



An international alliance of family farmers appeals to politics and society



Dear reader,

Reports of floods and droughts have increased at an alarming rate in recent years. Climate change is no longer a future scenario, and it affects us all. Whether we live in urban or rural areas, in Austria or Argentina, we are all suffering extreme heat waves or floods that wash away our belongings. Farmers, working in and with nature, are particularly affected by the impacts of such extreme weather phenomena.

Climate change is threatening their livelihoods and thus our food security. Yet, farmers are also part of the solution for combatting climate change. At the same time, however, certain areas of agriculture themselves contribute to climate change – this is a vicious circle we need to break.

A vicious circle with global dimensions. One example is soybean production.

It reveals a system that is also in place for maize or wheat. The high demand for meat leads to an enormous demand for soybeans. Soy is primarily cultivated by transnational corporations on vast areas of land in countries like Argentina, from where it is exported. Unsustainable practices are used, depleting the fertile soil. This leads to a constant search for new land, often to the detriment of forests and pastures that are essential for climate regulation. Moreover, large-scale monocultures with genetically modified crops require and enable the intensive use of pesticides, which harm humans and nature. This predominant agricultural model is supplanting smaller, family-run holdings and indigenous peoples that cultivate the land sustainably and produce food for their community and the population. Since 1988, Argentina has lost around 40 % of its family farms.

In Austria, we also feel the pressure of the global market.

Driven by public subsidies and the need to remain competitive, many farms are undergoing structural changes. To survive, they have to produce as much as possible, as cheaply as possible. Imported soybeans, e. g. from Argentina, help sustain business operations as they are more affordable than non-GMO soy produced in Europe. In addition, because of their integration into the global market, many farms face challenges such as highly volatile input prices that render planning difficult, if not impossible. While some farms manage to carve out new paths with considerable effort, many cannot withstand the pressure and are forced to close down.

This longstanding "grow or go" dynamic, which has existed for decades, has led to the loss of more than half of Austria's agricultural and forestry businesses since 1960.

Additionally, in both countries, the distance between producers and consumers keeps increasing. As a result, knowledge about agriculture and the value of animal-based foods is disappearing as well.

This poses a challenge for family farms, as it leads to the loss of a nuanced perspective on livestock farming. Along with this development, livestock farmers are increasingly subjected to criticism: structural changes in favor of growth-driven agriculture are often linked to practices that exacerbate climate change, such as factory farming or dependence on cheap feed imports, e. g. soy from Argentina. This raises the question: would our society be better off without livestock farms?

Without animals and farmers, however, we lose much of great value.

Animals close nutrient cycles and utilize feed that is unusable for human consumption. They shape landscapes, such as alpine pastures that we use for recreation. Sustainably managed pastures, fields and forests help foster biodiversity and combat climate change. Additionally, family farms produce high-quality food; they guarantee local food supply, strengthen the social fabric in rural areas and create jobs. At the same time, they preserve traditional knowledge and promote cultural traditions.

As a society, we find ourselves at a crossroads: do we want to give up animal-based products and consequently the benefits of animal husbandry? Or are we going to find ways to promote sustainable production and support farms in this endeavor?

In the Alianza project, we clearly advocate for the second path. Therefore, we have reflected on how we can change the current agricultural system.



How we work at Alianza

ALIANZA identifies global challenges in family farming.

Alianza Austria-Argentina

We, Alianza Austria–Argentina, are an alliance of Argentinian and Austrian family farmers, their associations as well as church-affiliated and secular development organizations (INCUPO/Argentina and Welthaus Graz/Austria). Our activities are supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action.

Exchange between farmers

Over the past two years, we have been exchanging ideas to better understand our situation: What is the relationship between Austrian and Argentinian agriculture, especially with a view to livestock farms? Why is family farming in both countries under so much pressure? What can we do to strengthen family farming in both countries and promote sustainable agricultural practices?

Sustainable agriculture

We are convinced that sustainable livestock farming is both possible and necessary, as it is central to solving the crises of our time. Many farms already show us how it can be done, but underlying conditions often make sustainable farming difficult. We understand "sustainable" to mean: socially sustainable, ecologically sustainable, and economically sustainable – all three dimensions are needed.

ALIANZA analyzes how these issues impact the regional and national levels.



International connections

In the course of international exchange meetings, we have worked together to identify topics that are globally relevant and connect us with each other. Based on this, we have analyzed how the individual topics impact the situation of family farming in our countries, and to what extent the underlying conditions need to change in order to strengthen agriculture in these areas. We have elaborated concrete demands for Austria and Argentina and for the international context. Changes of certain parameters in these countries accordingly translate into changes of the global situation. Therefore, it has been important to us to consider the global effects of these demands: no demand from one country must harm family farming in the other country. Instead, it must contribute to strengthening family farming on a global level.

Measures to strengthen family farming

Effective interventions to support family farmers in all their diversity cannot be approached through traditional sectoral policies. Instead, they require a comprehensive set of integrated, cross-sectoral policies, strategies and programs that address the economic, ecological and social challenges that family farms and their communities are facing.

Join us!

To succeed on this path, we need a broad alliance and new forms of political dialogue. That is why we are sharing our demands in this brochure and inviting you to join our alliance. In doing so, you are helping to secure the future of family farming – and thus of us all.

International agreements: participation and co-determination

Why do family farms need to have a say?

Already our international exchange visits (where Styrian farmers experienced in Argentina how climate change and the influence of industrial agriculture put pressure on family farms, and where Argentinian farmers witnessed in Austria that despite a well-organized agricultural system, co-determination of farmers is not guaranteed) have made it clear to us: international regulations and agreements have an impact on family farming. Therefore, co-determination of family farmers is crucial. In the "Alianza Declaration of Family Farms" (see annex), where we outline our common position, we have already documented this point.

International Cooperation

A fair and sustainable food system requires the active participation of the affected stakeholders, so as to benefit from their experience and expertise. This collaborative approach allows us to develop solutions that are feasible for a maximum number of people and that serve the common good. Since family farms play a fundamental role for climate, nutrition, biodiversity and life in different regions, they are key agents in the development of new agreements and regulations. This requires the involvement of family farms in all stages of political decision-making, from planning to implementation and evaluation.

We live in a global world with global problems. Therefore, solutions to these problems need to be found on an international level. To create a political and economic environment that allows for the valuable contributions of family farms to our society, it is important that politics commit to this cause in the long term, and that countries cooperate to this end. Along with these efforts, sufficient resources and a good, fair organization are essential.



Family Farms:
Appreciation and
Empowerment



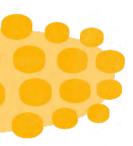
Why are family farms important?

Family farms contribute to numerous socially valuable areas: the provision of high-quality, culturally appropriate food, the sustainable use of resources, the preservation of traditional and cultural knowledge, and the economic development of a country. They operate at the intersection of climate action, environmental protection, land use, economic development, social justice and cultural values. As such, they are key players in achieving a balance between these areas, which are essential for sustainable development.

Current dynamics

Argentina and Austria have lost a significant number of their family farms over the last decades. In both countries, family farms are increasingly being supplanted by large-scale agricultural establishments. This results in a concentration of resources. Past and present economic and subsidy policies contribute to this trend. Farmers usually find themselves in a difficult income situation: in many cases, they are confronted with highly volatile input prices, and the payment they receive for their products is insufficient to secure an adequate income to sustain their family and farm. Due to a lack of prospects in agriculture, youth are seeking alternative career paths.

The rural population in Argentina as well as Austria is declining, while the urban population is growing. This entails an increasing shortage of agricultural labor on the one hand, and a loss of contact between producers and consumers on the other. As a result, mutual understanding is lost. Family farmers' challenges, needs and countless contributions to society, the environment and climate are becoming invisible.





for Argentina

Over the last three decades, Argentina has lost around 40 % of its family farms.

This development, fueled by an agricultural model focused on the concentration of resources, has created a situation of extreme inequality. It endangers not only the viability of family farms, but also the ecological sustainability and food security of the entire society.

We therefore urgently demand the full and effective implementation of Law 27.118 on the "Historical Reparation of Family Farming", which is crucial for the survival of the sector.

This comprehensive law acknowledges family farming as an important component of the national economic structure: family farming contributes significantly to populating rural areas, the supply of food to the internal market, economic diversification, guaranteeing food security, combatting the climate crisis, and creating jobs in remote regions far from urban centers.



Despite the existence of this law, family farming remains largely invisible.

Neither the state, society, nor the sector itself is sufficiently well informed to effectively implement the relevant policies.

In addition, much of the work at family farms is carried out informally. and they have inadequate access to essential services such as education. healthcare, infrastructure and housing. These deficits exacerbate the challenges faced by families living in rural areas, making it more difficult for them to remain on their land. This, in turn, drives migration from rural regions and moves especially young people to seek a better future in the city. At the same time, organizations of family farmers are confronted with considerable obstacles when they try to participate in public decisionmaking processes.

We therefore demand acknowledgement and appreciation of the sector as an essential response to the challenges that rural development in Argentina is facing.

To make this possible, governments in Argentina have to take the following measures:

- Ensuring the effective functioning of the National Register of Family Agriculture (ReNAF) to generate reliable data about the sector.
- Supporting family farms in formalizing their activities to facilitate their integration into the formal sector.
- Creating incentives to promote rural living and training opportunities for young people, who play a key role in sustainable development.
- Guaranteeing the effective participation of farmers' organizations in the creation of public policies and the implementation of programs.
- Providing sufficient financial resources for the implementation of legal provisions and programs.

for Austria

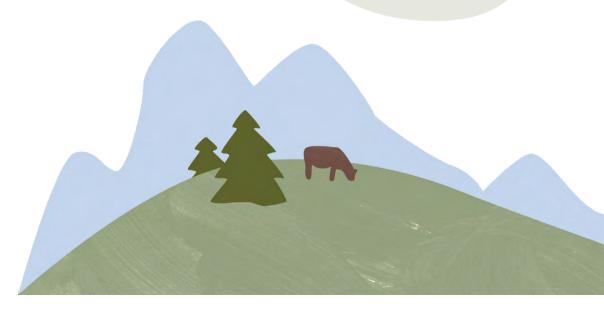
Austrian agriculture has a workforce problem. With fewer and fewer people working in agriculture, essential tasks are becoming increasingly difficult to carry out.

For sustainable animal production, we need sufficient farms and new, creative ideas. The state should encourage the exploration of such ideas and incentivize young professionals to work in agriculture.

We therefore demand state support for young professionals in agriculture during an orientational phase.

To ease the financial burden on farms and young professionals and to provide incentives,

 the state should cover social security contributions, including pension insurance, for young agricultural professionals for one year.



Since the number of farms is declining, knowledge about the functioning and contributions of agriculture in a local and global context is disappearing as well.

As a result, there is a growing lack of understanding for the numerous challenges in agriculture.

This divide between farmers and consumers needs to be bridged.

We therefore demand educational measures focused on nutrition on all school levels.

For a more sustainable food system, we need to share knowledge on

- · the agricultural and silvicultural production,
- · the global food system, and
- the treatment of food.

For a successful implementation, it is necessary to

- incorporate educational programs on nutrition as mandatory components of curricula at all school levels,
- involve farmers from diverse sectors and farm sizes in the development and implementation of these programs and compensate them financially for their efforts, and
- adapt teacher training and textbooks according to the contents of these programs.

Land and Soil: Access, Conservation & Restoration



How do family farms help to sustain land and soil?

Farms in Austria and Argentina manage and use important resources such as water and soil. A sustainable use guarantees that these resources will be preserved and remain usable for future generations as well.

Through their land use, farms and their animals shape and preserve diverse ecosystems of great value. Forests as well as soil in the form of fields and pastures regulate climate and water cycles, are important refuges for biodiversity and provide recreational areas for humans. These ecosystems also offer habitat and contribute to food security and the economic development of Argentina and Austria, respectively. The use of animals in these ecosystems closes nutrient cycles: livestock convert feed crops unsuitable for direct human consumption into valuable food products such as meat, milk, and eggs.

Forests and soils play a pivotal role in storing CO₂. Managing them sustainably represents an important contribution to combatting climate change. Moreover, they increase resilience to climate-related hazards and catastrophes, such as droughts – which have hit Argentina in recent years – or storms and floods – which have regularly affected Austria. Forests and soils can only be preserved for the future if they are managed with care. Only then can farmers keep providing us with food.

Restricted access to land

Access to land and related resources is necessary for agricultural production. Soil and water are the basis for food production. Grasslands, pastures and forests provide forage crops that only offer nutrients for human nutrition through livestock. When access to land is restricted, the local food supply for the population is endangered. Restricted access to land also means that a country cannot cover its own demand for food and forage domestically, and that agricultural production must be outsourced to other countries. Nowadays, this frequently leads to environmental, climate and human rights issues. Due to different factors, access to land is restricted both in Argentina and Austria.

for Argentina

For many years, numerous farmers have not held property titles for their land.

The insufficient regulation of land ownership, restricted access to sufficient land for family farms and the unequal distribution of land aggravate the already difficult situation in rural areas, especially for youth and women. Ongoing disputes over land and displacement of people from their land are additional problems.

At the same time, overexploitation and degradation of soils and ecosystems considerably lessen their capacity to regenerate and adapt to climate change. This situation demands political action that regulates insecure land use and unclear land ownership, to guarantee access to housing and other essential services while at the same time promoting sustainable soil management practices.

To be successful, these programs need to address the following points:

- Legal certainty: Ensuring legal land ownership, with special attention to youth and women.
- Suspending the displacement of family farmers until disputes are settled peacefully.
- Guaranteeing that a lack of property titles does not restrict farmers' access to programs for soil restoration, environmental protection, and climate change adaptation.
- Promoting measures that enable families to stay on their land, to avoid the concentration of land ownership in the hands of large corporations as well as depopulation of rural areas.

for Austria

Austria has a soil sealing problem. This means that the soil is covered by buildings or infrastructure, rendering it impermeable to air or water.

Soil sealing entails a number of negative consequences, e. g. a reduced water absorption capacity of the soil, increased surface runoff, and the death of soil life. Society and farmers permanently lose fertile soil, such as grasslands, arable fields and related resources, to soil sealing. Fertile soil is the basis and precondition for agricultural production. Sufficient domestic farmland is essential for ensuring regional food supply.

We therefore demand the rapid implementation of the Austrian Soil Protection Strategy.*

For a successful implementation, it is necessary to

- take concrete measures and establish limits against soil sealing, and
- ensure that sustainably operating agricultural establishments have access to soil and its related resources.



* The Austrian Soil Protection
Strategy is the joint endeavor of
the federal government, federal
states, cities and municipalities
to substantially reduce the
expansion of areas covered
by buildings and transport
infrastructure as well as newly
sealed surfaces until 2030.
The strategy was adopted by
the federal states on
February 29, 2024.

Markets: Access to Markets and Appreciation of Food



How do family farms contribute to food supply?

About 90 % of agricultural establishments worldwide are family farms. They manage the majority of global farmland and produce around 80 % of our food, while their structures and sizes vary depending on the region. In Austria and Argentina, too, family farms are fundamental for local supply with high-quality food in line with the cultural and geographical characteristics of the country in question. Food is valuable. It is the basis of our lives.

Imbalance of power

Due to the increasing interconnectedness of our world, farms in Austria and Argentina are largely embedded in the global value chain. Along this chain, a small number of transnational corporations holds significant shares, especially in the areas of agricultural input supply, agricultural trade, food processing, and retail. Three corporations hold 50 % of global market share for agricultural machinery, six corporations control over 70 % for seeds and agrochemicals. In agricultural trade, four corporations concentrate about 70 % of global market share. In food processing, 50 corporations hold almost 50 % of global market share. Similarly, almost 50 % of shares in food retail in Europe are in the hands of only ten corporations. The increasing market concentration means that goods and raw materials pass through the hands of fewer and fewer players on their way to consumers. As a result, corporations can heavily influence prices, while producers are often dependent on global market prices and act merely as price takers. Given their significant power, these corporations bear an especially high responsibility to advocate for a fair and sustainable food system and to implement measures accordingly.

for Argentina

Consumers in Argentina have difficulties buying animal-based products from family farming, although these products are affordable and of high quality.

There is a lack of support for commercialization strategies that could reduce intermediaries and facilitate access to local and regional markets.

Additionally, financial systems are not tailored to the socio-economic and ecological needs of the sector, and the state's administrative processes overlook the specific needs of the family farming sector.

Therefore, livestock farmers from the family farming sector need specific programs that promote the commercialization and access to markets for products from family farming, and that highlight their high social as well as biological value.

These programs should address the following aspects:

- Introducing a "Family Farming Label" for commercialization purposes, which highlights the origin and nutritional value of the products.
- Promoting regenerative family livestock farming practices that help improve the health of soil and environment.
- Developing or adapting financing and credit options for family farming.
- Promoting technologies tailored to different types of family farms and their production sizes.
- Revising administrative processes to grant family farms access to tax benefits, customs reductions, emergency assistance, food regulations, and other support measures.



for Austria

Consumers need more transparency to make informed decisions about what they choose to consume.

They can only do so if they are able to identify where products come from and how they have been produced. While mandatory origin labeling is already in place for supermarkets and communal catering, the gastronomy sector still lacks transparency for the most part.

- Provide financial and advisory support for agricultural establishments endeavoring to produce more sustainably, thus enabling them to implement the necessary changes.
- Support gastronomic businesses in implementing such legislation to ensure practical feasibility while avoiding significant additional workload and costs.

We therefore demand mandatory labeling of the origin and production methods of animal products in the gastronomy sector.

These labels initially apply to unprocessed or minimally processed animal products (according to the NOVA classification).

For a successful implementation, it is necessary to:

 Actively involve representatives of gastronomy and agriculture, representing different sizes and structures, in the drafting of the respective legislation. In the Austrian retail sector, we observe a strong concentration: the Spar group, REWE Austria and Hofer jointly hold market shares of 84 %, which gives them significant advantages in negotiations.

The retail sector engages in intense discount and price wars, particularly where animal-based products are concerned. These practices distort the true value of food and often shift the resulting income losses onto producers.

We therefore demand an end to the price and discount wars over animal-based products in the food retail sector.

Alianza Declaration of Family Farms

BUENOS AIRES, NOVEMBER 18, 2022 & VIENNA, APRIL 26, 2023

We, family farmers from Argentina and Austria, have joined forces in an ALIANZA to strengthen family farming. Through two journeys across northern and central Argentina as well as the Austrian federal state of Styria, we have developed an understanding of our shared home and the situation of family farming in each region. Recognizing the urgent need to act, we have jointly crafted the following vision:

Farming families practice agriculture embedded in a healthy environment, grounded in the cycle of healthy soil – healthy genetics – healthy nutrition for humans and animals. Farming families have free access to the land they cultivate. They nurture, preserve, and share the biodiversity that forms the foundation of their work. They independently decide what they produce and reproduce. Their work ensures the livelihood of their own families, future generations, and rural communities. Farming families are aware of their role as producers of healthy food, protectors of the climate, and shapers of landscapes and society in rural areas. The broader society values and acts in alignment with these contributions. Farming families work in safety. They are organized and actively advocate for their rights and interests. The state assumes its responsibility to protect and appreciate farming families, their resources, and their continued existence.

However, we are currently faced with global challenges:

- Environmental pollution and the impacts of climate change are evident worldwide, particularly affecting family farmers.
- Ecosystems such as the Amazon, the Chaco region, and the Guarani Aquifer are vital and urgently need to be saved.
- The global trade of agricultural products, along with the intensification and industrialization of farming, leads to deforestation and high consumption of land, resources and energy.
- Consumers are increasingly losing touch with food production and processing. Overproduction and food waste are reaching alarming levels.
 The concentration of major food corporations keeps increasing, leaving fewer and fewer people working in agriculture. Investments in rural areas are insufficient, resulting in a lack of infrastructure and services. Youth are increasingly migrating to cities.
- The societal value of family farming is not adequately appreciated.

To address these issues, we need strong family farmers. Already, they have made significant contributions:

- Deeply rooted in our land and soil, we live our agri-culture with great passion, ensuring food production and environmental protection. Our family farms ensure social, economic and ecological sustainability in the region.
- In agriculture, combatting climate change is only possible through the management of family farms. Our diverse production helps sequester carbon in the soil, prevent deforestation, and set an end to environmental pollution.
- While we cannot control the climate, we can make our farms and families more resilient with the help of farming practices adapted to local conditions, the use of natural processes, and protecting nutrient and water cycles.
- By applying agroecological methods, we increase biodiversity, regenerate our soils, manage diseases and pests in an environmentally friendly way, and use fewer resources.
- Family farming is the backbone
 of global food security. It provides
 healthy, culturally appropriate food and
 ensures resilience in crises as well as
 independence from global market prices.

To further strengthen family farming, we aim for the following contributions:

- We produce healthy and culturally appropriate food.
- We strengthen local and social networks and regional marketing initiatives.
- We work on the continuous development of communication and training strategies to highlight family farming practices, their importance and their role in society, as well as to disseminate our knowledge and combat misinformation or missing information about our food, production methods and the value of family farming.
- Through raising education and awareness, we exert a positive influence on consumer behavior, taking on our responsibility by actively participating in the public information process.
- By adopting a responsible lifestyle, we contribute to climate protection. We want to lead by example and align our actions with our words.
- We engage in global dialogue to collaboratively work on global solutions.
- The food system and its connection to the climate need to be addressed jointly by family farms and states, e. g. through initiatives like the FAO or the REAF (Specialized Meeting on Family Farming) of MERCOSUR. We are prepared to contribute to these efforts.

However, we cannot tackle all these problems and challenges in isolation. We therefore demand the following actions from policymakers:

- We need laws that are adapted to the needs of family farming in the respective country and that protect its natural resources. These laws need to be respected by the rest of society. It is the state's duty to ensure compliance with these laws.
- Family farmers, especially youth and women, their organizations and the agroecological approach have to be respected and promoted, and serve as the foundation for governments' policy and program proposals.
- We need to conduct awareness campaigns to highlight the added value of agroecological food for our health.
- Institutions, government bodies and societal organizations have to support producer organizations, enhance their production and marketing capabilities, and guarantee rural infrastructure and attractive living environments.
- When concluding international trade agreements, the impacts on the affected population and ecosystems need to be taken into consideration. Family farmers have to be consulted in the development of political measures and agreements.
- Global problems require global solutions.
 To achieve them, we need coordinated strategies based on humanity, spirituality, and a shared commitment to change.



You are wondering: what can I do now?

The ALIANZA project addresses society as a whole. To strengthen family farming, we need farmers, politicians, researchers and citizens, for we all bear the responsibility for the future of family farming.

As a citizen,

- I can make conscious purchasing decisions and opt for local products.
- I can support the farmers' demands.
- I can subscribe to the Alianza newsletter in order to stay up to date and be able to contribute in the future.
- I can share my positive attitude towards family farming.

As a farmer,

- · I can actively participate.
- I can join the project and make my voice heard.
- I can farm sustainably and raise awareness about the importance of family farming.

As a researcher.

- I can advocate for sustainable change.
- I can collaborate with family farms to develop scientifically sound solutions for sustainable agriculture.
- I can make the latest scientific findings accessible to the public, contributing to a nuanced understanding of agriculture.
- I can participate in discussions on climate change and, in doing so, put special focus on the role of family farming.

As a politician,

- I can campaign for the implementation of the above demands.
- I can actively shape politics and support family farming.
- I can act as a role model and speak out in favor of a sustainable food system.

As an institution, civil society organization or media outlet,

- I can share the concerns and proposals voiced above with my networks.
- I can help to raise awareness about the importance of family farming and support political measures to strengthen it.
- I can collaborate with the Alianza project and organizations of family farmers to collectively work towards empowering the sector.

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Each and every one of us

plays an important role in strengthening family farming. By joining forces and pursuing a common goal, we can secure a sustainable future for ourselves and our planet.

We are looking forward to exchanging ideas with you: alianza@welthaus.at incupo@incupo.org.ar



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