

## **9<sup>th</sup> European Annual Conference „Peace and Agriculture" 2023**

*PROMOTING YOUNG FARMER'S ENGAGEMENT IN DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH AND  
USE OF THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN AGRICULTURE*

**Modra, Slovak Republic**

*20 – 22 September 2023*

### **Discussion Paper**

In recent years' agriculture in the European region, as well in most regions in the world, is facing numerous unprecedented challenges. After partially recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, world is still affected by climate change, loss of biodiversity and particularly by the effects of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, closely linked with soaring food prices, overall inflation and energy crisis.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine is affecting most countries economically, materially and socially. Current events prove that peace can only be maintained through the unity, cooperation, shaping of common goals and protection of mutual values. In the view of the current situation and challenges the main message of the PeaceBread Project to maintain the peace and understanding between nations has become more significant and relevant now than ever. It is important to keep in mind that mutual understanding and cooperation between nations lead to stability and prosperity of the entire sector and ensure its sustainability for the future generations.

Nowadays we are witnessing the aging of the agricultural sector. There is no doubt that generational renewal in agriculture is inevitable. Young farmers as future and guarantor of the food security are crucial in ensuring the continuity of the agriculture and sustainability of the world's food systems. As the next generation of farmers, they bring new ideas and willingness to adopt new technologies that can help improve agricultural productivity and sustainability by introducing new procedures, production standards or markets, which can support new possibilities of food production, processing, distribution and consumption. These include growing new varieties of crops, combining traditional methods with modern scientific knowledge, applying new integrated production and post-harvest procedures or developing market relations in new, more efficient and sustainable ways.

Supporting the next generation of European farmers is therefore of utmost importance, as it not only enhances the competitive advantages of agriculture, but it also helps secure food supplies for the years to come. Young farmers are likely to be open to innovation, change, new technologies and thus significantly influence the future trajectories and sustainability of the world's food systems.

Development of the existing and creation of the new opportunities for young farmers will require a significant redistribution of resources for sustainable, inclusive, healthy and climate-resilient food systems. This includes important changes to the structure of land, technologies and their use, to capabilities and opportunities for diverse populations and to the distribution and dynamics of the population and workforce. Such a transformation will generate multiple benefits, including improved education, nutrition, health, increased incomes for smallholder farmers and strengthening their position in the food supply chain.

Young farmer's engagement in development of research and use of the new technologies in agriculture is closely linked with structural challenges, such as access to land, investments, quality education and advisory services. These are the primary constraints and challenges limiting the ability of young people to start the agricultural activity.

Land ownership fragmentation is one of the serious barriers in small farms expansion. It has also negative effects on the land market and leads to the high transaction costs for the transfer of land through sale or lease to more efficient farmers. Apart from difficulty to access land and high land prices, access to finance is another challenge and too often an obstacle for young people wanting to join the profession. Young farmers have a high demand for investments and at the same time, insufficient access to loans. Especially at the beginning of the business, they have to deal with high costs, while the revenues and profits achieved are lower. This fact negatively affects profitability and at the same time complicates the access of young farmers to loans, mostly because there are a lot of risks associated with this type of investment and the returns are often far in time and not that attractive in quantity. There is also high demand for high-quality knowledge and advisory services, but available sources of information are often insufficient or do not meet required quality. In addition, farmers often face difficulties to access essential utilities (water, sanitation, telecommunication, broadband) and social support services (health and long term care, educational services).

With respect to the mentioned challenges, the Common Agricultural Policy plays a fundamental role, which provides support for young farmers, and especially for their high demand for investments, quality education and advisory services.

In order to make the sector more attractive to young people, and at the same time motivate them to use new technologies that will contribute to the resilient and sustainable agriculture and fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is necessary to seek and identify effective solutions and approaches that will help young beginning farmers in the initial stages of agricultural activity.

To seek Minister's and Social partner's views on the key challenges and opportunities for young farmer's engagement, following discussion questions have been set:

- 1) Which steps should be taken by countries in the process of generational renewal and better involvement of young farmers in the development of research and the use of new technologies in agriculture?**
- 2) Which factors affect decision to apply new technologies in practice and how to advise young people in use of the new technologies and innovative approaches?**
- 3) What way could national governments help to network young farmers in order to boost their involvement to the information flows related to research, new technologies and fostering sustainable innovation?**