

Work dynamics within and beyond the farm gate: from diversified activities to socio-technical networks

Convenors:

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Topic:

Farms across the globe are under significant transformations alongside with changing of farm work. No longer dedicated solely to food and fiber production, farms increasingly serve multiple purposes: tourism, energy generation, food processing and direct sales, artisanal production, ecological services, and other non-agricultural ventures. Farmers also combine farm-based activities with off-farm work and rely on external labor sources through collective arrangements or private networks, including service providers such as cooperatives, and contractors. These shifts reflect an expanded conception of agricultural work that encompasses both agricultural and non-agricultural activities, embedded in wider socio-technical networks involving diverse actors (farmers, hired labor, services providers...), institutions, technologies, and infrastructure.

Work-related issues on farms and within their socio-technical networks are prompting researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to rethink farm development pathways - such as diversification, pluriactivity, and multifunctionality - alongside changes in farming practices, and technological transitions. This rethinking seeks to foster sustainable transformations that also secure adequate income, decent working conditions, and a healthy work-life balance for farmers and farm workers.

We invite proposals addressing the following topics, but not limited to:

- Strategies for work organization and labor allocation, including relationships between agricultural and non-agricultural activities, and coordination among family labor, hired workers, and service providers (cooperatives, contractors...)
- Synergies, impacts and trade-offs between agricultural and non-agricultural activities and farm resources management – labor, land, capital.
- Knowledge and skills requirements for agricultural workers involved in diversified activities, and the role of socio-technical networks in knowledge sharing, changes in farming practices, and technological transitions.
- Drivers and constraints influencing farmers to engage labor in both agricultural and non-agricultural activities, including interactions with collective or private networks for farm management resources (labor, machinery, etc.).

- Development and functioning of socio-technical networks at territorial level, including labor mobility patterns of service providers, and accessibility conditions regarding physical and social environment.
- Comparative analyses across regions or countries of farm diversification patterns and work dynamics, and their implications for employment, rural development, and youth engagement.
- Frameworks, concepts and methodologies to analyze work issues and diversification of farm activities, and to examine socio-technical organization beyond the farm by integrating social networks and spatial analyses of work dynamics.

We welcome contributions across the globe that explore these topics from diverse disciplinary perspectives, including agronomy and animal science, rural sociology, management, agricultural economics, geography, and agrarian studies. Interdisciplinary approaches are encouraged.

Aim:

We intent to better understand i) how farm work is reconfigured by the expansion into non-agricultural activities and their embeddedness in socio-technical networks, including the reliance on external labor and services; ii) how these diversified farms promote attractive workplaces for workers, iii) share lessons learned across farm work contexts to identify common bottlenecks, successful strategies, and emerging patterns; iv) develop a research agenda on work dynamics, diversification, and socio-technical networks in agriculture, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue. Our purpose is to facilitate networking based on knowledge sharing to encourage future collaborations.

Format:

We expected to occupy one or two sessions of 1.5 hours each. Different types of presentation will be accepted regarding scientific paper and non-traditional formats for practitioners.

Output:

We expected a report summarizing the discussions of the two sessions and probably a scientific paper.