



Webinar December 1st, 2022

**Transformations in food systems and agrifood value chains:
How do work and employment come into play?**

Report of the discussions

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For information on the webinar, please read the [“save the date”](#) and the [final program on the IAWA website](#). After the keynote speakers’ presentations (see the [YouTube registration and the ppts](#)), we proposed 3 questions to the participants in order to organize the general discussion. We report here the main contributions.

Question 1: What are the most interesting aspects of the presentations for you

- Diversity of case studies, regions products and impacts

The workers

- Consideration on different categories of workers (including invisible workers), their status, remuneration and working conditions, social protection; living standards, etc.; What about the child and adolescent work? Also consideration of different types of work and their relations.

- Gender issues, combination of care work and farming are addressed, despite of a variability of interest between countries’ VC and localities. There is a need of adapting extension methodologies to women farmers.

Qualifications of work

- An original focus on skills, education and training in agricultural – food work. Importance of its recognition.

- Good that working conditions and decent work are addressed.

Value chains

- Demystifying the dominant narratives on alternative food systems! There is a need of a multiscale analysis on local food systems.
- Original to keep an interest on domestic value chain. Power relations and decisions within value chain and food systems have an impact on communities and work.

Framework

- Strong interdisciplinary approaches. What about economics (neo- classical) contribution?

Question 2: What is missing?

Do we have enough data?

- Documenting the workers' strategies (men and women) is important in order to understand the norms, the working conditions, banish the undecent work and favour the valorization of the products.
- The labour requirement and the employment potential of different production systems.
- Working time / working intensity in downstream activities.
- The transnational workers mobility in a globalized market.

Value chains

- There is a need to analyse their trajectories, to develop more dynamics approaches; to analyse jointly ecological sustainability and work.
- To be informed of the points of views and assessments of other VC actors about the working conditions of farmers and farm workers.
- Do the policies of big players make a difference (gender, remuneration)?
- Comparison should be made between alternative food systems and monopolistic in terms of inclusivity, gender, decent pay, impacts on environment

Other missing points:

- Decent work concept should be adapted to the diversity of context.
- How to take into account the generational age effects on labour practices and perception?
- The territorial scale is also of interest (not only VC).

Question 3: What are the needs for future research?

Struggles

- What issues about labour rights and workers' struggle in the agricultural sector?
- What are the different forms of struggle / collective organization by workers for decent working conditions?
- How best to improve voices / capabilities of workers in the food system to ensure it is just / fair?

Present and future of work

- Ethnographic approaches within workers (rebuild their professional and personal trajectories).
- Ethnographic and ergonomic studies (micro) together with the macro determinants of activities (e.g. compared and pluridisciplinary studies among different continents on issues like efficiency and health).
- The role of automation in shaping the future of work.
- Short chain job satisfaction: continue research in other countries and contexts.
- To identify the support networks and services available to farmers and farm workers to increase their quality of life and working conditions and to evaluate their efficiencies.

Value chains / other approaches

- How to consider the linkages / actors in local food systems (LFS) and global value chains GVC)?
- How to better connect the gap between global / local?
- Formal and informal food systems (they are often studied separately).

Policies, actors and structural aspects

- To understand the dominant paradigm underlying public policies implementation at the national and meso level and their impact on labour dynamics at the local levels.
- Data on the labour content of different agricultural models (on farm, value chains, territory).
- How can government policy better control VC dominated by multinational companies to improve benefits and value capture by farmers and workers?
- Look at labour dynamics through the lens of structural change on the economy / political economy.

Impacts, resilience and adaptation

- Impact of "deglobalization" on regional and domestic food chains and workers.
- Covid hit => temporary and permanent impacts.

Frameworks

- To better understand the complexity. What framework for the subject?

Toward a new framework? An attempt for synthesis

Figure 1: GRAPHIC SYNTHESIS – What future research agenda?

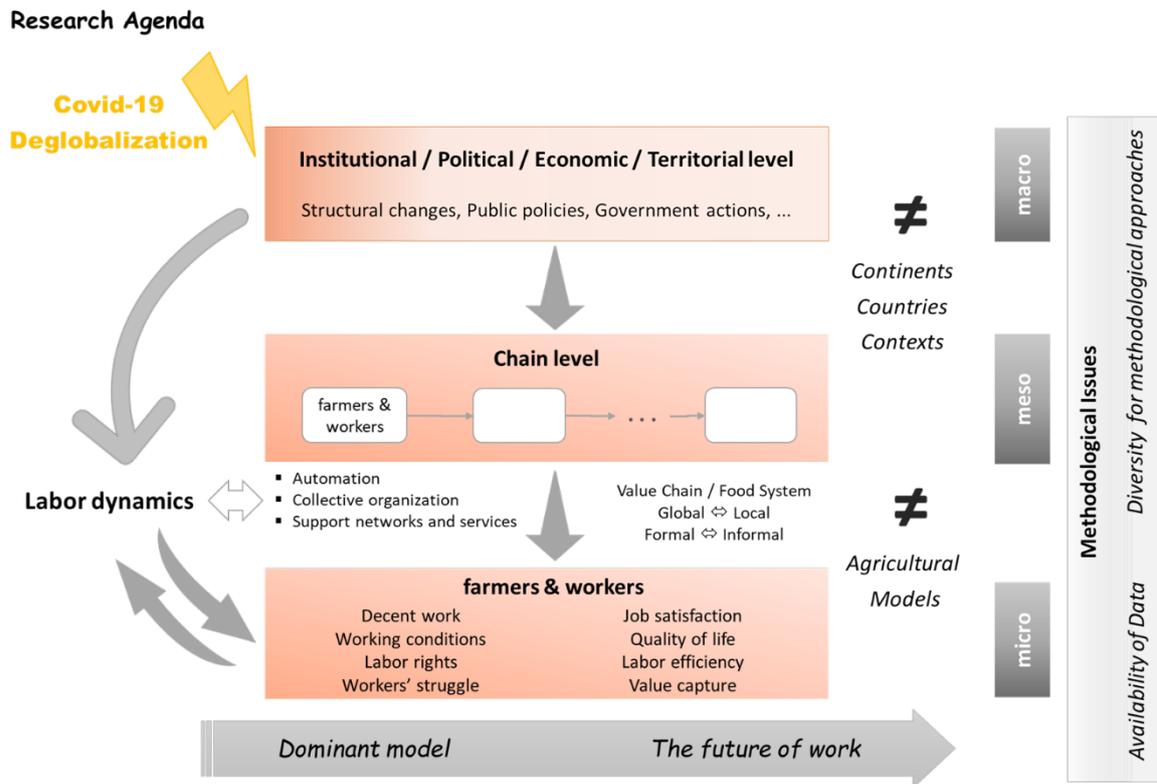


Figure 1 brings a graphic illustration synthesizing element for future research agenda. It was built from the reorganization of contributions on Q3 whiteboard (“What are the needs for future research?”). Background ideas, discussions during the webinar and contributions on Q3 whiteboard shed light on different aspects concerning a future research agenda on work and employment issues in value chains (VC) and food systems (FS). Those aspects, seen at different levels, are very diverse: it comprises different continents, countries and contexts, a diversity of agricultural models, including agroecology. From a methodological perspective, the inherent multidisciplinary aspect of the discussion imposes different methodological needs (from data to methodological approaches). Also, it emphasizes the importance of macro elements (institutional, political, economic, territorial) in chain design and dynamics. At the chain level, different elements more directly related to its primary stage (agriculture and livestock production) and actors (farmers and workers), such as automation and collective organization, with broader elements concerning different stages of the chain, including differences in approaches (VC X FS), scopes (global X local) and dynamics (formal X informal). Elements at macro and meso levels impact farmers and workers in different ways. On the one side, institutional, political, economic and territorial elements, such as public policies and structural changes, may influence labor dynamics, in combination with elements at the meso level. On the other side, elements at chain level themselves (related to different stages of the chain) may influence farmers and workers in different ways, comprising its dynamics and outcomes, such as decent work, working conditions, quality of life and value capture, among others. More exogenous elements, such as the pandemic and deglobalization movements, may impact those dynamics as a whole, in different levels. In that context,

future research agenda needs to bring into light debates on the dominant model and the future of work and employment in value chains and food systems.

Synthetic figure of the general discussion

Figure 2 below, brings synthetic illustrations composing the three questions after the speakers' presentations: what was interesting (Q1), what was missing (Q2), and what were the needs for a future research agenda (Q3). The three elements together help us to synthesize and highlight the main issues and aspects rose by participants. Those elements and illustrations are a first attempt to synthesize the main issues related to the webinar "Transformations in food systems and agrifood value chains: How do work and employment come into play?", which will be deeply developed through forward efforts.

Figure 2: Graphic synthesis of general discussion

