

International initiative



World Agriculture Watch

The rapid increase in the number of hungry [...] reveals the fragility of present food systems and [...] points to the urgent need to tackle the structural, root causes of hunger.

FAO 2009,
The state of food insecurity in the world .



World Agriculture Watch
*Monitoring structural changes in agriculture,
Informing policy dialogue.*

World Agriculture Watch...

Monitoring structural changes in farming systems for an improved multistakeholders policy dialogue

Agriculture currently faces a wide range of global challenges that undermine food security: resource depletion (water, land, fossil energy and nutrients), climate change, price volatility, diet changes and concentration of the food chain, increased competition via globalization, demographic transition and urbanization, cropland acquisition and new forms of investment.

In a global review, FAO highlights locations where the current availability of suitable land and water resources is under relatively high pressure (production systems at risk), and where sustainable land and water management should be a priority focus. These global challenges have very different local impacts, often aggravating the food security situation of the poor.

Different forms of farming organization (ranging from small-scale family farming to large-scale enterprises) with dissimilar access to markets and resources provide different social, economic and environmental services and respond differently to global challenges. Agriculture is undergoing rapid structural transformations, as reflected by a number of key trends concerning the land tenure status, use of hired labour, reliance on non agricultural activities, modes of market integration, new forms of enterprise, etc.

However, little is known about the actual geographic scope, dynamics and range of impacts of these changes. Ongoing transformations have also triggered further policy debate on the relevance and effects of different forms of farming organization. Given the variety and complexity of these transformations, policy debate at national and international levels should be supported by novel approaches for assessing and monitoring the phenomenon. This approach should at least account for the diverse forms of farming organizations, the multiple sectors with which they interact at food chain, territorial and global levels, as well as associated impacts on ecosystem services, spanning environmental, economic and social dimensions.

Existing information systems relevant to agricultural transformation are, in general, geographically dispersed, narrowly thematically focused, while generating fragmented static data that are not adapted for systemic, dynamic and multi-scale analyses. Moreover, stakeholders linked to agricultural transformations are often relatively detached from the production and use of information contained in such systems, thereby limiting the usefulness of these systems for supporting policy debate.



... to feed policy dialogue

🌈 Goal, objectives and deliverables

The main goal of WAW is to bring the dynamics and relative performances of different types of agriculture into the policy debate in terms of production and economic, social and environmental sustainability at local and global levels, while taking anticipated changes into account.

To achieve this, WAW aims to be a platform for knowledge generation, exchange and debate. It will be based on a network of local observation centres (observatories), located in representative areas, where significant structural transformations are under way or foreseen (including agricultural production systems at risk).

The main functional objectives of WAW will be to:

- **document more accurately** the diversity of agricultural production systems, their structural transformations, their resilience to current challenges and contributions to sustainable development;
- **produce comparative spatiotemporal analyses;**
- **warn** of possible crises and specific vulnerabilities, proposing possible policy options;
- **strengthen the capacities** of local, national and regional observatories and stakeholders to collect and analyse relevant information, and use it to fuel the policy debate.

In addition to reinforced capacities of local observatories, other potential WAW deliverables include:

- peer reviewed collective publications: i) a methodological framework and its application with case studies; ii) flagship global reports on, for instance, the “comparative dynamics and state of agriculture versus sustainable development in a few hotspots”; and iii) policy briefs of possible crises and specific vulnerabilities or resilience of different agricultural systems;
- training manuals and workshops;
- a web portal hosted at FAO, connected to local WAW websites, providing access to: i) published documents; ii) relevant global and local data and reports; iii) ongoing trends and issues; iv) forums;
- coordination of WAW related activities and contributions to the policy dialogue based on WAW analysis and issues raised (e.g. workshop, e-forum, side events).



🌈 Operational specificities and added value

WAW differs in several respects from other initiatives designed to help fill the existing wide information gap on global agriculture land use and management.

- **WAW proposes an original conceptual framework based on a system approach (concentrating on relations between variables rather than on the sectoral variables) focused on the different forms of agricultural organization, their dynamics and contributions to sustainable development.**

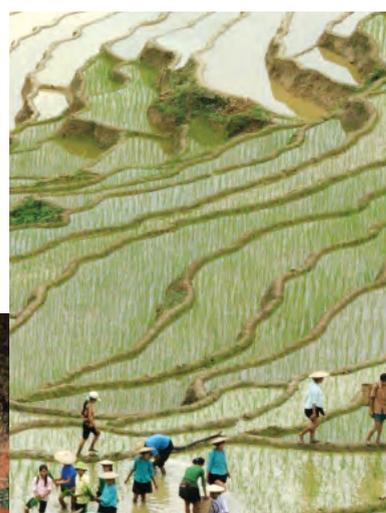
A common typology of organizational forms will be drawn up and characterized with key environmental, social and economic indicators, spanning three scales:

- agricultural production units—characterized by agricultural and non-agricultural activities, farming structures (type of labour, farm size, land tenure, capital), resources and technology);
- territories, combining ecosystem and socioeconomic data;
- markets, as food chain organization and market integration affect farm sustainability, but also land and labour markets.

- **WAW will take an inclusive and progressive partnership approach to ensure sustainable impacts and anchorage within existing institutions.**

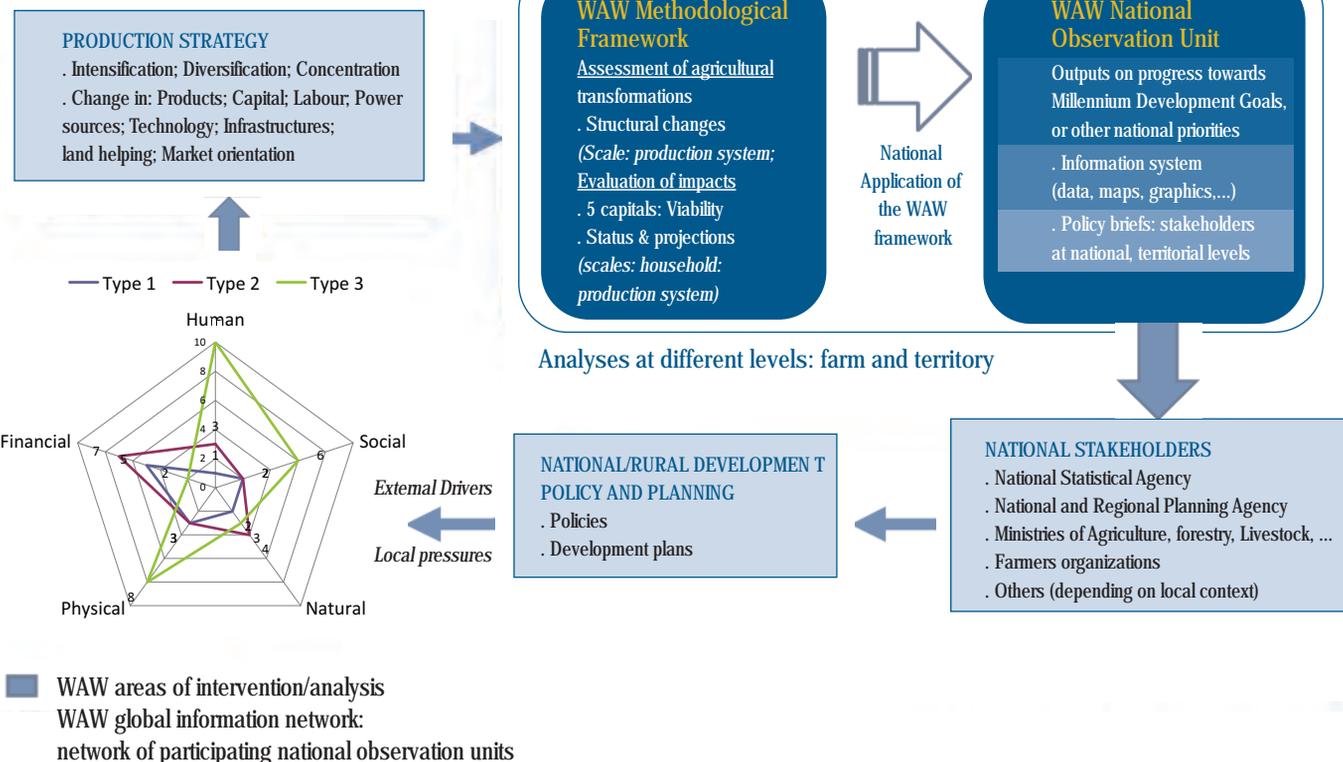
It will start with a feasibility phase based on a limited number of observatories, where the conditions for local uptake by national stakeholders are favourable,

while also focusing on key local issues.



WORLD AGRICULTURE WATCH

- Holistic, multi-scale analyses of agricultural transformations
- Information relevant to national (territorial) development planning and policy formulation
- Synergies with existing initiatives and tools
- Capacity building of stakeholders



- WAW areas of intervention/analysis
- WAW global information network: network of participating national observation units

- Among its partners, WAW will include farmer-based organizations, so as to strengthen their capacities for participating in relevant policy debates.
- WAW will focus on representative areas, covering low to high income countries and differing farming systems, where significant structural transformations are in progress or foreseen.
- WAW will complement existing information sources and systems using, as appropriate, novel approaches for organizing and integrating existing information. WAW will build synergies (e.g. through common data use, methodology development and analyses) with ongoing activities, information systems, field projects and other related global initiatives (e.g. Bill and Melinda Gates "Global monitoring network", GEOSHARE, GEO Agriculture, Global strategy for improved rural and agriculture statistics, etc.). Supplementary data collection will be undertaken by local observatories when significant gaps in key data requirements are noted.

Beneficiaries and benefits

The main beneficiaries and potential benefits include:

- Local observatories: capacity-building, partnership in a global information network, comparative analyses, access to funding, international visibility.
- Farmer organizations: enhanced understanding of global challenges and their impact; greater capacity to lobby for policies that promote sustainable management of different farming systems.
- Policy-makers and development organizations: improved capacity to design, evaluate and scale up projects and policies tailored to the diversity of farming systems, their dynamics and integrated sustainable development issues.
- Research and think tanks: access to local information and databases, sharing of methods and knowledge.
- Information systems at global and local levels: integration and harmonization of currently dispersed data, greater visibility and use of information.



Cost, funding and ways forward

- As a result of an agreement signed between FAO and Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD), a WAW Secretariat has been set up at FAO, which include four staff (initially): an FAO Senior Technical Officer and two officers assigned by the French government, based in Rome, along with a senior CIRAD scientist, based in Montpellier. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is among WAW's initial partners.

- In 2011, through extensive consultations with potential partners, the Secretariat will coordinate:

- (i) finalization of the methodological framework; (ii) setting-up the international governance and partnership system for WAW; and (iii) preparation of a project document for donor funding.

- In early 2012, WAW will organize an international workshop to launch its initial phase of methodological strengthening and testing in a limited number of pilot countries. The country engagement process will be initiated during this phase.



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Initial WAW partners:

