

INOFO POSITION PAPER

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Who is a Farmer?

Introduction:

Around 10,000 years ago, humans transitioned from nomadic hunter-gatherers to settled agricultural societies, leading to the widespread adoption of agriculture and the decline of nomadic societies. This period saw the rise and fall of civilizations, empires, and feudal systems, culminating in the Industrial Revolution (late 18th century). The Industrial Revolution transformed human society from manual operations to mechanization and mass production, increasing production capacity and generating a hunger for raw materials, leading to colonialism and the exploitation of resources.

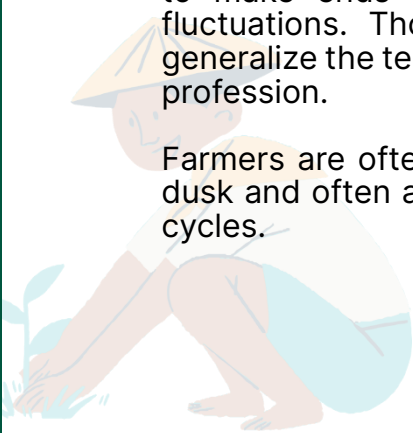
The Industrial Revolution also impacted agriculture, replacing family farms with large business farms, making farmers dependent on single crops, and increasing vulnerability to climate and market fluctuations. This led to the loss of traditional farming practices and skills. During World War I and II, chemical companies developed large quantities of synthetic chemicals for explosives, nerve agents, and other war-related materials. After the wars, these companies repurposed their research and production capabilities to develop agricultural chemicals, such as pesticides (insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides) and synthetic fertilizers leading to the emergence of the Green Revolution, focusing on high-yielding crop varieties. The overuse and misuse of these chemicals led to environmental concerns, soil degradation, and decreased crop diversity.

Throughout this timeline, corporate companies, middlemen, and government policies have often prioritized profits over fair prices, exploiting farmers' lack of market access, knowledge, or resources. However, not all entities engage in exploitative practices, and many organizations work to support and empower farmers. Considering the media stereotypes, political agendas, and misrepresentation of farmers' interests, there comes a need within INOFO to define who is a farmer and revisit the already existing definitions of a farmer.

Perception of what a farmer is:

Farmers are often stereotyped as being uneducated and unsophisticated part of the society. Many times, it's a perceived notion that farmers are poor, struggling to make ends meet, and vulnerable to the whims of nature and market fluctuations. Though these common notions are partially true, one cannot generalize the term farmers as they are a diverse set of individuals as in any other profession.

Farmers are often seen as tireless workers who toil in the fields from dawn to dusk and often associated with a deep connection to the land, soil, and natural cycles.





They are widely recognized as the primary providers of food for the society. Farmers are sometimes seen as resistant to change, holding onto traditional practices and ways of life.

Farmers are often romanticized as noble and selfless, working for the greater good of society without seeking to draw attention to them. These perceptions often oversimplify the complexities of farmers' lives and generalizing the farming profession as a whole.

Many people, who have left their respective professions to become a farmer in today's world, have often expressed that becoming a farmer has been a life changing journey for them. Being an employee with a 9 to 5 job, advising farmers on practices seems easy but earning a livelihood for a family from farming is a totally different ball game all together.

Existing Definitions of a Farmer

Global Organizations:

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations:

A person who engages in agriculture, including crop and livestock production, forestry, and fisheries.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA):

An individual who owns or operates an agricultural business, including farming, ranching, or aquaculture.

The International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP):

A person who engages in agricultural production, including crop and livestock production, forestry, and fisheries, and who is directly involved in the decision-making process of the farm.

Regional Farmer Organizations:

The National Farmers Union (NFU), the United States:

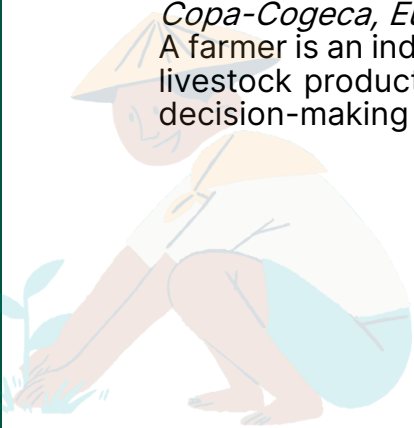
An individual who cultivates, operates, or manages a farm for profit, either as an owner, tenant, or sharecropper.

National Farmers' Federation (NFF), Australia:

A farmer is an individual who owns, manages or works on a farm, and who derives their primary income from agricultural activities.

Copa-Cogeca, European Union:

A farmer is an individual who engages in agricultural activities, including crop and livestock production, forestry, and fisheries, and who is directly involved in the decision-making process of the farm.





Farmers' Union of Wales (FUW), UK:

A farmer is an individual who owns, occupies or works on agricultural land, and who derives their primary income from agricultural activities.

Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare (MoAFW), India:

A farmer is an individual who cultivates land personally, either as owner or as tenant, and who depends on such land for their livelihood.

National Leadership Council Indonesian Farmers Union or Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia (HKTI):

A farmer is an individual who cultivates land personally, either as owner or as tenant, and who depends on such land for their livelihood.

Pan African Farmers' Organization (PAFO): A farmer is an individual who derives their primary income from agricultural activities.

African Farmers' Association of South Africa (AFASA):

A farmer is an individual who owns, occupies or works on agricultural land, and who derives their primary income from agricultural activities.

Kenya National Farmers' Federation (KENAFF):

A farmer is an individual who engages in agricultural activities, including crop and livestock production, forestry, and fisheries, and who is directly involved in the decision-making process of the farm.

Confederation of Agriculture and Livestock of Brazil (CNA):

A farmer is an individual who owns, manages or works on a farm, and who derives their primary income from agricultural activities.

African Farmers' Association of South Africa (AFASA):

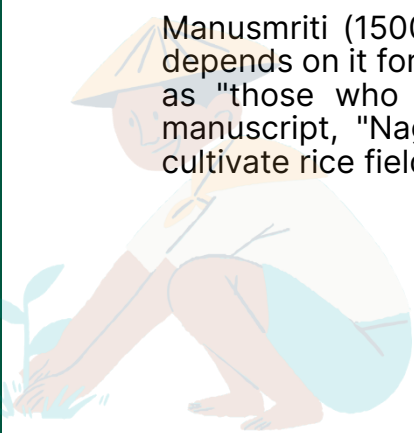
A farmer is an individual who owns, occupies or works on agricultural land, and who derives their primary income from agricultural activities.

These definitions from UN agencies or from Farmer Organizations around the world emphasize the importance of farming as a livelihood and the direct involvement of farmers in agricultural production and managing natural resources.

Historical Significance

After considering the current organizational definitions of a Farmer, let's look at some of the old manuscripts around the world that do make efforts to describe the farmer with diverse qualities.

Manusmriti (1500 BCE) defines a farmer as "one who cultivates the land and depends on it for his livelihood" while Arthashastra (300 BCE) describes farmers as "those who cultivate land and produce food grains". Ancient Javanese manuscript, "Nagarakretagama" (1365 CE) describes farmers as "those who cultivate rice fields and produce food".





Egyptian papyrus (1200 BCE) describes farmers as "those who till the soil and produce grain" while Yoruba Ifa Oracle (10th century CE) defines a farmer as "one who cultivates the earth and makes it produce". Aztec codex, "Codex Mendoza" (1540 CE) illustrates farmers as "those who cultivate maize and other crops". These definitions might not be exact matches to modern concepts, but they do provide insight into ancient understanding of farmers and their roles.

INOFO Definition

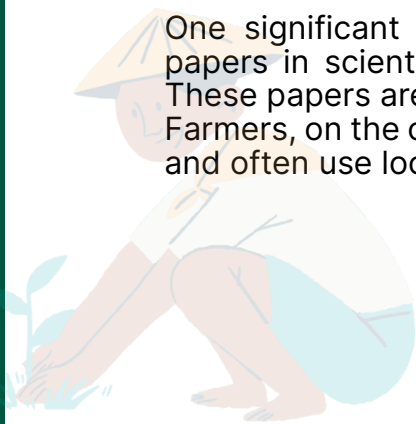
According to INOFO Statutes 2019, 'Farmers signifies all primary producers, pastoralists, collectors, fisher folk, forest folk, and indigenous people for whom land and water are their livelihood and defines their culture.'

Farmers as un-known, un-named Scientists

Scientists and farmers share some similarities in their approaches, but there are also notable differences. Both scientists and farmers follow a scientific process, starting with observation and questioning. However, scientists formulate hypotheses, conduct experiments, and draw conclusions based on results. In contrast, farmers make assumptions, conduct farm experiments, and draw conclusions based on results.

	Scientists	Farmers
1	Follow scientific process Observation->Questions-> Hypothesis->Experiments-> Results->Conclusions	Follow scientific process Observation->Questions-> >Assumption->Farm Experimentation-> ->Results->Conclusions
2	Usually in English	Usually in local languages
3	Publishes papers in scientific journals	Shares with family and community peers
4	Holds Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).	Not aware of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) due to Communitarian behavior.
5	Usually individual or a max of team efforts.	Usually participatory group efforts
6	Experiments are more Quantitative	Experiments are more Qualitative
7	Education and Knowledge passed through Academic Route.	Knowledge passed on from Generation to Generation
8	Usually in Written format	Usually Oral format
9	Proud, knowledgeable, acknowledged and recognized	Knowledgeable but hardly acknowledged and recognized

One significant difference lies in communication. Scientists typically publish papers in scientific journals and often use English as their primary language. These papers are often proprietary and not open source. Farmers, on the other hand, share their knowledge with family, community peers, and often use local languages, culturally rich.





Additionally, scientists hold Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), whereas farmers are not aware of IPR due to their “communitarian” behavior and participatory group efforts.

The approach to experimentation also differs. Scientists conduct more quantitative experiments, whereas farmers focus on qualitative experiments. The source of knowledge and education also varies. Scientists acquire knowledge through academic routes, whereas farmers pass on knowledge from generation to generation. The format of knowledge sharing also differs, with scientists using written formats and farmers relying on oral traditions with living laboratories as evidence.

Despite these differences, both scientists and farmers are knowledgeable in their respective fields. However, scientists are often proud, acknowledged, and recognized for their work, whereas farmers are hardly acknowledged and recognized for their contributions. This highlights the need to, recognize, appreciate and value the knowledge and efforts of farmers, who play a vital role in sustaining our food systems.

Conclusion:

We are talking about the goal to acknowledge and recognize farmers' expertise, placing farmers research with equal relevance to that of scientists, but we are still far from achieving this goal.

Hence INOFO connects organic farmer organizations on the ground, to represent themselves on international platforms and takes pride in our ability to coordinate strategies across nations, bringing together the expertise, knowledge, and networks of farmers from different countries.

Our collaborative efforts lead to innovative and sustainable solutions that contribute to food security and sovereignty for current and future generations.

