemented with cereals acquired from my cousins' neighbouring farm, which also produces organically.

The activity I carry out not only provides production but also allows me to close the cycle completely, as I manage the forest and maintain a balance in undergrowth grazing, resulting in an activity with an extremely low carbon footprint.

Girona



Alba Ferrer



Alba works, among other things, in apple production.

“I am a member of the Association of Women in the Rural World, as I think it is very important to give visibility to women's work in this field.”

I am Alba Ferrer Sala, from Valveralla, in the municipality of Ventalló (Alt Empordà). I come from a family with a long-standing farming tradition across several generations.

I studied a vocational course in IT, but once I started working, I realised I could not be confined to an office and that what I enjoyed was being outdoors, working in the family's agricultural activity.

I have established myself on a farm with both agricultural and livestock activity: soft fruit, cereals, pig fattening, and, following the generational succession of the family farm, I also run a complementary rural tourism activity. I became a partner at Can Deri, SCP, together with my parents. To modernise and adapt the farm, I applied for the young farmer first-installation grant. With this aid, I was able to cover the necessary expenses to implement my business plan. To make the farm more competitive and efficient, I applied for a competitiveness-improvement grant, which allowed us to expand the apple orchards; a mitigation grant to comply with manure regulations by purchasing slurry applicators; and a diversification grant to install photovoltaic panels to make the rural tourism activity more efficient.

In addition to the aid, I undertook a training programme at the Empordà Agricultural School of the DAAC, which gave me further knowledge of business management and technology suitable for my farm.

Currently, my soft fruit farm has 7.21 hectares of apples, 27.44 ha of arable crops, almost half of which are irrigated, and 1,316 pigs for fattening under an integration system. The complementary activity consists of the rural tourism venture Can Centena in Vilamacolum.

Some time ago, I became a member of the Association of Women in the Rural World, as I believe it is very important to give visibility to women's work in this sector. My future goal for the farm is to make it as sustainable as possible.

Rural tourism website: <https://www.cacentena.com/ca/>

Lleida



Josep Gregori

“The primary sector is indispensable, and together we must guarantee its future.”

I am Josep Gregori Borrell. I was born in Vilamajor d'Àger (Noguera). I grew up in a farming and livestock family that values the land and works to care for our surroundings.

I graduated in Agricultural and Food Engineering at the University of Lleida and completed a Master's in Agronomic Engineering (interuniversity programme). After finishing my studies, I decided to join the family farm.

I have always considered this my space, the place where I want to live and work, where I want to shape my professional and personal future while continuing the work my parents and grandparents have cultivated over the years. It is a legacy that connects us to the past and at the same time is the fruit of the present.

We focus on cereal cultivation and sheep farming. We do this with the aim of providing good-quality food and meat to our society. Caring for the fields and animals is the best way to keep our environment alive.

For this reason, I try to follow the path set out so far to continue developing our crops and livestock. The primary sector is indispensable, and together we must guarantee its future.



Cereal field.

My Instagram: @josepgregorii

Terres de l'Ebre

“Proud to be the first woman to join the Montsià Rice Chamber, an institution with 90 years of history.”

I am Maria Adela Tomàs Ferré, from Amposta. I studied Labour Relations at the Rovira i Virgili University, Tarragona. For six years, I worked in an advisory firm, where I applied the knowledge I had acquired and balanced office work with activities on the family farm.

I am the daughter and granddaughter of farmers, so I did not hesitate to change jobs and dedicate myself exclusively to agriculture. The family farm grows rice, and I joined this activity in 2015. Currently, I work just over 20 hectares. Through subsequent competitiveness grant calls, I acquired innovative machinery that allowed me to optimise sowing and harvesting



Maria Adela Tomàs



Rice.

work, increasing the farm's area. The agricultural tradition has extended to my brother and nephews, who also cultivate rice.

The current configuration of the Ebre Delta combines agricultural activity with biodiversity conservation. This symbiosis helps maintain one of the most important natural reserves in the Mediterranean, which is fragile and threatened by climate change.

I would also like to highlight that women's role in the Ebre Delta has been fundamental to its development. Women have always participated in rice cultivation, but with the mechanisation of farming, they were relegated to a secondary role.

Currently, women's presence in decision-making roles in rice cultivation in the delta is almost non-existent. This is not a family or company issue but a social one: it involves recognising, legitimising, and considering a way of working where men traditionally make the decisions. This motivated me to take the step of joining the Board of the Montsià Rice Chamber, an institution with 90 years of history, and I am proud to say I am the first woman ever to be part of the Board.

Barcelona peri-urban area

“Being a farmer allows me to enjoy the lifestyle I want.”

I am Veronica Vega, from the small village of Sant Joan Samora, in the municipality of Sant Llorenç d'Hortons. I studied Business Administration and worked in the commercial department of a multinational until the company relocated, leaving me unemployed.

While looking for new work, the conditions—long hours, precariousness, and low pay—led me to consider expanding



Veronica Vega

the small family vineyard and olive farm and establishing myself as a farmer.

To make the project viable, I used the young farmer first-installation grant to buy land and a competitiveness grant to purchase a tractor and a sprayer, which allowed me to work all the land I added to the farm.

I carried out all the formalities with the support and guidance of a collaborating entity and the DACC County Office in Alt Penedès.

With regard to production, I opted for ecological and local agriculture. During the pandemic, to sell our grapes, I started producing and bottling my own wine and oil, which we sell directly.

We participate in the Agroecosamora initiative, which can be found at www.agroecosamora.com and also on Facebook and Instagram.



The family farm is in Sant Joan Samora (Alt Penedès).



Generalitat
de Catalunya



xarxa-i.cat
Xarxa d'Innovació agroalimentària
i rural de Catalunya