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**From communal farming to household production: The
development of capitalism in rural southeastern France**

Ferraro, Chantal, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1991

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FROM COMMUNAL FARMING TO HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTION:

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALISM IN RURAL SOUTHEASTERN FRANCE

by

Chantal Ferraro

A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in
partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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Abstract

FROM COMMUNAL FARMING TO HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTION:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALISM IN RURAL SOUTHEASTERN FRANCE

by

Chantal Ferraro

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In 1962 the French government passed a law providing for the institutionalization of Groupements Agricoles d'Exploitation en Commun (GAEC), or joint farming agricultural groupings. It did so in response to rural unrest and to the need for agricultural modernization created by the involvement of France in the European Economic Community. In the first decade communal GAECs between neighbors were the dominant form of association, while in recent years kin-embedded GAECs, especially associations between one man and his son, prevail all over France. Based on twelve months field work in Meilleux, in Southeastern France, this thesis investigates the transformation of GAECs from communal to kin-embedded forms. This transformation of the productive system is paralleled by a transformation of the GAEC ideology at the

local level. The instability of communal GAECs is explained in terms of the social conflict producing limitations imposed on the farming household by the state-induced dichotomy between GAEC and non-GAEC members. The popularity of kin-GAECs is explained in terms of their ability to mobilize household resources, emphasizing especially gender and generational relationships. This thesis shows that the unanticipated consequence of government intervention in the dominance of older farmers over juniors and women, the increasing prevalence of capitalist criteria in decision-making and the destruction of mutual aid communality that characterized pre-GAEC relations contradicts an ideological commitment to egalitarian norms.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the last twenty-five years France's efforts to modernize and transform its agriculture, partly in response to internal pressures, partly as a result of the European Economic Community's economic demands, have been highly significant. While such efforts have also been observed in many other European countries, the degree of state intervention in French agriculture has been unsurpassed. In 1960-1962 the government passed a comprehensive set of agrarian laws aimed at improving the structure of French agriculture by promoting larger units, providing access to credit, easing intergenerational farm transmission, enhancing farmers' educational levels and addressing the issue of cooperation in agricultural tasks. This legal package proved to be historically significant for it defined a new set of relationships

between the state and the agricultural sector. Whereas in the past, state intervention targeted the agricultural sector in its economic dimension--price policy, tariffs --the sponsors of the 1960-62 law sought to remedy the structural deficiencies of French agriculture (Chapter III).

The GAEC law, a section in the 1960-62 legal framework, provided for the establishment of Agricultural Groupings for Joint Farming, or Groupements Agricoles d'Exploitation en Commun (GAEC). A GAEC is an association of farmers who pool their labor, capital and means of production to achieve a more productive and viable agricultural unit, distinct from the original individual entities. A GAEC association abolishes the boundaries between individual farmers who, from then on, labor on, manage and own their pooled farm communally. By law, GAEC partners must be full-time farmers and cannot engage in activity external to the GAEC. In order to become a GAEC, an association has to be approved by a departmental state committee. Ultimately, the approval or rejection of a potential GAEC is based on two considerations: 1) a quantitative factor--at least 15 hectares per associate and 2) a qualitative factor--the commonality of productive goals and objectives between farmers and state. The GAEC

law targets primarily medium-size farming and was never meant to promote the interests of small farming in France.

Statistical analysis (Minister of Agriculture 1966), of GAEC formation and dissolution at the national level reveals two distinct trends. In the first decade most GAECs were constituted between neighbors and/or friends. They often involved more than two partners and did achieve the state's goal of structural enlargement and modernization. In the last decade however, fewer and fewer communal GAECs were formed, and many of the existing ones were dissolved. Instead a new pattern of GAEC association began to thrive, one limited to two kin related partners, most typically a father and his son and on rare occasion a father and his daughter. This restricted kin-embedded grouping in which the senior partner contributes most of the land and the means of production while the junior member offers some minor element of capital leads to an involution of the unit of production. Many GAECs which started as communal associations underwent, over the years, a process of decomposition ending in kin-embedded forms. The great diversity in GAEC forms that one concretely observes was made legally possible by the imprecision of the provisions regarding GAEC formation which only stipulate that at

least two partners are necessary to constitute a GAEC. From the previous observation two questions arise: 1) why did communal GAECs which appeared to have been so successful in the first decade fail? and 2) why have restricted kin-embedded GAECs become so popular? In this study I am concerned with the disappearance of communal forms and the survival of kin-embedded associations.

In order to understand the decomposition of one form of production and the establishment of another we need first to specify the basis of stability of each form (Friedmann 1978), to identify the conditions for the recreation of existing structures of production.

Reproduction occurs when a productive cycle is completed and when the initial social relations of production are recreated. Accordingly, the study of GAEC transformation requires the analysis of objective factors of production such as land tenure, production, surplus extraction and other factors (Chapter VI) and an investigation of social relations within the GAEC and between GAEC and GAEC members' households (Chapter VII).

As soon as I started this study, I was struck by the GAEC paradox. On one hand GAEC farmers I talked to emphasized communality and equality. Communal GAEC partners feel that their association was in fact an

experiment in communality, their participation in the search for a better world. Kin-GAEC members claim that the most important outcome of the GAEC movement has been the redefinition of authority and power in the farm as a work place. But on the other hand my research led me to identify recurring patterns of inequality among GAEC members themselves and between GAEC participants and non-GAEC household members.

In this thesis I intend to demonstrate that the survival of the productive system depends upon the situation of productive units within the wider system of kinship and community. The case study of the GAEC indicates that the legal introduction of new relations of production resulted in the breakdown of pre-existing social relations without creating a new viable sphere for productive and social interaction. The kin GAEC attempted to remedy the shortcomings of the communal GAEC by revitalizing traditional relationships between production and the household.

This thesis intends to prove that although communal GAECs achieved economic success they ultimately failed to achieve an egalitarian structure. I shall maintain that the institutionalization of GAECs created a marked dichotomy between GAEC participants and non-GAEC household

members. The resulting alienation of the wives, the children and the dependents of GAEC members from the work situation and the community became a source of tension and conflict resulting in social disillusion.

This thesis will also show that kin-GAECs do not achieve the level of economic success that characterized communal associations, and that their success and persistence as a social formation is linked to the direct or indirect involvement of household members in the GAEC economic strategy. This in turn is made possible by the overlap of household and productive units, and the commitment of household and GAEC members to the family, for in Rapp's words (1979:177):

it is through their commitment to the concept of family that people are recruited to the material relations of households.

Whereas communal GAECs lead to the exclusion of household members from the productive process (Chapter IV), kin GAECs in contrast are characterized by a high degree of involvement of non-GAEC/household members. Practically, such involvement is synonymous with gender

inequality. In the kin-embedded GAEC, women from the senior generation often contribute non-paid labor in productive and/or in managerial tasks, while women from the junior generation provide financial security for the household through external employment.

The contribution of women's labor to the economic welfare of the agricultural unit in advanced capitalist societies has often been analyzed in terms of the adaptation of the household to the larger competitive economic system (Friedmann 1980, Rosenfeld 1985). Familial labor helps diminish the cost of production, while external labor provides for income security. Other studies, based primarily on Latin American cases, reveal that when state intervention in agriculture is channeled through agrarian reforms, the terms under which women are incorporated are unfavorable (Deere and Leon 1987). GAEC associations are both under pressure to compete on the market while at the same time being submitted to heavy state directionality.

In order to achieve economic success, GAECs have to perform according to capitalist rules. But the limitation on external-to-the-farm employment and on-the-farm hired labor (Chapter IV) imposed by the state on the GAECs has denied them an important vector of adaptation to market

competition, and of productive expansion. GAEC farmers are forced to remain, in Marx's words (1967), petty commodity producers, that is in a situation where "the laborer is the private owner of his own means of labor, set in motion by himself" (1:176). Under conditions of economic deterioration, communal GAECs have responded by increasing the level of capitalization of the farm, and therefore its productivity. This was made possible by two factors: 1) the large size of the GAEC was more conducive to the adoption of sophisticated technology, thereby raising the level of productivity, and 2) most importantly, since each associate came to the communal association with no debt (Chapter VI), it made it possible for the GAEC to invest and to acquire new capital. This is not the case for kin-GAECs. Under conditions of economic deterioration, kin-GAECs may or may not be able to capitalize, depending on the size and productivity of the unit and most importantly of the level of indebtedness of the younger partner (Chapter VII). This study shows that, most of the time, a kin-embedded GAEC has no alternative for improving the level of production but to tap household resources. Not surprisingly, women of the household who are not GAEC partners have felt such pressure the most. Their subordination as a result is not

to be interpreted in terms of tradition or cultural attribute, but is structurally determined by the GAEC framework itself. The mobilization of household resources for GAEC salvation is a very effective compensatory mechanism and is reflected in statistical trends. Indeed, peaks of popularity of kin-GAEC formation coincide with the introduction of unfavorable European Economic Community policies such as production quotas, production thresholds, abandonment of price supports, etc. (Chapter VI). In cases where social mobilization of non-GAEC/household members is not possible (see GAEC Maronia in Chapter VII), the GAEC itself is doomed to failure.

In this study I intend to show that the level of indebtedness of the junior generation is in the long run the most important factor preventing intergenerational reproduction of kin-embedded GAECs involving two generations. Part of this level of indebtedness is linked to the French partible inheritance system and affects property transmission in general. Under such a system the heir remaining on the farm is obliged to pay off the siblings. But most of the level of indebtedness results directly from GAEC legal provisions that require the junior partner to buy off part of the capital invested by

the senior partner before GAEC association. Inequality between generations, as in the case of relationships between genders, is structurally determined by the GAEC framework itself. This inequality however is masked by the redefinition of authority in the GAEC.

As a consequence of the ideology of egalitarianism which marks the GAEC movement, the notion of authority has been redefined. Traditionally in family farming a man exercised his authority over his son: authority to manage the farm, to distribute work assignments, to decide when the passing down of the farm takes place, etc. The notion of "equality of partnership" in a GAEC fundamentally redefines the basis of generational relationships along legal and ideological lines, thus affecting the perception that each generation has of the other. Equality however does not apply to the most critical aspect of GAEC life.

Equality is social. The son's input in farming decisions is important, and he is often left to manage or innovate. Equality is also a legal concept, embedded in the partnership. In the lived experience of GAEC members, it has a moral connotation as well. Every kin-GAEC associate acknowledged that generational relationships on the farm are today characterized by respect and deference. But more importantly the GAEC framework does

not lead to economic equality.

The effects of the combination of moral, legal and social equality but economic inequality have been most dramatic and far-reaching in father/son associations. A father joins a GAEC at a time in his life when he has reached his economic peak, and has accumulated some wealth. As a result he ends up providing capital and most of the means of production to the GAEC. In contrast, his son most typically contributes very little in the capital building of the association. Because of the state's emphasis on equality and because of life-cycle induced differences, the son makes it a priority to achieve some degree of economic equality by buying off some of his father's shares and to secure the farm for the future by buying out his siblings. In doing so he contracts massive indebtedness. Meanwhile, the younger generation, which for the most part is better trained and educated than the older one, enters joint farming with a great deal of knowledge, enthusiasm and physical capabilities, while the father, approaching middle age, sees a decrease in labor performance. There is no doubt that the coming of the son in GAEC farming gives impetus to the farm as a whole. And because, theoretically the son enters the association as an equal partner, he does so with even greater

enthusiasm. To some extent, most GAEC older associates recognize this phenomenon and try to compensate for such imbalance by allowing the overlap of personal and productive consumption (Chapter VII). Unchecked, the process of "each according to his needs" creates a financial debacle commonly revealed at the time of succession by the agents of state control. Then again the financial burdens fall upon the younger generation.

The nature of a father/son GAEC association imposes strict limitations on long term joint farming continuity, and highlights the most important shortcoming of such groupings, i.e., intergenerational limitations. Joint farming, by definition, exists only if the association counts at least two members. Most GAECs today are farmed exclusively as an association of one farmer and his son. When the farmer retires, the son is faced with two options: 1) to continue joint farming through the substitution of a new GAEC member after the late-comer acquires the father's shares, or 2) to revert to single family farming after he buys his father's shares. Either way, the younger GAEC partner loses out. In the traditional family farm where father and son labor together, the son ended up inheriting the whole farm. In the GAEC context, his shares of inheritance are

significantly lower, although the passing over of property takes place earlier in the son's life.

When asked, "What is the most important outcome of father-son GAECs," every GAEC member argued that "It allows sons to settle in agriculture." They all stressed that no one today can start a farming venture from scratch especially because of land's prohibitive costs. My observations, however, reveal that the most significant outcome of GAEC partnership between father and son is to allow the father to remain on the land and to reach retirement age much more endowed than he would have been without the younger generation's agricultural input. Kin-embedded GAECs in fact reinforce the traditional dominance of older male farmers over the younger generation. Furthermore, fieldwork data indicate that despite their concrete and crucial involvement in daily agricultural work, women in the household are typically denied membership to the GAEC, thus resulting in a process of dominance of men over women linked to the very nature of the GAEC law. Dominance however is today more economic than social while in the past it was more social than economic. By emphasizing the ideological creed of equality, the GAEC system has made it more palatable to the victims.

This study suggests that a central GAEC paradox--the contradiction between ideological interpretation and social reality--results from the conflicting views that the state and the grassroots rural movement had of the role and purpose of social cooperation in agriculture. Historically, the GAEC law is a meeting point of the state's interests in modernizing the agricultural sector to face the new European order, and of the concerns of the most radical segment of the agrarian population (Chapter IV).

When I first encountered communal GAEC farmers who had been active in the 1960s civil disobedience protests which eventually led to the drafting of the GAEC law (Chapter III), I was struck by their discourse. They envisioned economic cooperation as a means to an end, as a way to achieve a better world. They talked about fraternity, social harmony, community, morality. Indeed it was their aspiration for social fulfillment and their awareness of the power of capitalist encroachment that led them to petition the state for a legally induced structural change (Chapter V). When I talked to state representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture in Paris and to the GAEC Departmental Approval Committee members in Grenoble, I realized that to them economic cooperation in

itself was an end. Economic cooperation was meant to improve the economic conditions of the farmers as well as to enhance agricultural national production, and as a consequence, it was thought, the social lot of French farmers would improve.

The contrasting explanation of the role of economic cooperation in the larger society has been a long standing debate in French intellectual history and in fact takes us back to the early days of cooperativism at the end of the nineteenth century. Indisputably, to this day, Charles Gide (1847-1932) is the most influential theorist of the cooperative movement in France. Gide's cooperativism is very pragmatic. He saw in cooperative association a way to protect consumers against capital. He believed that principles of cooperation were to become the foundation of a new social economy based on 1) an economic system leading to a better reward of labor and improved relations between capital and labor; 2) a service system providing housing, health facilities, education etc.; 3) a system of insurance; 4) the independence of the cooperative system so as to compete with large industries and big capital (Desroche 1982). The approach to cooperation taken by the state in the 1960s reflects Gide's influence. The 1960-1962 agrarian law aimed at improving farmers' income,

and giving them access to social services and education (Chapter IV), and does not impose a great deal of control on traditional cooperatives--buyers' cooperative, cooperative of distribution etc. It is interesting to note that in contrast, state control over GAECs is the most extreme.

Historically, economically grounded forms of cooperation are an off-shoot of utopian philosophy. Early in the nineteenth century, social philosopher Cabet developed the concept of fraternity as a means to achieve social egalitarianism. But it was De Beluze, a former Cabet disciple turned dissenter, who founded one of the first workers' cooperatives. St. Simon and Fourier talked about social harmony, morality and freedom. But again it was their dissenters who started workers' cooperatives. When World War II was over, returning farmers articulated the same ideological principles (Chapter V). In the 1960s it was they who petitioned the state for the GAEC law. To them, this law was their way to achieve communality.

And indeed, the GAEC system, by erasing physical property boundaries between single household farms, did concretize the option of communality. After all, what could be more socially advanced than putting the means of

production and labor together into a joint farming venture? But such a system, although it did create communality, did not engender equality among GAEC participants. Whereas one of the GAEC law's stated purposes was to grant recognition to human potential over capital, one of its concrete outcomes was precisely the domination of capital over labor. Because of their total inclusion in an ever more competitive economic environment, communal GAECs have had to follow capital's rules, to intensify and to expand, thereby contributing to the reproduction and increase of inequality between farmer participants based on their capital differences. Communal GAECs did fulfill the structural and productive aspirations of law-makers but never became the legal institutionalization of traditional patterns of mutual aid farming. When the state talked about communality, it meant larger, structurally more sound productive units; from that point of view, communal GAECs are indeed a success. When the farmers talked about communality they meant a more humane working environment in a kinder society; from that vantage point communal GAECs have failed. GAEC farmers have dropped out of the joint farming movement as a result of the social disillusion and conflicts created by the lawmakers misconception of

communality.

Traditionally, communality is not solely confined to the work process but extends to include the social environment as well. The historical basis for rural communal ideology was the village. The image that GAEC movement leaders portrayed was one in which family life, neighboring relationships, political and social events, etc., would be integrated into the communal life experience. Communal production was just one facet of the global experience, although probably the most important one. The GAEC system, with its exclusive focus on labor, has led instead to the isolation of the GAEC productive unit. Lawmakers have introduced a clear boundary between GAEC members on one hand, and non-GAEC people on the other, between those who belong and those who do not. Not surprisingly, the first sector to feel the alienation was the non-GAEC household members of GAEC participants. Farmers have indeed abandoned communal GAECs as a result of serious conflicts within their own household.

The institutionalization of GAECs has in fact destroyed the concept of mutual aid and communality. Mutual aid in French rural villages refers to reciprocal exchange of services between farmers on a scheduled basis (e.g., harvest, planting time, etc.) or in case of

emergency (e.g., war, illness, death, etc.). It was mutual aid in farming activities that cemented the larger community and contributed to the integration of individual farmers into a larger society. Cooperation in productive tasks was the basis for social gatherings, food exchange and celebration. The first farmers who joined forces in a GAEC association claimed that doing so was the legalization of the process of mutual aid that had been taking place between them for years. But in fact their association in GAECs killed that process in two ways. First, capitalist relationships based on money were introduced in the GAEC unit, and became an important component of everyday labor relations. Traditional mutual aid was based on the exchange of services, not money. Second, because of GAEC capitalization and increase in labor efficiency, the GAEC as a farming unit stopped engaging in mutual aid exchanges with the GAEC's neighboring farms, thereby leading to the isolation of the GAEC, and therefore of its participants, from the rest of the rural community. Non-GAEC farmers do not talk well about GAEC associations. The most often voiced complaints are that communal GAECs have become big business--pointing to economic success, and are very secretive about it--pointing to GAEC isolation. Today those communal

GAECs that have reverted back into individual family farms, or that have been transformed into kin-GAECs, still feel the consequences of social isolation. It seems therefore that it is the attempt of former GAEC members, especially those perceived as the most successful, to seek re-entry into the larger rural community that led them to commit themselves to local causes such as unions, irrigation projects, regional tourism development, and political activism (Chapter II), etc. Aware of the failure to achieve communality by way of a GAEC, former participants still cling to these notions, perhaps out of nostalgia or romanticism, but with the determination of getting back into the larger community.

Fieldwork data indicate that the institutionalization of communal GAECs contributed to increase the differentiation between farmers in the locality. This issue of differentiation has been an enduring concern for scholars and politicians since the seminal debate between the Bolsheviks and the Populists over the effects of capitalist penetration in the Russian countryside at the turn of the century. Lenin (1967) explained such differentiation in terms of class relationships, Chayanov (1966) in terms of the demographic characteristics of the farming household. The local

supremacy achieved by communal GAECs is made possible by the increase of the size of the productive unit through land concentration, by a more efficient labor organization and by the increased capitalization of the farm. The economic success of communal GAECs, and the resulting local rural differentiation, is not dependent on the establishment of class relations between hired labor and capitalist ownership on the productive unit, as Lenin had predicted. It is my contention that in fact the potential for differentiation as a consequence of GAEC expansion is limited because of the state control over hired labor. Further differentiation would necessarily have to be achieved through the integration of independent farming households in the GAEC association. The social consequences of communal GAEC formation however make such a situation very unlikely.

Kin GAECs have not significantly contributed to local differentiation because of the typical absence of land concentration and the difficulty to capitalize them. The persistence of such forms indicates the functional adaptation of household farming in the context of increasing capitalist expansion. The superiority of family farming to achieve productive goals in commodity production has been well documented (Friedmann 1978;

Donajgrodzi 1989). As was shown earlier, the ability of kin-embedded GAECs to mobilize unpaid labor and to generate income through the involvement of non-GAEC/household members in the labor market explain their level of adaptability. Those notions are reminiscent of the concept of "self-exploitation of peasant labor" developed by Chayanov (1966: 81) to account for the autonomy of "the peasant economy." Grounding his theory on statistical data of the Russian peasantry, he described the peasantry as a separate sector ruled by its own internal dynamics apart from the rest of society. Contrary to capitalist enterprises, the goal of peasant family labor farms was consumption and not profit. In that respect, kin-embedded GAECs do not fit Chayanov's definition of family labor farms. But he also claimed that since family farms do not hire labor, the need to increase production as a requirement of life cycle events is met by increasing family self-exploitation.

I shall maintain that this discussion of Chayanov's work is relevant to the analysis of kin-embedded GAECs, and is directly linked to the question of unity and separation of households. A father-son GAEC association typically leads to a transformation of a pattern of co-residence to one of two separate-residence household

settlement. A farmer creates a GAEC association with his unmarried son returning from military service, and after a few years, the son, upon marriage, sets up a separate residence with his bride. But at the same time the household as a productive unit remains unchanged, thus creating a need for productive expansion induced by life cycle events. In a GAEC framework, such productive expansion is achieved through family self-exploitation.

This study contributes to the renewed interest in household production that shows the many levels in which households bridge economic and social spheres. In addition, this thesis also shows how formal rules of government defeat some of the advantageous adaptations of households to economic change. The emphasis placed on the individuality of GAEC partnerships in the legal document has created a dichotomy between family and household, and between household as a productive unit and as a unit of consumption. Communal GAECs, by not recognizing spouses and dependents, defeat the possibility of adaptation linked to the mobilization of household resources. Kin-embedded GAECs, on the other hand, are capable of mobilizing such resources to adapt to a changing economic context, but do so only by increasing the level of subordination of non-GAEC to GAEC members resulting from

the enforcement of the GAEC law.

Definitions of family and household are essential to the analysis of GAEC transformation. Early anthropological work (Murdock 1949; Bender 1969) concluded that a family involved a group of people united through kinship ties while a household implied a pattern of co-residence. More recent work (Netting, Wilk and Arnould 1984) emphasizes the economic dimension of household as a definitional criterion, while other work (Segalen 1984) warns against using co-residence as a factor in the definition of household.

And indeed, defining household as a co-residence unit does not provide an analytical framework for kin-embedded GAECs. But defining household only in terms of its productive function does not lead to satisfactory explanation either. I intend to prove that the need for productive intensification is directly linked to the degree of separation between household as a residence unit and household as a productive entity. In the course of the life of the GAEC the relationship between the two changes as a result of life cycle events. In concrete terms, the dynamics between household as a residence unit and household as an economic entity are translated into changing relations between productive consumption and

personal consumption (Chapter VII).

This thesis is organized as follows: Chapter II locates the GAEC movement in the ethnographic context of Meilleux. It also shows that its historical significance is twofold: 1) political by including a shift of power from the traditional elite to a GAEC farmers/newcomers coalition and 2) cultural by shifting the basic social unit of relevance from household to community.

Chapter III traces the history of agricultural development in twentieth century France. It shows that the 1960-62 agrarian law, with its focus on structural change, represents a radical departure from the typical pre-1960 state answers to rural problems. The shift in state policies is explained both in terms of the pressure created by the inclusion of France in the Economic European Community, and in terms of the popular uprisings among a French peasantry in need of redefining its status in the aftermath of World War II. Chapter IV indicates the most important characteristics of the 1960-62 agrarian law in general, and of the GAEC law in particular. It also raises the question of the statistical significance of the GAEC movement in French agriculture, as well as the social significance of the GAEC movement in the larger rural development of capitalist economies. Chapter IV

focuses on the ideological motivations that led farmers to form a GAEC association. It shows that, although every GAEC farmer proclaims ideological affiliation to the same grassroots rural movement, the concretization of such values differ tremendously between communal and kin-GAECs. Chapter VI analyzes GAEC associations as productive units by focusing on the concrete conditions of production such as land tenure, production etc. It shows how, from strictly economic terms, communal GAECs are more successful than kin-GAECs. Chapter VII investigates GAEC groupings as social units by focusing on the social relations of labor as well as on relationships between productive and household entities. It shows that the shortcomings of communal GAECs and the success of kin-GAECs may be explained by the specificity of social relations.

CHAPTER II

THE SITE, FIELDWORK AND THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE GAECs IN MEILLEUX

The Beginning

"The only hope for French agriculture," my cousin, an uneducated dairy farmer from Burgundy, told me in 1976, "is a return to the original collectivist spirit embodied in the GAEC." I had no idea what he meant. The GAECs, he explained, are collectivist associations which became institutionalized as a result of rural unrest in the late 1950's in France. My curiosity was aroused: I had never heard of GAECs and never thought that French farmers could be collectivists. Years later, in 1985, while on a leave for one semester from the Ph.D. program in Anthropology, I began researching the subject with the hope that eventually this would lead me to a dissertation proposal. And it did.

The preliminary research was conducted on four

fronts. First, I went to the library of l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes in Paris looking for literature on GAECs. Although I could not find any specific study of GAECs, there was often some reference to this particular form of rural labor organization in more general work on the nature and role of cooperativism in France (Berthelot 1972; Rambaud 1973; Desroche 1976; Vienney 1982; Saillant 1983). The early work emphasized the legal specificity of the GAEC framework standing in contrast to cooperativist status, while more recent descriptions briefly alluded to the process of transformation from communal to kin-embedded GAECs. Second, my research took me to the Minister of Agriculture where I obtained the texts of the GAEC law and quantitative data on national and departmental trends of GAEC formations and dissolutions, which clearly indicated two distinct phases--communal followed by kin-embedded--in the GAEC experience. Third, I looked up back issues of the French newspaper Le Monde from 1955 to 1962 in order to get a sense of the social and political momentum that had brought France's most comprehensive agrarian reform to life. In doing so, I was especially struck by the intensity of the protest, the clarity of the demands, and the critical role played by the youth section of organized rural associations in

petitioning the state. As it turned out, the Centre National des Jeunes Agriculteurs (CNJA), the young farmers association, impregnated by the spirit of the Jeunesse Agricole Catholique (JAC), a grassroots Catholic youth movement, had in the late 1950's reached political maturity and was instrumental in the implementation of the GAEC law (Chapter III, V). Fourth, I met with the president and vice-president of the Union des Groupements pour l'Exploitation Agricole (UGEA), in Paris, a state-financed research institute on collectivist agricultural associations whose main objective is to keep farmers informed on new developments in that domain through the publication of a monthly newspaper and occasional monographs. During our first meeting over lunch, a heated debate developed between the president and the vice president over the significance of the GAEC in French rural history and society. For the former it was communality, for the latter the recreation of family farms and the rearrangement of inter-generational relationships. Thus was I introduced to the GAEC system of production. And thus was I left with three puzzles: 1) how to explain the evolution of GAECs which, from statistical analysis, appeared to have been constant all over France, 2) how did the GAEC movement transform the

politico-social scenery of rural France, and 3) what has happened to the political fervor, commitment and activism of the JAC-GAEC protestors. Although the central concern of this study revolves around the question of transformation of one productive system (communal) into another (kin-embedded), it is nevertheless essential to underline the significance of the GAEC law and movement on French rural history (Chapter III) as well as on the locality.

After consulting with UGEA representatives and after obtaining the trends of GAEC formation and dissolution for several departments, I decided to narrow down the ethnographic task to the department of Isere in southeastern France. The choice of Isere was dictated by several factors. First, a central aspect of the GAEC law is the obligation that farmers have to remain full-time GAEC farmers, thus excluding any possibility of part-worker/part-farmer combination (Chapter IV). Accordingly, I excluded the agricultural areas with limited or no availability of industrial work. The question of choice and voluntary option for GAEC farming is, I was convinced, central to the GAEC movement as a whole. The department of Isere with its proximity to the concentrated industrial complex of Lyon (less than one

hour's drive from Meilleux), and a decentralized small scale factory network around Vienne (a twenty minute drive from Meilleux) and Grenoble (an hour's drive) is well suited to provide industrial work alternatives to farmers. And indeed non-GAEC farmers have taken considerable advantage for such opportunity. Second, the GAEC movement in Isere is statistically significant. With a total of 303 GAECs functioning by 1984 (Minister of Agriculture statistics 1985) Isere stands in the middle of statistical listings. But the average position of Isere on the national GAEC list is nuanced by the geographical concentration of GAECs on the plain of Isere. According to the GAEC representative in Grenoble, over 90 percent of all GAECs in Isere are located on less than half of the territory. Instances of GAECs in mountainous zones of the department are few. In addition, the GAEC sector in Isere exhibits signs of vitality as indicated by a yearly rate of expansion averaging 10 percent.

I then travelled to Grenoble, the department's capital city where I met with the departmental GAEC representative at the Chamber of Agriculture, who suggested Meilleux as a possible fieldwork site. And indeed, Meilleux turned out to be a perfect fieldwork location for this project. The choice of Meilleux as the

fieldwork site was very much influenced by its long term historical legacy of agrarian militancy. Meilleux, located half an hour's drive from the Rhone Valley, the major communication path between the North and the South of France, has always felt the social and political influence of events unravelling elsewhere. Meilleux, with a population of 3,684 inhabitants, is not a marginal rural town tucked away in an unreachable region. On the contrary, it is definitely modern, and, in recent years, has often taken the lead in the path of modernity and change. The significance of this history for the GAEC movement in the department will be explored below.

After surveying and contacting the fifteen existing GAECs around Meilleux, I selected eight of them so as to be able to carry out field investigation in depth. My selection was determined overall by the level of enthusiasm of the farmers for my project. The eight I selected were those who agreed to collaborate and to have me around their homes repeatedly. All eight are kin-embedded GAECs, mostly father and son associations. One of them, today a father-son GAEC, started some twenty years ago as a communal GAEC and eventually decomposed into a more limited association. Today, there are no communal GAECs in existence in Meilleux. As a result, I

included in this research four cases of now extinct, formerly communal GAECs, in the area. In addition, I also included three kin-embedded GAEC associations which are extinct today. The addition of cases of dissolved GAECs is justified in this study because of a concern with the problematic of GAEC transmission between generations, as well as an interest in GAEC failures.

The limited size of my sample may seem problematic, but it reflects the national proportion of GAECs to non-GAEC farming households. The GAEC sector in France makes up only 2 percent of total farming community (Minister of Agriculture 1986). In 1985 Meilleux counted 3684 inhabitants and 675 farms. Of those 675 farms, 15 were GAEC associations, and the rest family farms. If not significant numerically, the GAECs and former GAECs of Meilleux played a critical role in ousting the traditional political forces of the municipality from the town hall in 1981. It was then that a GAEC farmers/newcomers coalition won the elections in the sweeping socialist victory in France. This point will be developed below. The historical significance of the GAEC movement in Meilleux is not only the achievement of its local political supremacy: most importantly it is a case where farmers over a period of 40 years organized themselves with the

conscious purpose of redefining and reinventing a rural tradition.

The Site: Contemporary Meilleux

The one hour that it takes to drive from Lyon to Meilleux marks the transition from northern to southern France, from the cold and the fog to the sun and the warmth. Meilleux lies in the westernmost section of the department of Isere, but shares more of the climate and physical characteristics of the southern departments than those of the mountainous eastern side of Isere. Meilleux is a vital rural town surrounded by flat open fields with dispersed farming settlements. It is a peaceful place where corn and wheat fields are succeeded by orchards and meadows. At the outskirts of town one passes by CUMA of Meilleux, a cooperative which provides tools and machinery to its members. Most GAEC farmers in the area are members, although they borrow less than individual owners of smaller farms. On the other side of town, the roads leading to Vienne and Grenoble are dotted with small sized factories manufacturing ski shoes, leather items, garments, food cans, agricultural machinery, etc.

Non-GAEC farmers have found there a major source of part-time or full-time employment.

The town of Meilleux exhibits signs of tradition and of modernity at the same time. In 1980 Genty, a major chain of supermarkets, opened a branch in Meilleux to the delight of customers and the distress of small grocery store owners. In 1982, Stock, a rival company, opened another supermarket on the other side of town. Two small stores went bankrupt. One was replaced by a video rental place, the other by a beauty shop.

There are two important centers in Meilleux where people congregate, where political maneuvering takes place, and where social dramas are acted out. The first one, the market place, literally called Market Place, Place du Marche', has managed to retain its primacy throughout the history of the town. It is there that on Wednesdays, the people of Meilleux gather, as buyers or sellers of agricultural products. For many it is the only outing of the week. It is there that news is spread, and gossip is exchanged. On Wednesdays the Market Place becomes the realm of middle-aged and older women from farming households. Younger women are busy working, while the husbands of the market women are waiting for their wives at one of the three busy cafes that surround the

square, drinking and chatting with one another. It is on Wednesdays that most of the local politicking takes place. It is on that day that political candidates for local office go around shaking hands.

The second center is the town hall building that symbolizes the victory of the state over the traditional elite and the church in recent years. In 1981, for the first time in the history of Meilleux, the socialists won political power for local and national representation. Dupont, a high school teacher, became Mayor of Meilleux and Representative of the Meilleux region at the National Assembly in Paris. A long-time socialist activist, he eventually was nominated to the rank of minister in the mid-1980's. In the week following the election Dupont and his socialist town council seized an 18th century monastery, converting part of it into the administrative headquarters and the other part into rooms for social meetings. In less than a decade Meilleux has been transformed from a dormant provincial town into a modern dynamic center. People from neighboring towns, especially young couples with small children, have moved to Meilleux for its quality of life, thus altering the ratio of farming to non-farming populations. The new wave of migrants includes mostly professionals.

Using his power at the national level and his personal ties to the Minister of Culture, Dupont has created a wide array of cultural and social activities, subsidized by the state and partly financed by local taxes. Today, the people of Meilleux can learn to play all sorts of musical instruments, process pictures, make movies, weave, make pottery, dance, design and make cloth, etc. They can get involved in cooperative day care centers, send their children to a newly built swimming pool or to day camps in the summer, participate in sports events in the new stadium, take trips to the French Riviera, Germany or Italy--all of which has enhanced the popularity of Dupont as people come to appreciate the dynamism that he has made possible. Dupont's programs are well attended. The town hall is not just an administrative center; it has become a center where the younger members of the farming and non-farming communities congregate. As the people of Meilleux like to say, "Town Hall is the People's Home." Perhaps needless to say, however, the older generation as well as the members of the traditional elite who were ousted from power in 1981 are not part of this social movement.

Although the monastery-turned-into-town-hall had lost its religious functions earlier in the century, the

takeover was nevertheless perceived as a blow to the church and the traditional elite. An imposing structure centrally located, the building was there to remind everyone of the power that the church had had in the history of Meilleux. Turning it into a People's Hall demystified considerably the church's authority. Today, the only remaining center of religious activity is a small church located on a narrow, one-way street, sandwiched between two four-story buildings, with no parking spaces for worshippers. Clearly, life is changing fast in Meilleux. GAEC farmers have played and still play an important role in that process of change.

The Site: Historical Background

The history of Isere is sprinkled with instances of farmers' rebellions against landlords, of attempts to offset blatant inequality. Meilleux shares in this history. Once part of the Dauphine Province, it is in close geographical proximity to Lyon, also an historical hotbed of popular uprisings. The fate of Meilleux has been intimately linked to the larger region. As will be detailed below this was especially true during

World War II.

Meilleux is located in "the third France" (Braudel 1986: 128), that is in neither the openfield regions (dominant in the North and Northeast), nor in the bocage regions (dominant in western and middle France). Based on the classification developed by French historian Mark Bloch (Braudel 1986), the former, in contrast to the latter, is characterized by nucleated settlement, neolocality and egalitarian inheritance leading to extreme land fragmentation, and a strong communal tradition. Openfield villages are places where the concept of community prevails as the basic unit of social organization and relevance (Lamarche, Rogers and Karnoouk 1980).

The "third France" however is more difficult to characterize. Geographically, it is contained by the Vosges mountains and the Mediterranean sea, and is sandwiched between the Alps and the Massif Central along the Rhone River. Physically and socially, it is an area of high variability with no fixed agricultural pattern, social organization or concept of communality.

The department of Isere exhibits those signs of variability. In the eastern and northern section of the department, people still have communal use of woodlands

and/or grazing pastures (Barral 1962). In Meilleux however, there is no communal tradition. Although settlements are increasingly nucleated as one gets closer to the mountains, Meilleux is marked by a dispersed settlement pattern. Neolocality and egalitarian inheritance are widespread in the mountainous sections. Close to the Rhone Valley, there is a tendency toward single heir inheritance although the rules of transmission are more fluid than in the ostal system described by Rogers (1991). This point will be explored in Chapter VII. Historically, the great degree of diversity observed in the department of Isere has had several consequences. First of all, it has hindered a sense of shared common culture and tradition. Unlike other regions, there is no culinary specialty to speak of in Isere, no regional cultural events, no local dialect. The ritual calendar is determined by state and church celebrations. Second, this diversity has created opposite poles of cultural and political allegiance within the department, with people from the mountains looking toward the Alps and people from the plains toward Lyon and the Rhone Valley. Third, it has contributed to the atomization of society. True, there have been many instances of popular uprising in Isere throughout the centuries. Historical evidence seems

to indicate that these rebellions often resulted from spontaneous violent uprisings rather than planned acts. The political history of Isere, as a result, is marked by peaks of violence intertwined with long periods of submission and resignation. It is the contention of the present study that, indeed, the JAC/GAEC movement represents an attempt to reverse this historical and political trend by introducing formal organization and by injecting the concept of community in the social structure. As will be explained below, World War II played a major role for the subsequent redefinition of the existing social order.

Some of the greatest conflicts in the history of Meilleux unfolded in pre-revolutionary days when inequality in access to land was a salient feature. The scenery of the region, even today, reveals the dominance of large landed property in the past through the profusion of castles and monasteries scattered over the landscape. In Meilleux the Cisternian Order (whose monastery has recently been converted into the People's Home), and the nobility shared in the privileges derived from land ownership.

As early as 1580, and repeatedly after, peasants violently rebelled against tax collectors. In

pre-revolutionary years the rate of rebellious acts intensified. It was then that local bandits, peasant rebels turned into kidnappers of tax collectors made their way into local peasant folklore and legend. In 1789 the peasantry of Meilleux seized and burned all titles of property ownership in the hands of ecclesiastical and noble lords (Barral 1962).

Two major outcomes of the revolution were the abolition of noble privileges and the sale of national property. The Constituent Assembly declared that church property and royal domains were part of national property and ordered their sale. Faced with tremendous financial difficulties, the newly constituted state opted to sell these properties at auction to the highest bidder. As a result, only the wealthiest buyers benefitted from the national sale of land (LeFebvre 1951), thus prompting some to talk about the persistence of feudalism in nineteenth century France (Soboul 1968).

In Meilleux, as in many other regions, the sale of land to the public benefitted in particular the local bourgeoisie. Although the pattern of large property holding persisted, church-owned holdings disappeared completely, and only a few families maintained their rights (Barral 1962). Today GAEC la Visette still leases

land and buildings from an absentee owner with a particle name, descendant of a pre-revolutionary noble family, but this is unusual.

Nineteenth century Meilleux was surprisingly peaceful, despite the continued concentration of property and deteriorating conditions of rural life. Farmers, left out of the sale of the national domain, remained subjected to paying dues to the landlord. It is true that the word "tithe" disappeared from the legal vocabulary and was replaced by the term "contract" (Soboul 1968), but the relations of people to the land were little changed. Most farmers owned minimal plots which they combined with renting and sharecropping. As the century progressed, dues in kind gave way to dues in money (Barral 1962). Yet the department of Isere continued to be famous for its poverty stricken peasantry as described by Victor Hugo (1987: 12-13):

In Isere . . . the peasants do not even have wheelbarrows; they carry the manure on their backs; they have no candles, but burn pine

knots, and bits of rope soaked in pitch. . . . They make bread once in six months and bake it by the heat of dried cow dung. In winter they have to break it with an ax and soak it in water for twenty-four hours before they can eat it.

It is curious that in Isere people did not rebel as they had in the previous century, since this was a century marked by tumultuous political upheavals. The coming to power of Napoleon, followed by the Restoration, consolidated the gains of the bourgeois revolution. This was also a time of mounting opposition to the state on the part of the working class, an intellectual elite and other political groupings. The failed Revolution of 1830, the more successful but ultimately failed Revolution of 1848, and the formulation of alternate social ideals such as socialism testify to that. It is worth noting that most of those rebellious or revolutionary movements attempted to define the working class, regulate its life, and influence its fate in the light of a rapidly developing and encroaching capitalism: we see this is the

definition of the working class by the intellectual elite in the Revolution of 1830, and in the regulation of the relations between human beings and machines as revealed by the demands and grievances of working class activists. Following the repression of the Canuts uprising in Lyon in 1831, six hundred of the striking workers lay dead in the streets of the city. Numerous instances of strikes and working class protests were reported in most cities of France (Branciard 1967). In Isere however, the rural population appears to have been absent from or at least merely in the background of this sweeping social turmoil.

The increasing polarization and differentiation of the French economic order had a direct impact on the farming community of Meilleux. From the turn of the century on, the segment of the population which had been able to accumulate wealth through post-revolution ownership of landed property began to turn their attention to the rapidly developing urban centers, especially Lyon. In an interview, a notable of Meilleux described how part of the family went into shoe manufacturing in Lyon in the 1850's. The family had sold some land around Meilleux to start up

the business. Today the only evidence left of the family in Meilleux is a large mansion where he himself resides, and which had been used as a family summer home before that.

Another consequence of national political change for Meilleux was the establishment in 1804 of the Napoleonic code which prescribed a partible inheritance system. In Meilleux, this led to a progressive fragmentation of land holdings. The manipulation of inheritance laws to preserve the farming units intact over time appears to occur when farmers are also owners of the estate. In nineteenth century Meilleux this was not the case, and farming properties were handed down equally among heirs. Decreasing shares as a result of inter-generational transmission became synonymous with decreased profits for the owners, and the diminishing return from agricultural estates seemed to converge at the dawn of the twentieth century to create an economic atmosphere suitable to the transfer of landed property from the non-farming to the farming class. It is also then that changes in inheritance practices began to emerge (Chapter VII). Today, more than eighty percent of the farmers in Isere own a property

that was acquired by an antecedent in the first quarter of the twentieth century (I.N.S.E.E 1941).

It was also then that embryonic forms of agricultural association came to life: agricultural societies at the end of the nineteenth century through which minimal state assistance was channeled to their members; early forms of cooperatives and syndicates in the 1890's; institutionalization of a local branch of the ancestral form of Credit Agricole (Barral 1962). To some extent, those groupings, especially the latter, have eased the process of property transfer. Initially, however, the establishment of formal rural associations in Meilleux led to the social and political formalization of patron-client ties between the farming and the non-farming community. By becoming heads of rural associations and syndicates, and board members of the Credit Agricole, former landowners were able to present themselves as protectors of the small farmers who did not possess the educational background necessary to direct rural organizations.

In Meilleux, the traditional elite, whose members obviously did not have much in common with the farmers, made a priority of promoting an agrarian

ideology stressing the autonomy, the "natural" state,
and the morality of the peasantry who

in the peace of the fields, do not think of
general strike and of social revolution

(Barral 1962: 144).

This ideology was channeled to the farmers through elite-controlled newspapers, through the development of "folk literature" written by doctors and notaires demonstrating the superiority of the peasant way of life, and through sermons delivered at Sunday masses.

Until recently, the notables of Meilleux controlled the political life of the town by securing the mayorship and town council membership, decade after decade. Doing so they regrouped in their social configuration most of the professionals and local investors of Meilleux. These included doctors who control the local private hospital and most clinics, and notaires--a form of lawyer--who use their legal training and power to regulate inheritance, advise farmers on land transactions, and manage estates. In Meilleux, notaires generally inherit their practices from their fathers and are not well liked by the

population who nevertheless cannot avoid dealing with them to settle inheritances or transactions. In the past, they were usurpers as well. It is worth noting that none of the farmers who constituted a GAEC association, and therefore necessitated the services of a notaire to write the GAEC legal status for state approval, hired local notaires to do so. Instead, they hired the services of one of the larger firms in Grenoble. Asked why, the farmers claimed, "notaires are crooks."

Owners of small scale factories dispersed in the vicinity of Meilleux also belong to the group of notables. The working pool of those decentralized plants is mostly recruited from the non-GAEC farming community or from the ranks of those who have abandoned farming while retaining residence in Meilleux. According to local informants, factory owners attempt to personalize as much as possible their relationships to the employees. They call them by their first names, occasionally sponsor gouters--a sort of afternoon tea party--for the workers' families, and buy presents for their children at Christmas. Among the elite of Meilleux one finds also powerful community businessmen from Lyon who have opted to live in the calm and beauty of the countryside. Members of the elite of Meilleux socialize with one another. It

is an endogamous group where alliances through marriage are frequently made. They live in large mansions surrounded by yards and enclosed by impressive iron gates--perfect examples of what people in Meilleux call les maisons bourgeoises (bourgeois homes). In recent years, some have moved to the outskirts of Meilleux in magnificent newly built villas so as to avoid contact with post-1981 incoming migrants.

Patron-client relationships between a powerful local elite and a lower status farming community is a persistent characteristic of French villages (Rogers 1991). In Meilleux the basis for those relationships underwent an important process of historical transformation which partly explains the loss of local political control in 1981 by the traditional elite. As was shown earlier, the traditional elite of Meilleux descended from post-revolution landed property owners who were able, through the sale of land, to accumulate capital and diversify economically. While doing so, they nevertheless maintained their grip over the more independent rural population by controlling all embryonic forms of agricultural associations and groupings and asserting their local political power at town hall. By the late 1930's, it became clear that the elite of Meilleux began

to favor the latter activity over the former. By the time that World War II broke out, the notables were still at town hall, but the boards of agricultural cooperatives, rural associations and agricultural unions were increasingly controlled by Meilleux's farmers.

Thus was achieved a kind of unspoken yet observed division of power between the two segments of the local society. When asked why they relinquished their control over the rural associations, members of the elite point to the fact that it had become too cumbersome and time-consuming to be involved. But in fact, by then, the elite of Meilleux, well installed in local government, had lost any significant ties to the surrounding farming community. The dichotomy between the political sphere and the rural organizations was very marked, but the two were linked through patron-client relationships: elected notables although they stayed out of the business of the Credit Agricole, cooperatives and unions, smoothed out the transactions between the municipality and the farming leadership in exchange for receiving political support from the community. The 1970's militancy of the GAEC farmers was precisely an attempt to break the status quo and combine the two separate spheres into one.

Meanwhile, rural leadership became more pronounced

and assertive. Oral histories of the then-leaders (old, retired farmers today) reveal that their primary concerns revolved around the issue of the long term viability of the farm as an economic unit. Part of the solution, they argue, depended on the level of economic performance achieved by the farm. This was to become an essential motivation behind the rise of local cooperativism and unionism. But the long term success of the rural world was ultimately linked to the non-fragmentation of the estate. Accordingly, they overwhelmingly favored single-heir inheritance. To them, this was intrinsic to the maintenance of the traditional pattern of authority which emphasized the primacy of the senior generation and the subordination of the junior generation. Later, this was exactly what young farmers were to oppose in the aftermath of World War II. To them, the community, and not the household, was the most essential feature of the rural world. Such conviction was based on two critical elements: 1) their experience of the JAC movement which, after the war, provided individuals with a sense of collectivity (Chapter V), and 2) the existing pattern of mutual aid which they envisioned as the basis for communality.

And indeed, in Meilleux, the integration of the

rural community was not based on the use of communal land so much as on the existence of a pattern of mutual aid between neighboring farmers. Mutual aid is described as the association of several farming households to perform agricultural tasks by exchanging services and using individually owned machinery collectively on a scheduled basis (harvesting, planting) or in case of emergency (death, illness, war). It is worth noting that World War II greatly exacerbated a sense of community and collaborative efforts.

The generation of farmers that lived through the war (today represented among others by the senior generation of GAEC farmers) testified to the importance of the strategic location of Meilleux and its effect on their social awareness. Indeed, Meilleux was caught in the middle of a substantial network of resistance against German occupying forces--the urban resistance underground in Lyon and rural underground in the Vercors. Then social solidarity took on various forms.

According to Paul from GAEC du Dolon, about 70 young men joined the Maquis in Vercors, the underground network which made it a priority to sabotage the enemy lines. Those maquisards often hid out in the barns of Meilleux farmers before going on to the Rhone Valley to stop German

operated trains, to blow up bridges over the rivers, in short to paralyze the infrastructure of the country. Furthermore, those rural households that had lost their sons to the war became very dependant on mutual aid to carry on agricultural tasks as best they could. According to Pierre, a member of City Council today, collaboration between French people and enemy forces was never significant in Meilleux, in spite of the fact that the Gestapo had seized the town hall in an effort to control this pathway between Lyon and the Vercors and had gunned down some twenty suspected resistants. Mutual aid between neighbors before the war was a question of practicality; during the war it became a question of necessity. After the war it turned into an important model for JAC activities (see Chapter V), whose social consciousness and political activism was modeled by the war experience. With the exception of Marius from GAEC Marovia, the men and women in the older generation of GAEC farms/households today, whether dissolved or still functioning, were JAC activists. Those like Pierre who dropped out from a now extinct, communal GAEC in 1981 after he retired, and who had joined the underground movement in 1943, emphasized the importance of the French Communist Party and other left-leaning parties on the articulation of the agrarian

demands at the local, regional and national level in the post-war era. Pierre, like other JAC participants, joined the CNJA, the youth rural organization which petitioned the state for the GAEC law (see Chapter III).

In addition in Meilleux during the war, the farming community became almost independent from the local elite. Occupying forces settled in the town of Meilleux while the farmers, scattered over the fields, minimized the interaction with the town and developed a stronger pattern of self-reliance on the farm-defined community, thereby providing the lived experience that would allow postwar activists to shift from the traditional concern with on-farm survival to the question of the definition of a rural community. The young farmers who settled back in Meilleux after returning from the front, or the Maguis, or prison camps were not the same persons that had left. Those who had stayed behind were very much changed too. All of them knew somebody who did not return. There is no doubt that the war dramatically affected the farmers' self-perception and their judgment of community.

In Meilleux, the JAC became a dynamic social movement which attracted rural youth. Few members however made the step of becoming actively involved in the CNJA, spearhead of political activism at the national level.

But oral histories of farmers in the area reveal that, despite a lack of practical commitment, the JAC ideology had given them a sense of trust in and enthusiasm for the central state as a potential provider of relief for agricultural hardship.

Whereas in the past their hopes for social and economic improvement were channeled to agrarian associations or the traditional political elite depending on the time, farmers then looked up to Paris. This newly acquired conviction and the level of apathy of most of the agricultural community in Meilleux led to the granting of power and constituency to those farmers within the JAC who accepted the work and responsibility of becoming CNJA representatives at the local and the national level. Not surprisingly it was those farmers that fought for and turned to the GAEC alternative. Although they are not so young anymore, and although the JAC has long disappeared as a significant social movement in France, they have retained a political legacy which played a definite role in the ousting of traditional conservative parties from town hall by the Socialists in 1981.

When the GAEC law was passed in 1962, Meilleux farmers showed a great deal of enthusiasm for it. Most of the GAECs formed in the first years were communal. During

that time, GAEC farmers threw their hearts and minds into their agricultural endeavor and began to neglect national politics. Talking to early GAEC farmers, one gets a strong impression of how meaningful the communal GAEC experience was to them. But by the mid 1970's it was clear that the communal movement was failing to the benefit of the kin-GAEC pattern. As is detailed in the thesis, one of the outcomes of GAEC labor organization has been the isolation of GAEC members from the larger community. Realizing that the state institutionalization of community had indeed failed communality, and aware of the limitation of the associative process engendered by GAEC formation, GAEC farmers channeled their enthusiasm to fighting the traditional elite in power. As Pierre, who was elected to the town council argued, "Perhaps we farmers have become too atomized in agriculture today. Perhaps this is for the best. But there is always something to do to improve the community and make life better for all."

Pierre and several other GAEC/former GAEC farmers translated their conviction into a political fight to seize town hall. A shrewd politician, Pierre understood that such a takeover could be achieved by mobilizing the traditional constituency of Meilleux and by making

alliances with the newcomers in the area. The newcomers included workers attracted by the availability of employment in Meilleux, high school teachers who moved there after the high school opened in 1972.

Dupont, one of the teachers, was a prominent Socialist Party activist at the national level. A charismatic figure who benefitted from the tremendous popularity of the Socialist Party nationally, from the political machinery behind him, and from the support of the farming community as a result of GAEC/former GAEC militancy, Dupont was elected Mayor and National Representative of Meilleux in 1981 in the sway of the great Socialist national victory. Five of the thirteen members of the town council, to this day, are GAEC or former GAEC farmers. Following the election, Dupont genuinely used his political influence in the Socialist Party and in governmental circles to the benefit of the people of Meilleux.

In the mid-1980's Dupont was nominated to a ministerial rank. As a result he began spending a great deal of time in Paris, leaving Pierre maire adjoint (Assistant Mayor) in charge of most current affairs. In 1987, when I began fieldwork, Dupont was having serious difficulty in Paris and was in the middle of judicial and

governmental hearings on charges of corruption. He came back to Meilleux on November 11th to deliver the yearly speech to war veterans.

November 11 in France is a day when veterans parade, the Boy Scouts' band plays and a handful of people watch. That day in Meilleux turned into a major show of support for troubled Dupont. The crowd was in the street, and hundreds of people marched from City Hall to the monument. All were cheering and clapping whenever Dupont made reference to the vitality of the youth, the pride of the farmers and the fact that France was a much better place with the town and the people of Meilleux in it. Among the organizers of the event, well represented, was the senior generation of GAEC farmers. The young generation, on the other hand, was very sparsely represented. In early 1990 Dupont was demoted from his posts as Minister and Representative but was again elected Mayor of the town. In contrast to the joyful parade of November 11th, the August 15th parade which went from the market place to the church in less than five minutes was remarkably quiet, followed only by a few church followers and members of the demised elite. The symbolism of those two parades tells us of the importance of the newly achieved social alignment. The state, at least for now,

has won to the detriment of the church and the traditional elite. All dressed up, GAEC farmers wearing tricolor bands around their waists testify to the vitality of this movement in Meilleux. But one cannot help wonder about the future of the political influence of the GAEC movement once the remains of communality and communal spirit are gone.

The Ethnography of GAECs in Meilleux

The study of the GAEC in Meilleux is concerned with the process of transformation of one pattern of rural labor organization based on communality into another one embedded in kinship. As will be explored in the following chapters, this transformation results from objective conditions of production evolving in the light of a changing larger economic context, and from the various patterns of social interaction characteristic of the two forms.

The GAEC system of production came to life as a result of a state-sponsored law. As such, this study contributes to the body of work concerned with the effects of state encroachment on the locality, and consequently

addresses the issue of rural modernization.

Scholarship on modernization in France is extensive. France is today a definitely modern, integrated capitalist nation and most of the literature attempts to analyze the ways in which local cultures have become integrated into one unified France. Instrumental to this evolution is the historical development of a strong, centralized state which, through its penetration into the most remote localities, links the various parts into a whole, pretty much as a magnet attracts many pins scattered on a floor (Braudel 1986; Weber 1976). The creation of a penetrating network of communication (Tilly 1976), of innovating technology (Wright 1964; Mendras 1979), of a national education system (Wylie 1964), and other factors, contributed to link the core and the periphery of France together.

It is worth noting however that the scholarship presents us with two problems. First, it implies a process of modernization overwhelming enough to lead to the disappearance of local and peripheral cultures and particularities which, as was noted by Rogers (1991), does not hold under ethnographic scrutiny. France still offers a great deal of particularism. Second, there often seems to be a hidden agenda behind writings on modernization.

Some tried to prove the superiority of modern over archaic ways of life (Mendras 1979). Others have written with nostalgia about their own roots (Braudel 1986). Still others have come to the rescue of and have become spokespersons for rural people. In Wylie's words:

Most accounts of rural France have made the people seem quaint and often ridiculous puppets.

(1964: ix).

The coming of anthropology to the study of European rural societies has helped redress some of the biases found in the studies of rural modernization in France.

Being a latecomer to the area, European anthropology has benefitted a great deal from the general development of anthropology as a discipline, and from more specific studies of modernization and rural development elsewhere. The use of ethnographic methodology, as primary source of data collection, provides life to social change by focusing on people's perception of the "appropriate," thereby leaving room for intentionality and agency. In addition, the study of kinship, families and households, a central concern for anthropology, has

greatly evolved over the years from a descriptive task to an identification of processes of inequality within and between households, the most successful of all being the development of studies of gender relationships. There is no doubt that the study of contemporary rural France has benefitted from the latter (Lamarche et al. 1980; Raup 1977; Rogers 1974, 1991.) Taking family and household as a critical unit of analysis is important since it is at this level that the pressure of outside powerful forces is felt the most, but it is also there that processes of adaptation and social rearrangements are likely to take place. In other words, it is at this particular level of human organization that the agency of human beings is likely to be activated and to be observable.

This study of the GAEC system of production and its transformation over time is an example of the rearrangement of the basic unit of production to adapt to and survive the pressures engendered by the involvement of French agriculture in a larger economic system. Such rearrangement among GAEC farms in Meilleux has involved a reevaluation of the concept of community and of household as well. In addition, it shows how household, residence and

property transmission are reconsidered to address the critical question of the maintenance of farm integrity.

The traditional pattern of inheritance in Isere is variable. Isere is physically and productively located in the "third France" and, to some extent, represents also an intermediary form between the partible inheritance system of the North and the impartible transmission system imposed by coutume rather than law in the South. The former pattern is very much linked to the preservation of the community by providing equal rights to all, while the latter aims at reproducing the farming unit integrally between generations. As was noted earlier, as access to property increased historically, so did impartible transmission. In the Meilleux area however, in recent years, the impartible rule has become harder to follow because of the strict observance of the provisions to pay off siblings left out of the farm, putting a great deal of financial pressure upon the heir. Contrary to the ostal system described by Rogers (1991), there is no room in Isere for taking care of and retaining marginal heirs on the farm.

It is interesting to note that non-GAEC farms

tend, overall, to follow the pattern of stem-family arrangements with the designated heir remaining with his parents. Stem-family arrangements however are perceived as being opportunistic solutions, and are not considered by the farmers as the ideal solution. In addition, the rate of marriage when co-residence exists between generations is lower than in a GAEC framework.

In Meilleux, the GAEC form of agricultural production has led to changing household arrangements in which co-residence never extends to two generations but in which observance of preferential transmission is tightly observed, with the exception of GAEC Maronia--a widowed father/divorced daughter and her offspring--where three generations are found under the same roof. Most frequently, the younger partner of a kin-embedded GAEC sets up a separate residence upon marriage, thereby reproducing a pattern of family different from non-GAEC farming households. One adaptive consequence of this is the diminishing involvement of the newcomer in the household's agricultural sphere. As will be shown in Chapter VII, such detachment provides the grounds for the younger partner's spouse to find external

employment, often critical to the financial survival of a GAEC.

The pattern of household organization in communal GAECs, on the other hand, does not follow the same logic. There, the sons and daughters of GAEC members do not belong to the GAEC as a result of the legal provisions for membership exclusion, but at the same time they live in a stem-family arrangement (see GAEC du Dolon). In general, the heir in a stem-family possesses a claim on the household and on the farm as well. In the communal GAEC context, however, the heir has rights over the household but not over the productive unit until it has been legally handed down to him, thereby creating a context for tension often resulting in the abandonment of the farm altogether. As a result, the case of the GAEC seems to indicate that the survival of the family farm necessitates the integrity of the family as a unit of consumption and of production as well. This is best achieved in a kin-embedded GAEC, and might very well explain their level of popularity. In fact, the evolution of the GAEC movement with its reversal toward more "traditional" ways of family-oriented productive units may very

well be seen as an attempt to accommodate and modify traditional forms into a new, more adaptive and dynamic productive and household unit. On the surface, kin GAECs are nuclear family arrangements. But as was pointed out by Segalen (1984), non-immediate household relationships might contribute to reproduce a family system. The high degree of social interaction often observed between the households of the younger and the older generations, and their close economic cooperation, de facto, achieves the same results that a stem-family does. The state however, by regulating the relationships between partners--i.e. the obligation of the younger generation to buy off the older generation's shares of the GAEC (Chapter IV)--may very well undermine the longterm adaptability of the GAEC system to the contemporary agricultural context.

Fieldwork

Doing fieldwork among GAEC farmers raised some logistical questions. I was interested in a specific form of labor process and in the transformation of a pattern of

labor organization in farming. And although the relation of GAEC farms to the large community of Meilleux is important, it was not the primary objective of the present study. GAEC farms are, like all farming households in the region, geographically scattered. As a result it was impossible for me to set up residence in a strategic point from which I could observe all the comings and goings of GAEC farmers, as Laurence Wylie did when he studied the village of Peyrane in the Vaucluse (1964). The anthropology of complex societies creates complex problems for the anthropologist. I was dependent on the phone and on an old car that a cousin had lent me, and in January, my daughter Lara, who was then six months old, and I moved in with a young couple and their three-year-old child in their house in Meilleux, one block away from the market place. He was a school teacher and she a nurse at the Hospital of Meilleux. They had moved to Meilleux from Lyon a couple of years earlier with a hope of returning to the land by joining another couple in a GAEC. Their wish however never materialized because of the prohibitive cost of land, but they nevertheless chose to remain in Meilleux. I had met them the year before during a pre-fieldwork investigative trip. Both were very enthusiastic about my project, and knew the area and the

GAEC farmers well.

My first contact with GAEC farmers was made through the phone. All of them agreed to meet me. Most of them showed a great deal of enthusiasm for my study although many could never figure out how a Ph.D. candidate from an American university could pick Meilleux as her site of doctoral research. I had chosen to begin fieldwork in the winter for it is then that the agricultural work is at its slowest intensity. And indeed the first months were spent getting acquainted with the farmers and their households, taking life histories, and getting a sense of their political and social involvement. I attended union and irrigation project meetings with Louis from the GAEC in Visette; I helped Paul and Emilie from the GAEC du Dolon research the local archives for their project on the history of the hamlet of Moissieu. I followed Louis, Paul and Lucien to their jobs at town hall. I went to the market with Marie, Lucie and Anne. I joined the day care cooperative center along with the wives of the younger generation of GAEC farmers thereby becoming familiar with the larger community of Meilleux.

The curiosity of GAEC families for everything regarding the American continent was endless. GAEC farmers were especially taken by the reports they had seen

on TV or had read in newspapers concerning the farming crisis. They wanted to know about the American health system, poverty, racism, schools. My knowledge of and experience with American culture, and carrying a smiling baby in a backpack, opened the doors and the hearts of my farming families. Later in the year I got involved in more practical agricultural tasks by essentially participating and helping out as much as I could. I learned to process cheese, picked fruit and vegetables, harvested hay, wheat and maize. I became familiar with cattle raising and automated milking and feeding stations. In the Fall, I helped cut down, select and hang dry tobacco leaves. Doing so allowed me to observe and record patterns of work organization within the GAEC and relationships between GAECs and households as well. I left Meilleux on Christmas Day and returned to the region in the summer of 1989. Then I chose to concentrate on the process of property transmission. Since then two GAEC families have come to New York to visit me and my family.

CHAPTER III

FRENCH AGRICULTURE IN THE 20TH CENTURY:

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Agriculture has traditionally played an important part in the economic, political, social and cultural life of France. Until World War II, it represented the dominant economic activity as far as the number of families involved as well as its relative contribution to the general economy. Since then, the economic significance of the agricultural sector has steadily diminished while its social, political and cultural strength remained unaltered. In the aftermath of the war, rising militancy and syndicalism led rural populations to express, violently at times, their grievances and to articulate their demands--locally, regionally, and nationally. It was clear to French farmers that technology and mechanization could not alone solve the problems of those who hoped to remain on the land and lead

a decent life. Accordingly, they demanded structural reforms that would create family-embedded farming units, productive enough to allow the rural population to catch up with the urban population's much higher standard of living, and traditional enough to retain the best of the peasant culture.

French rural society however was not alone in asking for structural reforms. Faced with the reality of a newly emerging European order, and confronted with the economic and political necessities of assuming a leadership role in it, the French state came to realize that a rise in agricultural production required modernization in the farming sector. Such modernization, it was argued, was not synonymous with high technology. Part of that process had to go through a restructuring of the existing social structure of farming labor. In the early 1960's those two social and political trends--from the masses up and from the state down--crystallized in the Loi Cadre de 1962 masterminded by President De Gaulle's Minister of Agriculture, Pisani. To this day it is the only comprehensive agrarian reform in the history of France. In this chapter I intend to investigate the trajectory of French agriculture in the 20th century, to highlight the emerging and redefined role of the state in agricultural

matters and to analyze the changing nature of farming community ideology.

French Agriculture Prior to 1944

France was a deeply agriculturally rooted country when World War I broke out. More than 40% of the working population was involved in some form of agricultural activity (Gervais et al. 1976: 24). Between 1900 and 1914 the production of all the major agricultural goods (cereals, potatoes, meat, milk and vine) increased steadily (Toutain 1961: 13-16). The typical social arrangement in rural France then was one of a small family farm, depending primarily on intensive non-paid family labor. The lack of access to capital that prevented small farmers from acquiring time and energy-saving machinery further reinforced their reliance on family labor. On a social level the rural sector of the population remained untouched by most state policies. For example the first law on child labor, passed in 1841 in order to reduce the length of the child's work day to eight hours, did not apply to rural work (Deterville 1982:12). To the eyes of most, rural life was timeless and possessed a life of its own.

In August 1914, at the height of the harvest season, the first soldiers left for the front. By 1918 it is estimated that over 60 percent of the male rural population had gone to war. Even draft animals were requisitioned to provide for the transportation of people and goods to the front. For four years the burden of farming fell entirely upon the women, the children and the old, despite some governmental attempts to channel foreign migration and non-draftable unemployed labor to rural areas (Gervais et al. 1976: 40-52).

In 1918 France emerged as a victorious but devastated nation. The effects of war on the population, as well as on the economy and productive capability of the country, turned out to be disastrous--1,310,000 soldiers had been killed and over one million left handicapped. The destruction of land in the war zones, the unavoidable neglect of farming in the countryside, the loss of cattle to the necessity of war, all raised urgently the question of post-war reconstruction (Bernard 1975: 108-112). World War I was fought by peasants, and one only has to look at the long list of dead soldiers' names engraved on war memorials to realize the extent of human devastation in each and every village of France.

Exactly what kind of reconstruction ought to take

place and what role should agriculture have in the larger economy were subjects open to debate in post-war governmental circles. Everyone agreed that the revitalization of agricultural production was essential to the general economic and social prosperity. Some, mostly technocrats, linked the rise of agricultural production to the development of agribusiness and a restructuring of landholdings into large, heavily mechanized productive units. Others, mostly politicians and intellectuals, envisioned a developmental path rooted in traditional rural social organization, emphasizing human resources over technology. After all, they added, it was in the countryside that the real values and spirit of France reside (Gervais et al. 1976: 82-83).

Although ultimately post-war economic and political expansion was dictated more by events and circumstances than by ideology, the controversy surrounding the reconstruction scheme was important in that it led the state to assume a managerial, entrepreneurial and interventionist role in agriculture. So was set the precedent that would characterize future state/rural relations. Whereas in the past, conscription and taxation were the basis of such relations, in the aftermath of World War I the state assumed leadership in providing

economic direction to the rural world.

The April 17, 1919 law on reconstruction targeted the northern and northeastern provinces ravaged by war. Through financial input and technological improvement the post-war government was able to regenerate the physical capability of agriculture and thus to generate rapid growth. Through its intervention it was also able to orient the productive process toward cereal production. Today it is in those same provinces that cereal agribusiness is widely found. By 1925 agricultural production had reached its pre war level and so were completed reconstruction efforts (Bernard 1975).

In 1920 the government instituted the Caisse Nationale de Credit Agricole (CNCA), National Bank for Agricultural Credit, that was then and still is today the most powerful instrument of state control in agriculture. The purpose for its creation was to promote and facilitate governmental economic and social reforms and policies regarding the rural world. Although the embryonic form of the CNCA as a minor lending institution dates back to 1879, it was not until 1920 that the full-fledged apparatus became a state controlled channel for policy implementation (Henry and Regulier 1986). It is worth noting however that the CNCA banking system did not evenly

reach the rural population until much later in the century. In contrast to the already large prosperous farmers and to those located in areas targeted by the reconstruction effort, small and medium farmers elsewhere in France did not routinely resort to CNCA banking opportunities. They kept money and savings in cash at home, and only on exception acquired anything on credit. As a result, their level of indebtedness was minimal as was their rate of economic expansion. The attitude of farmers toward banking changed to some extent after World War II, and by the 1960's, when the Pisani law was implemented, almost all held bank accounts at the CNCA and many had benefitted from loans to improve agricultural performance. Moreover it was the CNCA that later became the central instrument for the 1962 law's implementation.

Despite a rising productivity in the reconstructed zones, the national production of essential goods such as wheat, potatoes, and other cereals could not meet internal demands for such products and therefore had to be imported. In contrast, the production of milk, milk products and animal products increased dramatically as a result of rising cooperative organization. Although the cooperative movement existed before World War I in large-scale milk producing areas, it was not until the post-war

years that numerous small scale cooperatives of milk collection and distribution mushroomed around urban centers (Vienney 1980).

In the early 1930's the peasant community was severely hit by the world economic crisis and several cycles of overproduction. For example, the price of wheat in 1935 fell to less than half its 1929 value. It was then that French farmers sought to counteract such catastrophic effects by collective association. More and more cooperatives came into existence so that by 1939, 85 percent of wheat produced was collected and distributed through cooperative channels (Gervais et al. 1976: 80-82). By the 1940's the cooperative movement had spread to all sectors of agricultural activity.

On a social level, the post war years are characterized by the beginning of large scale rural to urban migration. Between 1919 and 1931 over 80,000 farmers left the countryside every year (Bernard 1975: 199) for economic, social and cultural reasons. In between the wars, French farmers' income at best stagnated and very often dropped significantly. Meanwhile industrial centers began to thrive, thus enticing rural folks in search of income security and a higher standard of living to move to the cities. Furthermore, urban life

provided an alternative to those young farmers dissatisfied with the traditional relation of authority in the family farm. Rather than waiting for their father's retirement to become head of household themselves, they opted for the industrial world.

Disillusion and discouragement among the French peasant community benefitted the Popular Front, a center to left political coalition genuinely committed to social reform, that came to power in 1936. Despite numerous attempts from right-wing factions to organize the peasantry along corporatist lines, it was to the Popular Front that rural France gave its support in 1936. Consequently some argued that the primary beneficiaries of the 1936 popular government were French farmers. And indeed, between 1935 and 1938, the average rural income increased by 54 percent (Gervais et al. 1976: 87). It is worth noting however that Popular Front reforms aimed at the agricultural world were strictly economic in nature and did not address the social particularities and grievances of the rural world. Underlying such an approach was the assumption that the betterment of the agricultural economy would, in a self-sustaining process, improve the social and cultural context of the rural world. But this proved not the case.

The most significant legacy of the short-lived Popular Front government was the institution of comprehensive work protection and social programs designed primarily for industrial wage earners. Some measures, such as the law on mandatory paid vacations, did extend to agricultural wage earners. Others, such as the limitation of work week to 40 hours, did not (Laroque 1983: 559). But none provided social and legal protection to the large pool of independent farmers or to the members of family farms providing unpaid labor to agricultural households. In short, the Popular Front's social and legal innovations left out the largest segment of the rural population.

The explanation for such a deficiency in the 1936 government policy-making rests in definitional and ideological considerations. It is simple to identify employers and employees in a wage-giving/wage-earning situation and subsequently attribute rights, privileges and duties according to one's place on the labor scene. It is more difficult to do so when a farmer, no matter how small, owns and labors on his land with his wife and children, when their lives are equally affected by harvest fluctuations, and when the notion of labor and ownership overlap that of familial property.

The lack of state involvement in rural social

matters also reflects the strong ideological creed that French peasantry and rural life stand for the natural moral tradition of France, and provide the necessary cement for self-regulation and control. As French sociologist Emile Durkheim, opposing rural and industrial order, wrote:

A type of activity [industrial] which has assumed such a formidable place throughout the whole of social life can clearly not remain as unregulated as it has been without bringing forth the most serious problems.

(Simpson 1967: 137)

Realizing its awkwardness and shortcomings in the rural legislative domain, the government enacted a law in 1941 which gave full authority to the Ministry of Agriculture for creating and implementing legislation on all rural social matters (Laroque 1983: 555). In contrast, social legislation regarding the industrial world fell under various headings (i.e, Ministry of Education, Labor, Health, etc.). One of the major outcomes of the 1941 law was then to institutionalize and reinforce the

already existing dichotomy between the rural and the industrial world and their respective relationships to the state and society. Over the years such double standards largely contributed to making farmers second class citizens and to fuel rural discontent.

Meanwhile, the nature of the work process on the farm was still very much family embedded, and issues of intergenerational and gender relationships in such processes remained a nagging question. The law on deferred wage work contracts, passed in the early 1940's, represents the first governmental attempt to regulate those work relations. This law was to become one of the most controversial and disputed issues among rural protesters and eventually was repealed in 1970. Deferred wage work contracts applied to the sons and daughters of farmers legally acknowledged as heads of household, (i.e., fathers), of 18 years of age or older who participated in the work process without being associated in the profits, and who received no systematic, financial compensation. For every year working on the farm, the descendants became entitled to half of the annual salary of one agricultural worker had such worker been hired by the father. The beneficiaries however could claim the deferred income only at time of inheritance which in most likelihood happened

upon the death of the head of household (Laroque 1983: 567). Needless to say, this legal provision did not satisfy the needs of the younger generation of farmers who, especially after World War II, found conditions unbearable and incompatible with normal modern life. It was precisely this generation that became the most vocal in asking for structural reforms in the agricultural domain.

By the time World War II broke out the French countryside had yet to achieve a balance between economic viability and human fulfillment.

French Agriculture from 1944 to Present

World War II considerably disrupted the economic and social texture of the nation. The agricultural sector lost about one-third of its labor force and again most draft animals to the needs of war. But in contrast with World War I the loss of territory was overwhelming, since by 1942 the Germans occupied all of France. Foreign occupation resulted in the loss of traditional import and export networks as well as a forced orientation of the productive agricultural sector toward the needs of Germany. French cities meanwhile reached a point of near starvation. The daily caloric allowance to urban dwellers

through allowance cards amounted to 1200 calories per adult, a level well below the necessities of laborers. Many urban residents managed to survive thanks to their ties to rural kin or friends. Despite heavy direction from the German occupying forces, French farmers attempted as much as they could to restructure their production to meet local and regional needs. They diversified, expanded their kitchen garden production, raised more poultry, emphasized home processing of milk, produced less grains. Very rapidly the practice of the black market developed into a dominant, semi-institutionalized form of underground economy that did benefit small and medium farmers more able to escape German surveillance and dictates (Azema 1979: 160-165). In 1944 the task of reconstructing the nation again lay ahead.

The Monnet Plan responsible for agricultural reconstruction sought to modernize the northern plains and regroup the best land into larger parcels in order to promote cereal production, to develop sugar beet production and to enhance cattle raising. Wheat production became a prime target and was stimulated through financial inducements (Kolinsky 1980: 142). Up to 1948 however domestic production could not meet national needs, and France again became an importer of basic foodstuffs. Most

of it was obtained from the North American continent, paid dearly for, and thus contributed to the serious national fiscal crisis. But the institutionalization of the Marshall Plan in 1948, coupled with a series of exceptionally plentiful harvests, inaugurated an era of agricultural prosperity. By 1950 France was definitely in a phase of dynamic expansion and took over a leading role on the agricultural export market. For the first time in its history, French agriculture exported all its basic products: wheat, barley, beef, milk, milk products, fruit, etc. By 1963, it ranked fourth on the world scale of exporting nations of agricultural products and second by 1971 (Gervais et al. 1976: 107-144).

The rise in agricultural production and productivity reflected the dynamism of agricultural modernization and organization. However it also created some problems. Large productive output and/or overproductive cycles typically lead to a flooding of the market supply side which in turn may result in a drop of commodity prices. A decrease in prices is likely, unless the state intervenes, to result in a significant decrease in real agricultural income.

There are basically two sets of regulatory mechanisms that work to counteract this downward tendency and promote

income stability. The first one is the self-regulating process of farming population reduction; the second is induced by the state through artificial financial subsidies of key agricultural products. Both were found in France in the aftermath of World War II.

As the rural population declined, the number of people being supported by the agricultural sector dropped accordingly. And indeed since 1950 the reduction rate of the farming population has steadily increased. In 1954, 23 percent of total French population lived off the land, in 1962, 18 percent, and in 1968, 15 percent. As the agricultural population declined, so did the number of farms which went from 2.3 million units in 1955 to 1.55 million in 1970. In 1963 the average farm acreage increased to 15.8 hectares, although a great regional diversity was observable--from 53 hectares in the Paris basin to well under 10 hectares in Provence-Roussillon in the south of France (Kolinsky 1980: 146-47). Although the average farm acreage in the department of Isere matches the national average, it is noticeable that farms of 20 hectares or more are found in the western section of the department and estates under 10 hectares are concentrated in the mountainous eastern section. The process of population reduction was only a temporary compensatory

mechanism which eventually was unable to mask the real structural deficiencies of the agricultural sector.

The second regulatory mechanism resides in the governmental policy of subsidizing agricultural prices so as to ensure some level of income stability. In France this policy targeted primarily cereal, grain and sugar beet production, all crops primarily grown by large agribusiness entities. Subsidies for wheat crops reached 50 million francs in 1954 and 300 million in 1958. Sugar subsidies went from 54 million in 1954 to over 90 million in 1956. More than half of the total amount devoted to subsidies benefitted the already prosperous large scale monocrop farm of the Northern plains and Parisian basin (Gervais et al. 1979: 116).

Instead of addressing the issue of differentiation among French agriculturalists and the rising discrepancy between small and medium farmers on one hand and large farmers and/or agribusiness on the other, the French government, through its subsidy policy, made possible the dominance of large scale export agriculture for many years. As a result a large segment of neglected agriculturalists came to realize that state intervention had again contributed to the prosperity of the already well off.

But if the small/medium peasantry felt a growing differentiation within the rural world, it also became very sensitive to the increasing disparity between industrial workers and farmers. At a time when important social protection and welfare laws were passed on the national level, the executive order of 7 July 1945 provided for the decentralization of authority regarding labor and social agricultural matters at the departmental level. In doing so, the government forcibly excluded the agricultural sector from crucial social benefits. For example, the 1946 law on collective conventions which ultimately protected workers' rights of association and unionization did not apply to agricultural occupations. Neither did the law establishing a 40 hour work week. From 1950 to 1968 the guaranteed minimum agricultural wage was markedly lower than the industrial one. It was not before 1970 that a unified minimal wage was applied to the industrial and agricultural sectors, and not until 1976 that the Labor Code provisions regarding health, holidays, layoffs, safety, etc., for workers was extended to the agricultural sector (Laroque 1980: 569-650).

The double standard established by the French government can be justified in practical terms. True, a decentralized decision-making body could have been more

suited to specific local and regional agricultural needs and demands. The reality however showed that such decentralization led to the exclusion of the rural sector from beneficial state measures. As had been the case after World War I, state intervention targeted the agricultural sector as a homogeneous, economic entity but neglected and/or ignored the human dimension and social fabric of the rural world. Although this gap seemed to suit traditional holders of power and authority, i.e., heads of households in family farming as well as prosperous farmers, it certainly did not fulfill the aspirations of those submitted to such authority, i.e., the least prosperous younger generation who aspired to economic, political and social recognition. The need for self-protection of small and medium farmers against larger agricultural units translated into a significant increase in cooperative associations. The desire to redefine farmers' status and role on the farm, to reaffirm their commitment to rural life and human scale agriculture led to an increase and reorientation of peasant militancy and a multiplication of grass roots associations and unions.

In the first half of the twentieth century two periods seem to have been particularly conducive to cooperative formation, first in the aftermath of

World War I and secondly after World War II. Both are characterized by the development of strong state intervention in the agricultural sector, as well as a definite state commitment to unequivocal capitalistic agricultural expansion. The development of small scale cooperatives by and for small and medium farmers can certainly be analyzed in terms of the cooperative efficiency to provide farmers with a better and more rational use of their means of production. In turn this efficiency allowed them to protect their economic viability vis-a-vis large landowners who did not need association to succeed economically. Between 1945 and 1949 one half of newly formed cooperatives were cooperatives d'approvisionnement or buying cooperatives whose purpose was to obtain collectively the raw material necessary to improve the productivity of small scale farming (Vienney 1980: 294-298).

In the first half of the century however, the cooperative movement in agriculture seemed to be limited in scale and scope. Most certainly its slow rate of development resulted from the lack of a clear legal framework conducive to dealing specifically with cooperative associations in agriculture. The form of a cooperative association was detailed in the Pisani

comprehensive agrarian law. Its legalization resulted in a tremendous expansion of agricultural cooperatives to the point that today those farming associations have become a standard feature of every sector of agricultural activity in every village of France. Moreover the 1960 law provided the necessary framework for diversification of cooperative farms as we shall see in the next chapter.

On the social and political scene the end of World War II ushered in the modern era of agrarian activism. Historically the leadership of farmers' political associations and syndicates had been drawn from the ranks of the landed peasantry and local village elites. The basis of their leadership and political influence resided in typical patron-client relationships that local power holders were able to develop with individual farmers (Maresca 1983). Traditionally this leadership had promoted the view of a unified peasantry devoid of class distinction and sharing a common peasant culture. The surge of vitality and enthusiasm of post-war agrarian militancy disputed those notions.

In 1940 the Vichy government, allied with occupying German forces, institutionalized the principle of "peasant corporatism." Based on ideological glorification of land, family and labor it established a hierarchical and

authoritarian structure which compelled all workers of every agricultural sector and class to join the only existing agrarian union. The mandatory membership of male heads of household was a requirement for the enrollment of the entire household, and was necessary for the family to benefit from social security protection.

Part of the rural world subscribed to the corporatist idea and some even saw in it a potential for agrarian democracy (Debatisse: 1963). But most opposed it because of its overt links to and control by enemy forces. Indeed it was through the association that the Germans under the Vichy government imposed production quotas for the benefit of the occupying forces. Most opposed to this concept were those farmers who went underground, actively resisted the enemy and worked toward the liberation of France. And indeed, as early as 1941, underground elements of outlawed agricultural associations attempted to reform clandestinely.

As a result of secret meetings that took place all over France, the Confederation Generale de l'Agriculture (CGA) was created to incite all farmers to fight German occupation as well as to establish the foundation of a post-war association that would include "every worker of the land" with the exception of large and absentee landowners. P. Tanguy Prigent became its first president

and later in 1944 the first Minister of Agriculture in liberated France (Gervais et al. 1976: 449). By 1943, the communists, greatly involved in the resistance movement, had constituted a network of grass roots organizations, the Comites de Defense et d'Action Paysanne (CDAP), openly committed to active resistance and sabotage. By 1941 there were about 4000 such groupings in France with heavier concentration in the south. When the war came to an end in 1944, it was the priority of the newly formed political coalition headed by General de Gaulle to dissolve Vichy corporatism. It was also clear by then that the pre-war traditional rural order was just that: a thing of the past.

After the liberation, the CGA remained the representative organization of farming interests for less than a decade. In 1953 the socialist-leaning CGA was dissolved. Its failure might be explained in terms of the multiplicity of its functions which transformed the association from a political entity into a managerial head of the agricultural profession. Post-war leadership assigned to the CGA the role of managing and coordinating the multiple complementary sectors of agriculture coordinating the relationships among various cooperatives, between cooperatives and Credit Agricole, between agricultural workers and landowners, etc. At the same time

the CGA retained its function of organizing, representing and defending farming interests vis-a-vis the state (Prugnaud 1963: 155-166). In short the CGA became too large an organization and as a result lost the political unity necessary for its survival and the fulfillment of its wartime objectives. Another explanation for the failure of the original CGA to survive as such resides in the fact that after the war French society as a whole underwent a process of political self-redefinition made possible by the vacuum of power and institutions engendered by the war. True the pre-war political social and economic order was gone, but many interest groups were still in existence and looking for a channel for their political aspirations; groups that had played a crucial role during the war were not ready to relinquish power after the war was over.

Within the CGA the structure that represented the union and syndicate function was embodied in the Federation Nationale des Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles (FNSEA) which early on in the history of the CGA succeeded in channeling right-wing tendencies opposed to the more progressive leadership of the CGA. It was through the FNSEA that many leaders of the then dissolved peasant corporation found their way back to institutional power. By 1955 the FNSEA established its political supremacy

(Wright 1968). The FNSEA composition and philosophy overtly reflected the interests of privileged agricultural zones of large farming in the northern plains and Parisian basin. Membership from the small/medium farming sector was limited. FNSEA leadership was committed to the principle of free enterprise and state non-intervention in the general economy.

After the war the CGA had denied FNSEA membership to absentee landlords as well as agricultural workers who were affiliated to the communist-bent industrial workers union, the CGT. By 1950, absentee landlords were allowed to join the FNSEA ranks with participatory but non-voting power (Prugnaud 1963).

One of the special interest groups that had been institutionalized by the CGA after the war regrouped individuals involved in farming whose age ranged from 18 to 35 years. After the dissolution of the CGA in 1953 the youth organization, called Cercle National des Jeunes Agriculteurs (CNJA), tried to become incorporated by the FNSEA so as to achieve union and political recognition. Most CNJA members farmed on a familial agricultural unit and because of the traditional generational relationships on the farm did not have the legal title of "farmer," reserved exclusively for the head of the farming

household. Furthermore the FNSEA, since its creation, had ruled to limit active membership to l'exploitant, the head of the farm. By joining the FNSEA, CNJA members hoped to advance their struggle to legalize a title of co-exploitant, or co-head of the farm, that would lead to legal equality between the two generations working on the same farm. By accepting the CNJA in its ranks, the FNSEA hoped to influence rural young generations (Prugnaud 1963: 184-186). Historically, as shall be detailed in Chapter IV the influence of the CNJA on the FNSEA, as well as the impact of CNJA militancy on the social evolution of French agriculture, had been tremendous. In the late 1950's and early 1960's the most active militants who demanded agrarian reform in general and a GAEC law in particular were drawn from the CNJA ranks.

FNSEA and CNJA expressed divergent views on what role the government should assume in the development and modernization of agriculture. They also envisioned a different future for the rural world. Both agreed that agricultural modernization was essential, but contrary to the FNSEA the CNJA wished the state to lead, direct and implement necessary reforms. Furthermore, the CNJA, aware of the potentially adverse effects of rapid modernization on human and social conditions, entrusted the state with

the task of preventing or reducing such unwanted effects (Kolinsky 1980: 152-153). The CNJA envisioned the future agricultural world as being made up of medium sized, kin-embedded competitive farms that would become modern enterprises through the farmer's ability to gain effective managerial and technical skills by means of education and experience as well. The FNSEA on the other hand, hoped to promote effective rural development through land concentration, increased technology and monocrop orientation (Prugnaud 1963: 221-230). Both FNSEA and CNJA however agreed that small family farms were no option for the future. Only the Mouvement de Defense des Exploitants Familiaux, MODEF, a small farmers' union with links to the Communist Party, sought to protect the viability of the most underprivileged (Klatzmann 1978: 134-135). By the late 1950's the foundation of modern agrarian syndicalism was well established. The main actors were in place and ready to play a role in shaping their agricultural future.

At the 1958 annual meeting of the federation, the FNSEA proposed that health insurance should be mandatory but left to private companies. In contrast the CNJA voted to extend national state health insurance coverage that benefitted industrial workers to all people of the agricultural sector. The issue was presented to the

government, which formulated a law in 1961 that would extend the existing national system to farmers only for catastrophic illness while leaving them to private companies for the rest (Prugnaud 1963: 230-237). Such measures created a great deal of dissatisfaction especially in the CNJA ranks and fed the general feeling of anger and frustration resulting from the governmental inertia to address the grievances and aspirations of the rural world. It was then that farmers, especially the younger ones, took to the streets.

In 1960 artichoke producers of Brittany, angered by the monopoly of one private company over the transportation of their harvest, took the matter into their own hands. They organized themselves into a network of distribution, short-cutting the company and eventually leading to its bankruptcy. Meanwhile wheat and beet growers facing significant hardship and income reduction paralyzed traffic by blocking the streets of every major city with their tractors (le Monde 1960, Jan. Feb.). By August 1960 the government, provoked by such public unrest, began to address the farmers' grievances (le Monde 1960, Aug). A year later however no law or decree had been implemented by the government. Farmers again resorted to civil disobedience and disruptive unrest. Again it all began in

Brittany, extended to the entire country, and paralyzed the entire French economy (le Monde 1961: Jun-Dec). This time the government proved to be more energetic, and passed the 1962 agrarian law which along with the 1960 loi d'orientation (law of orientation) that had never before been implemented, became the most comprehensive agrarian legal package in the history of France. It focused on price policy, agricultural structure and rural demography. It affirmed, as had been advocated by the CNJA, a commitment to kin-embedded farming structure, large and efficient enough to ensure a decent living. Legislative procedures sought to facilitate access to modernizing factors such as technology and formal education, and to improve social protection in rural areas. The law itself, as well as one its components, i.e., the law on GAECs, will be detailed in the next chapter. An argument however can be made that the 1960-1962 agrarian reform was not granted by the government solely out of concern for its rural citizens. By then France's membership in the European Economic Community (EEC), had created new pressure on, as well as a new context for, French agriculture.

France and the European Economic Community

The 1962 agrarian legislation was seen by the French government as a response to the need for agricultural modernization created by the involvement of France in the EEC. The EEC came into existence in 1957 with the Rome treaty; its goal was to create a geographical area in which goods, people and capital would be allowed to circulate freely within the boundaries of its member states in order to impose cooperation, economic and social progress. Six countries in western Europe, including France, originally ratified the treaty in 1954. Today there are 12 members and the degree of freedom of movement will culminate in 1992 when all boundaries and restrictions are officially lifted.

Because of the particular nature of agriculture, i.e., the difficulty of balancing supply and demand, the inequality in production, the social character of farming, and other factors, the EEC asserted the need for common policy regarding agricultural matters. As a result of this ferment, in 1967 the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was established. The goals were 1) to increase agricultural

productivity, 2) to assure a decent standard of living to agricultural populations through increased income, 3) to stabilize markets (Clerc 1981). By 1968 the policy of harmonization of prices and removal of national price support measures was completed and the institution to finance this policy, the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (FEOGA) was in place. The policy has stimulated the agricultural sector well beyond its original expectations and today EEC agricultural production, going beyond self-sufficiency, creates an expensive surplus in many commodities, the most notorious being milk, dairy products, and wheat. The challenge for the 90s for the EEC resides in its ability to control CAP which has diverted so far an enormous proportion, 60 percent to 70 percent of the total EEC budget, to its policy. Already by the early 1980s the need to adjust and regulate agricultural production in order to check overproduction, triggered in the past by the policy of high price supports, was felt in the EEC member states. But attempts to reform the CAP encountered strong opposition at the national level because it was, after all, the EEC that had picked up the tag for the promotion of agriculture. The policy, first financed through national contributions, was later financed by revenues from duties on imports into the community and by

national tax based on the "value added" in member states (Moyer & Josling 1990: 23).

In 1986 the EEC established dairy quotas in order to check milk surplus and thus inaugurated a succession of reforms including price decreases for EEC supported products, establishment of the green ECU the agricultural monetary unit, and other measures. The establishment of dairy quotas is the most significant reform, as far as this study is concerned, since as we shall see in Chapter V, it has had important repercussions on the region of Meilleux and on the life of GAEC farmers. Before 1984 milk production had indeed been expanded because of technical advances in the industry and because of the ready availability of low-cost cereal substitutes (Moyer & Josling 1990: 66-72). Needless to say, France, being a primary milk producer, opposed the imposition of quotas as did England and the Netherlands who pressed for price cuts instead of quotas.

The influence of the EEC on the domestic policies, and on the locality can be felt on several levels. First, the institutionalization of the 1962 reform fulfilled the structural requirements necessary to improve agricultural productivity, as was stated in the Rome treaty. Second, the adoption of reform along the way, and especially the

1984-1986 quota policy, and subsequent imposition of thresholds on farming production, had direct concrete implications on the economic life, strategy and decision-making of farming households. Third, the fluctuation and readjustment of productive levels at the national level are deeply felt on productive units. Those three considerations will serve as a basis for GAEC analysis in Meilleux.

In this chapter I have traced the historical trajectory of French agriculture that eventually culminated in the drafting of a comprehensive agrarian reform. With its emphasis on structural change, such a law has had an important impact on the nature of the farming units as well as their labor and human arrangement. A section of the law enables farmers to farm jointly in GAEC association.

The GAEC law on the one hand presents similarity with the spirit and ideology of the large legal context, but on the other it represents a net departure from any other type of cooperative farming association known in western Europe. My task in Chapter IV will be precisely to analyze both the continuity and new departures in the GAEC framework.

CHAPTER IV

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

In examining the historical trajectory of French agriculture with special emphasis on its relation to the state, it is clear that the agricultural legislation implementing social and structural reforms in the 1960's represented a radical shift from the solution in price policies--typified by state responses to farmers' grievances in the past. In this chapter I shall

- 1) examine the social and structural reforms of the 1960 loi d'orientation and 1962 loi complementaire;
- 2) focus on the legal characteristics of the law on GAEC, as an integral part of the 1960-1962 framework;
- 3) indicate the national as well as the departmental trends of GAEC formation;
- and 4) conclude with the significant features that make GAEC associations such a unique experiment and such an anomaly in the evolution of agricultural systems in capitalist economies.

The 1960 Loi d'Orientation and
the 1960 Loi Complementary

The legal elaboration of Pisani's comprehensive agrarian reform took a couple of years to be fully implemented. First an orientation law was passed in 1960 that defined and spelled out basic philosophy and objectives. Then in 1962 a complementary law was included that modified the 1960's law and concretized the original proposal. But it took even longer for some crucial amendments to become law, such as the 1972 legal definition of cooperation. The following section is an attempt to highlight the most significant feature of this complex legal package that still makes up the basic legal agricultural framework today in France.

Structural reforms

The stated goal of the 1960-62 law on agriculture was to ensure the survival and long term viability of medium-sized farming units. It is worth noting however

that the criterion used to define a medium sized agricultural unit shifted from a definition in terms of labor to one in terms of acreage.

A viable medium-sized farm was first defined as one which can be cultivated by two working farmers under conditions allowing use of modern techniques, availability of capital, and financial compensation for labor and managerial skills of both farmers (Loi no. 60808, August 5, 1960). Although its phrasing is too general to concretely define a medium-sized farm, the law nevertheless reflects the lawmakers' wish to define agricultural units as modern enterprises ruled by business rationality. In 1968, qualitative requirements were added. In order to qualify for state aid, agricultural units must measure at least 15.4 hectares (Gervais et al. 1976: 620). In a nation where land fragmentation had historically been excessive as a result of the partible inheritance system, the state hoped, through minimum acreage requirement, to foster land concentration. In doing so, the government intended to get rid of the smallest, least efficient agricultural units. It was also the government's plan to buy off those farms and by joining them together, transfer the small farming sector into a viable medium-sized agricultural sector.

This goal was approached through the creation of state funded committees, Societes d'Amenagement Foncier et d'Etablissement Rural, (SAFER). SAFER's principal role was to acquire farming land from small farmers through either personal dealings between committee and farmers or by using SAFER--state prerogatives to forcibly acquire landed property from farmers. SAFER agencies were then responsible for improving the land through irrigation, drainage systems, etc. Finally SAFER was required to sell back within five years those improved farms to prospective farmers who, according to SAFER's regional executive board, were most likely to succeed in their agricultural endeavors because of their personality, motivation and experience. SAFERS are powerful institutions and indeed are the most critical force behind national policy of land consolidation. Between 6000 to 7000 farmers benefit from SAFER sales each year. By 1976 30% of total national farm land had been consolidated through their intervention (Kolinski 1980: 155-6).

Besides their obvious economic significance, the SAFERS have influenced the traditional regional and local political scene. Indeed, as a result of their buying and selling prerogatives, they have emerged as critical centers of power. Conflicts between SAFER and individual

farmers, accusations of favoritism, bribery, and red tape, are reported every day.

In order to enhance rural dynamism the 1960-62 law sought to promote the transfer of farms to the younger generation. This was achieved through the institution of a Fond d'Action Sociale pour l'Amenagement des Structures Agricoles, FASASA. This social fund through financial enticement, IVD, indemnity of retirement, incited farmers to retire at the age of 65, and then lowered to 60 in 1967. Over the years, this legal provision has led to a generational transfer of property as well as to the abandonment of small sized farms by older farmers who had been scraping by year after year for cash and security and who welcomed the IVD as an opportunity to augment their incomes. In addition to its retirement benefits, the FASASA developed a program to assist unsuccessful farmers in changing careers and relocating, thus promoting a transfer of population from under-employed agricultural to non-agricultural jobs that would eventually alleviate the burden of the first group on the state.

Agricultural credit

State control over credit allocation and access to banking institutions has allowed the state to set direction over agriculture. The Credit Agricole, cooperative banking system, is the most influential financial institution in the French rural world. Through its central organization, the Caisse National de Credit Agricole (CNCA), the government is able to determine investments and enforce its policies regarding agricultural development. The CNCA was a pivotal element in the 1960s law which stated that only those farmers whose modernization goals were similar to the ones expressed in the legislation could benefit from state aid, via CNCA, and not, as had been the case since the creation of the Credit Agricole at the end of the 19th century, all and every farmer. From 1960 on, grants, loans, and preferential rates became contingent upon the characteristics, both physical and social, of the farm, i.e, size, economic potential, effectiveness in management, dynamism etc. Small scale farms or troubled estates could not benefit from such financial

opportunities and soon owners found themselves doomed to failure. Moreover, trying to instill new blood in the agricultural sector, the government devised especially favorable measures, implemented by CNCA, ranging from settlement grants to preferential interest rates to entice young people between the ages of 21 and 35 to settle as farmers.

Educational training

The 1960 legal package was meant to improve the economic and structural conditions in agriculture. But it also hoped to redefine and enhance the social status, role, and position of modern farmers. Contemporary efficient farms became described as modern enterprises, and farmers as modern entrepreneurs. There was a sense that the knowledge necessary to run such complex economic entities could not possibly be acquired sur le tas through generational transmission. Consequently the government proceeded to create and develop a new infrastructure aimed at bringing educational facilities to rural areas. This was achieved on two fronts: 1) by developing the traditional system of education in the countryside through

the establishment of numerous high schools in rural communities and 2) by creating a network of specialized schools stressing technical agricultural knowledge, managerial skills as well as liberal arts. Those institutions are well attended and seem to answer the specific needs of a modernizing agriculture. However, they have not been capable of attracting the female young population significantly (de Pomarede 1973).

French agriculture has historically been and still is male-dominated. Estates are passed down from generation to generation usually along the male line, and traditionally the women who resented becoming farmers' wives escaped the rural world by becoming secretaries, clerks, school teachers or nurses. Providing formal education to rural youth can, however, create intergenerational conflicts. Instead of the older generation providing knowledge to the younger, it was now the youth who brought about agricultural innovation to the farm. To counteract subversion in traditional patterns of authority, the government included, within the framework of those educational agricultural institutions, continuing education programs designed for already established farmers who wanted to expand their knowledge and horizons.

Similarly the state made a special effort to promote

agricultural innovation in the field. In each region, Chambers of Agriculture fund a pool of advanced technicians and engineers whose task is to advise farmers, to introduce new technology, new plants etc., to propose new orientations, in short to promote agricultural modernization.

Cooperative associations

Although the 1960 law reaffirmed its commitment to agricultural cooperative associations, it did not then modify their legal status. As was detailed in the previous chapter the history of cooperativism dates back much earlier but the cooperative movement expanded considerably after World War II. In France the controversy surrounding the issue of cooperativism was not theoretical. It was instead a question of the legal definition and status of cooperatives.

The first problem was whether or not industrial and agricultural cooperatives ought to fall under the same legal umbrella. In fact it was not until 1972 that the unitary law on cooperativism was passed. The second problem revolved around the legal definition of

agricultural cooperatives, e.g. whether a cooperative association should be treated as a person or as a commercial entity (and therefore what kind of legal code would prevail) or whether it should be a specifically unique entity altogether. Until 1967 cooperatives came under a personal code of law and accordingly benefitted from the financial and fiscal enticements proposed by the state to private farmers, i.e. loans, subsidies, and tax exemptions if the cooperative's stated goals fitted the objectives of agricultural development. In 1967 however a government decree shifted their legal definition to the commercial world. This was done in order to expand the scope, the power and the size of such associations, and incite them to become more competitive on the market. The most critical innovation resided in the fact that by becoming commercial entities, they were allowed to sell bonds, and as a result to include non-agricultural members as holders and sharers of cooperative profits. Unions, professional associations, and farmers massively contested this modification of status on the grounds that it could possibly destroy the traditional philosophy of the French cooperative movement, widely perceived as a shield against capitalist expansion in agriculture (Gervais et al. 1976). Threatened by social unrest again, the government

rapidly withdrew its proposition. But the incident revealed to all the necessity of a specific legal framework.

The 1972 law created a special type of society distinct from individual and commercial activities. It is still today the basis for cooperation and was drawn in accordance with EEC efforts to harmonize the process of cooperativization at the European level (Gourlay 1980: 11-33). Its legal content is a hybrid form of civil and commercial codes. Cooperatives may accept as stockholders non-participating members who should not exceed 40 percent of the total representation. However membership priority is given to agriculturally linked partners and concretely the Credit Agricole and Chambers of Agriculture are among the most visible associates. A distinct taxation system was devised (Gourbay 1980: 11-33). The Cooperative set of rules does not apply to GAECs which, although definitely involved in cooperation, are governed by their own set of legal provisions. The nature of cooperation in cooperatives and in GAECs differ tremendously and will be addressed in the following section.

Social benefits

A concern of the 1960s comprehensive agrarian law was to reduce the gap between industrial and rural workers regarding access to social benefits. Agricultural social benefits apply to workers, dependent and unsalaried workers involved in agricultural activity. The 1960-62 decrees on social protection centralized all the various regional mutual social benefit funds into one national social agricultural fund under direct state control. Today this national fund manages the entire system of social insurance, family allowances and, since 1972, the system of coverage for work related accidents and occupational diseases (Deterville 1982: 118-157). In doing so the government has narrowed the gap between rural and urban sectors.

In effect, the French government, through the Pisani reform, has fulfilled two functions. On the one hand it has redressed some of the farmers' grievances that had led to political and social unrest. On the other hand it has also provided the state with some powerful means of control over the farming sector in the nation's economy as

well as over the rural population which was helped by the state but at the same time has learned to become more dependent and reliant on governmental institutions. Ultimately however the most important impact of the state on French agriculture has been the weeding out of the smallest and more underprivileged farmers, and the increasing capitalization of those allowed to stay afloat.

The 1962 law on the GAECs was drawn as a subsection of the 1960-62 large agrarian legal framework. It is a special section in itself, distinct from any other provision on cooperatives. The GAEC law was designed for the most radical segment of rural protestors, and, as will be detailed in the following chapter, was meant to implement communality in agricultural endeavor. The following section examines the characteristics and particularities of the GAEC institutional framework.

The GAEC Law

The law

A GAEC is an agricultural unit made up of several independent households and/or partners in which management and labor are accomplished communally; the existing land, capital, and means of production become communal property of the GAEC. Addition of land and machinery is achieved communally as well. The GAEC becomes an economic entity independent of its original constituents.

GAECs became institutionalized by the Law 62.917 of August 8, 1962, modified by decree 64.1193 and decree 64.1194 of December 3, 1964, decree 67.237 of March 23, 1967 modified by decree 78.705 of July 3, 1978, decree 78.704 of July 3, 1978.

GAEC formation

Legal provisions defined a GAEC as a grouping of people whose objective is "the realization of common work

under conditions comparable to those in farming concerns of a familial nature." This characteristic addresses both structural concerns (i.e. grouping of several units that leads to an increase in the size of the farm) and social aspirations (i.e. retention of a family type agriculture). The creation of a GAEC requires the association of at least two members, at most 10, in a legally binding contract. Every GAEC partner must participate on a full-time basis in the GAEC's agricultural activities. They cannot engage in tasks outside of the GAEC and/or carry on non-agricultural occupations. A GAEC is a grouping of full time farmers. The law prohibits the association between two spouses in a two-member GAEC, but allows it if a third party joins in. It is worth noting that this is the only qualitative restriction placed on GAEC composition. Restrictions of association between kin do not apply intergenerationally.

Once tentatively constituted, the grouping must give itself a name that will become its legal denomination, and must file for state approval from the departmental approval board whose task is to verify that the legal status drawn by the GAEC-to-be complies with the GAEC law, and that the GAEC objectives and plans for the future are in line with governmental requirements, needs and

desires. It is the same committee which, after the GAEC has been approved, will exercise control over the GAEC functioning during the entire life of the grouping, will advise the GAEC on practical, technical, legal matters if need be, will preside over an eventual GAEC dissolution and reversion to single households, or over its cessation in case of retirement or death.

In order to become an associate, each member must contribute something to the grouping. Such contributions can take the form of capital and/or labor. The contribution in capital may include bien meuble such as cattle, tools, machinery or immeuble such as land or buildings. All that is brought to the association must be immediately usable by the GAEC to achieve its agricultural objectives. Because the GAEC becomes an independent financial entity, each associate must provide liquidity to establish the GAEC bank account used for all financial transactions of the association. Material and financial assets brought to the grouping are assessed by experts who determine their value as well as their rate of depreciation at the time of GAEC formation. This has proved most useful in the case of GAEC dissolution in which associates expect to take back their contribution to their original household.

The property brought in by each member becomes communal property of the GAEC which acquires decision-making powers regarding its use, assumes the risks (i.e. loss of cattle, burning down of buildings, etc.) collectively, and shares in the profits. Only fully paid items can be brought into the GAEC. Monetary contribution may be substituted for material goods. This particular type of contribution is particularly widespread among young farmers who do not have a farming unit of their own and therefore cannot bring anything tangible to the association. However because they are young aspiring farmers, they become eligible for financial aid such as aide au demarrage de jeunes agricultures (grants for young farmer settlement) and preferential loans. Membership in a GAEC through the exclusive contribution of labor, although legally feasible, is in fact highly unusual. Its theoretical possibility indicates the willingness of lawmakers to give full recognition to the social value of labor in the face of capital. But its practical non-existence indicates the reverse.

Contribution in capital and in monetary value constitute the social capital of a GAEC. The social capital is divided in equal shares that are allocated to all associates proportionally to their original

contribution, and are rewarded once a year at the end of a fiscal year. Participants who contribute only labor are excluded from the share of social capital but are entitled to the share in labor designed to reward labor. Rewards of labor are shared equally by all GAEC partners. It is this share, often equated with a salary, that defines and gives the fiscal status of co-farmer to GAEC participants. It is worth noting that while a GAEC erases the boundaries between associates and achieves communality in the work process and on the productive unit, it does not engender an egalitarian structure. Unless GAEC partners originate from the same economic background, or unless they consciously decide to declare themselves as equal partners in the GAEC status at the time of formation, GAECs reproduce the original hierarchy among members.

At the time of formation, associates must designate the GAEC's headquarters which become its legal headquarters and where, according to the law, all meetings regarding the life of the group are held. Legal texts prescribe a daily meeting to discuss matters ranging from technical aspects of production, to long term orientation or interpersonal problems. The final legal document spelling out all the details is written up by a lawyer

before being presented to the departmental board for approval.

Functioning of the GAEC

According to the provisions of the law, all decisions regarding the life of a GAEC must be taken collectively at meetings that gather all associates. Decisions concerning everyday activities may be taken informally although it is greatly recommended that some sort of record, e.g. diaries, minutes, etc. be kept. Resolutions concerning the orientation or re-orientation of the production, all financial dealings, etc., have to be notarized in order to provide the legal basis necessary in case of conflict and/or dissolution.

There is within the grouping a one man-one vote policy. Consensus is required. Unless they are themselves associates, partners' family members have no voice in the decision-making process of a GAEC. As will be analyzed in Chapter 4 the theoretical and actual exclusion of all but legal GAEC partners from the productive process has been the most significant source of tension within GAEC members' households and has in some

instances led to the abandonment of such associations. Lawmakers did anticipate the potential for conflict between GAEC partners and translated their worry about dissolution into bureaucratizing the GAEC. It was assumed then that if every transaction whether technical, legal, financial or fiscal was recorded on paper, the process of separation would be eased and the reversal to household economy facilitated. As it turned out, this has not been very effective in bringing about easy resolution because this bureaucratization process is perceived as such a burden on the daily functioning of a GAEC that whenever they can, GAEC farmers do not respect this prescription.

On the financial level each GAEC partner receives, according to the law, a monthly payment in an amount, determined at the time of GAEC formation, spelled out in the GAEC status, that cannot be lower than the SMIC (minimum wage). The amount of the salary is initially determined according to the economic potential of the association. The profits, collected at the end of the fiscal year, are subsequently distributed between associates. Financial state permitting, capital contributions as well as labor contributions are rewarded. The rewards of labor are typically smaller than those of capital. Unless this particular aspect is

explicitly covered in the GAEC status, it is assumed that the reward of labor equates the reward of the smallest capital contribution. Rewards of capital are granted to GAEC associates proportionally to their original contribution, unless the members have expressed in the GAEC status their willingness to distribute the rewards equally, independently of the amounts originally contributed. It is also common practice to maintain a reserve fund to be used for reinvestment.

GAEC Dissolution

The structure of a GAEC is flexible. An association may expand through the inclusion of new associates who, as was the case in the original formation, must bring capital and/or labor, and must be approved unanimously. A GAEC may also be reduced if an associate leaves either forcibly (age, illness, etc.) or willingly. The departing member is entitled to take back what he contributed to the association plus whatever results from the profit of a GAEC. He/she may also sell shares to a person who takes his/her place in the existing GAEC. Only the share of capital can be transferred to another party. Shares in

industry are nominal, cannot be transferred, and cease to be rewarded at the departure of the associate. It is also possible for the GAEC to buy off the shares of a departing member in order either to sell them or to cancel them. In cases of a GAEC associate's death, the general rules of inheritance apply to the transfer of property.

The Civil Code drafted in 1804 institutes a partible inheritance system which presumes equal sharing of the deceased's property among heirs. In order to prevent excessive land fragmentation, a 1938 legal amendment was passed and established a preferential assignment clause through which one heir is chosen to retain control over farm management and property. Spouses or direct heirs can be entitled to such prerogatives. When conflicts arise among several heirs, it is up to the court to decide which one is better suited (Laroque 1983: 566-567). Subsequently it is the responsibility of the allottee to pay off every heir left out through monetary compensation. Inheritance rules greatly influence the continuity of GAEC associations. As will be analyzed in Chapter VII, the future of father-son GAECs, today the dominant type of grouping, and their success or failure over several generations are greatly linked to the ways in which the inheritance system is played out.

GAEC groupings can be dissolved for a variety of reasons ranging from personal disagreements between members to forced dissolution by judiciary authorities. The liquidation process that follows involves the repossession of the original capital by previous owners as well as the share in profits or debts. Agreements are often reached amicably and if not are taken up to the court of law.

This section has examined the most distinctive features of the legal framework which defines GAEC associations. By defining the legal constraints imposed on the organization of those productive units and by comparing them to fieldwork data, I will be able to assess the leeway allowed within this legal structure as well as the amount of manipulation that takes place on the ground. Before doing so, however, it seems important to estimate the importance of the GAEC sector on a national as well as on the regional level.

National Trends

By 1987 France counted more than 35,000 GAEC associations in its rural territory. Although these

numbers seem to indicate a success story, considering the multiplication of the number of GAECs 32 times between 1966 and 1982 (Ministere de l'Agriculture), one has to consider as well the ultimate values inspiring its organization.

Agricultural production in a framework of group farming represents two percent of the total number of agricultural productive units in France (Minister of Agriculture 1986: 35). Furthermore, although the total number of existing GAECs is impressive, the rate of yearly increase of newly created associations went down from 35 percent between 1975 and 1978 to 14 percent since 1979 and has been steady ever since, while the number of GAEC dissolutions has been multiplied by about 18 since 1974, the year of the first dissolution of a GAEC. The analysis of the yearly increase since 1979 reveals a correlation between the size of landholdings and the creation of new GAECs: e.g. eight percent of all new GAECs involve productive units of five hectares, 11 percent of units between 20 and 50 hectares, 16 percent between 100 and 200 hectares and 21 percent greater than 200 hectares (Minister of Agriculture 1986).

The initial enthusiasm in forming GAEC associations reflects the fact that the first wave of farmers who

started the GAECs were those farmers who had been ideologically committed to the idea of group farming, had contributed to protest movements against the state, and had practically been involved in informal communal farming in their community.

Inquiries on the social composition of a GAEC distinguish between 1) father/son GAECs 2) sibling GAECs and 3) other. Composition is also broken down into 1) two associates 2) more than two. In 1986, two member father-son associations represented 95 percent, more than two members including father and son four percent, siblings four percent, others two percent. The number of GAECs including only two members represent 96 percent of the total, three members three percent, four members less than one percent, more than four less than one percent. Overall in the 1980s nine out of ten GAEC associations were kin-embedded. It is however worth noting that the trajectory of GAEC associations since their legalization offers a more varied image. In 1966, for example, only 12 percent of the GAECs were formed between father and son, 16 percent between siblings and 40 percent between non-kin farmers. By 1973 the number of father/son associations had reached 15 percent while non-kin-embedded groupings were down to 31.8 percent. By 1986 only two

percent were non-kin embedded while over 75 percent represented intra-familial associations.

The average national size of a GAEC (82 hectares) is significantly larger than the national average farm size of 25 hectares. But within all GAECs, father-son associations make up farms of the smallest acreage size: 77 hectares. This trend reflects the process of land contraction that takes place in father-son associations in which the son does not necessarily contribute land to the GAEC.

National global statistics do not reflect the regional diversity characterizing the GAEC movement. To explain such diversity would require a study of the local historical, economic and technical developments (a task extending well beyond the limits of the present work). But by looking at the repartition of GAECs in France one is tempted to venture a preliminary explanation of their role in recent agricultural history.

The regions with the highest rate of GAECs are, in that order, the Loire Valley, Brittany, Midi-Pyrenees, Charente-Poitou and Rhones-Alpes (Ministere de l'Agriculture 1986). Most are in milk and dairy products producing areas. One important feature of dairy farming is that it is an all-year-round activity which

necessitates a high degree of permanency on the labor site. Working in a GAEC setting makes for a more regular life, allowing leisure time that would not otherwise be accessible.

Another explanation has to do with historical particularity. Brittany for example has always favored local solutions to problems. Besides the fact that the most violent and sustained protests against the economic policies of the state originated there, a strong kin-embedded agricultural tradition makes the GAEC association a valuable experiment.

Isere, one of the eight departments forming the Rhones Alpes region (number five on the list) was selected as the fieldwork site both because of its representativeness of the national trend and also its particularities.

Departmental Trend--Isere

The rate of expansion of GAEC formation in the department of Isere is greater than the national average while the rate of dissolution is slightly lower. The rate of increase of GAEC's between 1976-85 was 28 percent in

Iserre and 12 percent in France (Ministry of Agriculture 1988). The composition of the GAECs in Iserre follows the national trend. Between 1966 and 1971 the constitution of non-kin groupings was greater than kin associations. From 1975 on there was a clear reversal towards more and more kin-embedded GAECs. Also from 1966 to 1978, associations between father and at least two sons or between brothers were greater than strict association between father and son. It is the latter association however that, since then, has become the most popular form of GAEC association (Rochas table).

In Iserre, as was the case in France in general, early groupings under GAEC law reflected the association of farmers that had long been involved, especially since World War II, in some kind of informal communal farming founded on social solidarity. For them joining a GAEC was the legalization of an already existing pattern of labor organization. By the early 1970s such informal groupings all had joined the GAEC movement. The post-late 1970's tremendous success of limited partnerships between father and son indicates a focus on labor relationships on a family farm. The growing success of such GAECs reflects the adaptive values of the partnership strategy to the pressure imposed on agriculture by an ever more complex

economic system. How adaptive such a strategy is will be detailed in chapters VI and VII, where we will consider, as well, such internal aspects as relations of generation and gender.

Significance of the GAEC Movement

For a number of reasons the GAEC experiment represents an anomaly in the general development of farming in the western world. No state has ever provided the legal foundation of joint farming the way France did, and there has never been a popular movement supporting farm grouping of GAEC type.

Three of its characteristics are especially significant in making the GAEC movement original and unusual, namely joint farming, no employment external to the GAEC, and the degree of state control.

Joint farming

Although GAECs do not have the legal status of corporatives, they are societes civiles (civil

societies)--they achieve in fact an extremely sophisticated form of cooperation in the productive process. Associations of industrial workers who carry out activities, own and manage the workplace collectively, and share the financial burden on profits cooperatively, are clearly defined as "cooperative of production" in the 1978 comprehensive law on cooperation (Vienney 1980: 212-228). In agriculture, however, this is not the case.

Cooperation in agriculture means cooperation in order to perform a specific and limited task in the agricultural process--typically not linked to production itself. For instance, in France, the most common types are cooperation in the domain of credit, marketing or supply. The only defined cooperative involving an aspect of production is the GP (Groupement of Producteurs) grouping of producers whose objective is to improve, organize and control the production, and organize the marketing of a given product in a given region. in contrast to all other types of cooperatives, GPs are more directly involved in some aspects of production. But they do not alter the fundamental structure of the basic agricultural unit, i.e. the farmer's household, or the basic organization of work. In addition, GPs do not impose limitations on the productive process itself.

Schiller (1969) made a distinction between cooperative society for the promotion of production and the agricultural productive cooperative. In the former individual farms are maintained while in the latter they disappear and become amalgamated into a larger farm unit. In the former a combination of collective and individual working process is possible, but not in the latter. In France the GPs exemplify the former and the GAECs the latter.

The type of agricultural organization like the GAECs in which member farmers cease to be independent and in which collegiality takes over is an uncommon occurrence in the Western world. Among Western European nations, France exhibits the most advanced form of collective farming and has been a pioneer in the integration of those collective farms into the wider agricultural context. Few instances of collective agricultural production have been reported in the western European countries and none have reached the level of institutionalization and success of the GAEC. Schiller (1969: 162-74) described a few isolated short-lived cases in Germany, and one more significant example linked to the introduction of rice in the Po valley in Italy. Joint farming was developed there as a result of land redistribution and in order to help

new settlers adapt to farm management. Frictions and controversies however led to a rapid dissolution of those farms. Neville Rolfe (1984: 156) describes how in Italy the Alleanza Nazionale dei Contadini (National peasant alliance) representing the interests of small holders advocated without success a GAEC type of production. What those few examples show is that attempts from above (state) and from below (Alleanza) have either failed or not been attempted outside of France. In France, it was the convergence of the two at a particular historical juncture that transformed both and concretized the institutionalization of the GAEC movement.

State control

Another striking feature of the GAEC law is the degree to which the state controls those groupings. It intervenes in every aspect of a GAECs formation, functioning and dissolution. It limits the minimal as well as maximal number of participants, the minimal and maximal size of land, the hiring of seasonal and/or permanent workers. The state has the capacity to deny, suspend or revoke an association. It has even created an entire

bureaucracy in charge of overseeing all GAEC operations.

The amount of control exercised by the state on GAEC associations strikingly contrasts with the amount exercised on any other form of agricultural cooperative. State control over other cooperatives is limited to setting up the minimal number of associates needed to start a cooperative, and to the establishment of a taxation system (U.G.E.A. 1985 A). The legal taxation placed upon communal agriculture reflects the ambivalence of the French government toward collective farming. While it is true that by 1962, the state was ready to improve French agrarian structures, because of the political clout of the French medium peasantry it was reluctant to promote the development of large agribusinesses that could create class antagonism. Yet the state also wanted to prevent the rise of overly strong agricultural collectives more fitted for the Eastern bloc than for capitalist society.

The interesting point however is not so much the explicit language of the law but how such legalization is translated in concrete terms and how people--individual farmers--are able to manipulate state dictates. It is the contention of this thesis that state rigidity was particularly deeply felt, and became rapidly unbearable, in the setting of non-kin interhousehold collectivization

where relationships between GAEC participants had to be more formal and formalized mainly because of the separation of the productive and the domestic spheres of activities. In a kin-embedded GAEC, by contrast, this separation does not exist or barely exists, allowing the use of household resources for the productive sphere and the use of productive resources for the household sphere. This we believe has been a significant factor explaining the evolution of GAECs from a non-kin to kin association. The issue of productive/domestic spheres will be developed in chapter X from ethnographic data.

External employment

The 1962 law expressly denies GAEC associates the right to earn any additional source of income from outside employment. To my knowledge, this particular clause has never been violated. The inability to rely on outside employment and income goes against the typical evolution of western agriculture where small or medium-sized farmers combine part-time farming and part-time non-farming activities. Already in the early 1970's, Franklin (1971) was arguing that the main trend for the peasantry was to

abandon their farms. The peasantry was being replaced by the factory worker as the most representative social formation in European societies. Franklin (1971: 18), also claimed that

only a small percentage of family farms have been successful in matching industrial return to labor, despite the capital-man ratios in family living, despite the peasant working longer time, despite considerable state aid and general price support.

More recent scholarship reinforces this point further by describing migrations of farmers to urban centers as a powerful means of regulation of population and resources (Segalen 1984; Rogers 1991). Traditional family holdings, because of the small size, structural deficiencies, and their lack of equipment, are no longer viable economic units and compose the marginal farming sector. Part-time farming, although historically significant, today represents the most important pattern of labor organization in rural Western Europe. Franklin distinguishes between "part-time farmers," i.e., peasants

who have a second business, and "worker-peasants", i.e., peasants who work in factories. The latter supercedes the former today. The working peasantry is historically linked to the rise of industrialism since World War II that led to the industrialization of the countryside in an attempt to use the labor resources of a stagnating agricultural sector (Franklin 1971: 24-26). Similarly Holmes (1981), basing his study on a Northern Italian community, describes a situation where the peasant worker alternative has been an enduring form of labor organization linked to the creation of an industrial base in the region.

The region of Meilleux significantly fulfills all the requirements for the occurrence of peasant workers. Meilleux is within commuting distance (one hour's time) from Lyon (second largest French city) to the north and Grenoble to the east. The southern belt of Lyon is heavily industrialized with oil refineries, chemical plants such as St. Gobain, Rhone-Poulenc, metallurgy plants, automobile construction, food processing industries, and is a major source of demand for unskilled labor. Grenoble, the gate to a very dynamic ski resort region, provides employment, mostly seasonal, in the winter which coincides with the slowing down of

agricultural activities. Closer to Meilleux still, small-scale industries such as ski shoes, leather, garments, canneries, industrial bakeries, etc. are prolific. And yet, it is in such an economic environment that seems so conducive to the development of part-time farming/working that one finds a very dynamic sector of collective farming which excludes its followers from the monetary benefits and the income security of non-agricultural employment.

Why then is the GAEC sector so significant? One answer is that, because of the possible economic alternatives available to residents of the region, the GAEC organization must be somehow viable economically. But considering that, according to the EEC program "Agriculture 1980", the minimum threshold of viability for a farm unit was 80 to 120 hectares for arable land and 40 to 50 cows for dairy farms, and considering that the average size of a GAEC in the department of Isere is 32 hectares in arable land and 25 cows for dairy farms, one can safely conclude that the key to GAEC's popularity does not exclusively reside in its economic performance. It is the contention of the present thesis that the popularity of group farming is due to a combination of pragmatic as well as ideological considerations. By turning to a GAEC

association, individual farmers make a statement about the particular type of organization that they see fits their social needs as well. They clearly do not want to join the industrial world but want to remain farmers.

This chapter has examined the legalization process of GAEC associations. Placing such a law against the background of the 1962 agrarian reform framework, it has highlighted the particularities that make GAEC an original solution to farmers' problems. We concluded that its success has to be analyzed in terms of a pragmatic reason as well as ideological one. The following chapter will examine the ideological reasons proposed by farmers to explain their commitment to the GAEC system. It is based on their views, expressed in their own words and their life histories.

CHAPTER V
THE FARMERS' VIEWS

In this chapter I propose to explore the ideological motivations that led GAEC farmers to opt for group farming. It is my contention that ideological justifications play a crucial role in their commitment to joint farming, even though the basis and expression of GAEC ideology may vary between farmers and between generations as well. The preference for group farming over lonely agricultural ventures is justified by the farmers both in terms of economic efficiency and social superiority. And indeed the way in which GAEC farmers envision what the rural community and the agricultural unit of production ought to be affect the economic and social organization of farm and community and help us understand their level of political dynamism and commitment. Historically, GAEC farming was institutionalized to fulfill the hopes and demands put

forward by the most radical segment of the agrarian militants after World War II. In many respects GAEC farmers still constitute the most dynamic group in agricultural France today.

Asked about their motivation to launch or join a joint farming association, GAEC members of Meilleux expressed their strong philosophical affinity with "the spirit of the GAEC." According to many it is this spirit that guides everyday choices, makes them proud of being farmers and sets them apart from the rest of the agricultural population. The spirit of the GAEC is a complex set of values which emphasizes both farmers' self-improvement and farming community development. Improvement is partly economic and related to productive performances. It is also social and human, and will lead to the creation of a "new society" and a "new man" drastically apart from the old rural order. Kin-GAEC members emphasize the former, communal GAEC participants the latter.

The analysis of GAEC ideology must address the original motivation of the social movement as well as the transformation of ideology that parallels the social transformation of GAECs from communal to kin-embedded forms. Communal GAEC participants expressed communal

themes reminiscent of nineteenth century utopian philosophers while kin-GAEC members articulate individualist theories. Ideology, in Wolf's words (1966: 96), "consists of acts and ideas, of ceremonial beliefs ... and has moral significance." Historically, the GAEC ideology fulfills three functions. First, it provides young farmers with ways of interpreting the world and their experience in the post-war era. Second, it set the basis for political action. Third, it justifies the recent transformation from communality to individualism.

Ideology as a way of perceiving and interpreting the world, and of explaining cultural transformation in terms of transformation of "world views" is in the anthropological tradition (Redfield 1955). In the aftermath of World War II, GAEC advocates-to-be began to question their conditions as young farmers. They devised a model of cultural transformation by substituting values of a utopian-bent, such as communality, "new man," society and fraternity, for such traditional values as seniority, generational authority and submission. The insertion of those values, and the building up of a model of a "new society" grounded in utopian concepts, was made possible by the particular context resulting from the war. First, the war experience had led rural young men to expand their

horizons and in many ways to become aware of the larger world and its nastiness. Second, the post-war era, characterized by a vacuum in traditional channels of political, social and ideological control was conducive to the development of grass roots, decentralized ideology. This particular historical juncture, at least partly, explains the originality of the GAEC movement in the larger social and ideological development of France.

Post-war rural militancy was to become the basis for social "acts." Once articulated, and after being channeled into existing political structures, those views became the most radical formulations of farmers' grievances. But as will be detailed in later sections on the history of the JAC, the most important rural youth movement, such ideology never challenged the primacy of capitalism and the state, although JAC/GAEC militants were aware of the damage that capitalist expansion could inflict on the social structure of the countryside. From the end of the war to the early days of active militancy, young farmers had acquired a strong identity. They came to the 1960's protest movement as a powerful group with clear objectives, and a sentiment of righteousness derived from a sense of solidarity and a conviction that the world they envisioned was moral. They genuinely believed that

they could influence the state, recruiting it to their side against the adverse effects of an unregulated capitalism.

And they did. The GAEC law was drawn up with the JAC activists in mind. But the reality shows that the type of social order they hoped to achieve never became concretized. In part this was because of the rigidity of the GAEC law itself. Most important, however, was the contradiction of communal values and capitalist development, a contradiction that has been well expressed by cooperation theoretician Charles Gide.

Marx, in the German ideology (1978), claimed that ideological processes have to be reconstructed from the reality of production and of historically determined social relationships. The contemporary ideological justification--self-enhancement, individualism and equality--presented by the young generation of kin-embedded GAEC farmers might very well be explained in those terms. Insisting on communality after communality failed is senseless. Stressing individualism in the framework of an increasingly competitive market economy is ideologically consistent with the conditions of capitalist-oriented production. As will be detailed later in this chapter, the shift from communalist to

individualist principles was made possible by the JAC/GAEC ideology itself. By claiming affiliation to the spirit of the GAEC, the young generation reaffirms its commitment to farming, but most importantly refutes the traditional pattern of authority on the farm. By invoking the spirit of the GAEC as the basis for such refutation, young farmers make it acceptable to their fathers' generation who had proudly lived in the age of GAEC ideology formation and GAEC militancy.

Historically, the GAEC ideology is rooted in a confessional rural movement, Jeunesse Agricole Catholique (JAC) or Catholic Peasant Youth which, after its transformation into a non-confessional grouping, became the vector for agrarian mobilization and militancy. In fact the leadership of CNJA, the most radical segment of agricultural associations which pushed the state for structural reforms, was drawn from the JAC ranks (Klatzmann 1978).

This chapter will first present, through two cases, each representative of one form of association, the farmers' description of their motivation in a communal GAEC and in a kin-GAEC. It will then trace the forerunners of the GAEC ideology. It will finally establish geneological ties between those forerunners and

the contemporary characteristics of "the spirit of the GAEC," trying to account for the diverging views that are given today.

Farmers' Motivations

GAEC du Dolon

The GAEC du Dolon which was created in 1969 regrouped four neighboring friends in the hamlet of Moissieu. By 1982 three of the original founders, as well as those who had joined the already formed GAEC between 1969 and 1982, had reverted to single household farming. Paul, one of the four founding partners, is the only farmer who has remained in GAEC association at all times. 1982 marked the end of GAEC du Dolon as a communal GAEC and its beginning as a father (Paul) and son (Andre) formation.

In 1969 the original GAEC formation included Paul, Max, Jean and Pierre, all of different unrelated farm families. For all of them the GAEC framework was a natural extension of a past experience of "mutual aid" that their grandparents, their parents and they themselves

had traditionally practiced. Max and Pierre's adjacent plots of arable land were separated from Paul and Jean's adjacent plots by a valley spring, the Dolon. By 1969 they all had inherited their respective portions of the new collective farm from their parents.

Mutual aid between those four households involved labor cooperation during tilling and harvesting time. It also implied the sharing of tools and machinery that had been acquired individually. For example, Paul's tractor and Max's wheat harvester were passed around among the four farmers. Jean who, because of less affluence, could not reciprocate, was nevertheless allowed to use his neighbor's equipment. Mutual aid also meant exchange of services between neighbors on those rare occasions when one of the four had to be away from home, or when one farmer was ill.

Max, who was about eight years older than the three others, was the only one who had experienced World War II first hand. Drafted at the age of 21, captured a year later, he was sent to Germany to work in an armament plant for the rest of the war. He is to this day very much affected by the experience, and his voice is still shakes when he talks about it. He repeatedly described the alienation that he felt, being a prisoner of war in a

foreign land as well as being a factory worker for the first time in his life. Before that his horizon had been confined to the family farm and the surroundings of Meilleux. After being released in 1944 he returned to Moissieu with the great determination of staying there and being a farmer again. Many young men did the same, and claimed that, "The war was finally over and we were sure that there wouldn't be another one. Back then, it really looked like nothing could prevent us from building a better world. And my world was right here, at home."

Paul, Jean and Pierre were too young to become actively trapped in the war, although they were very conscious of its occurrence. Paul explained, "We did not go hungry during the war, mostly because our mothers and grandmothers managed to preserve food and hide it from German requisitions. But what I remember most was those armies of starving people descending from Lyon, Grenoble or Vienne roaming the countryside on weekends ready to pay gold for a dozen eggs, a piece of ham or two pounds of potatoes. I remember also how young people that we knew began to drop out of sight overnight. We later found out that some had been enrolled, others had been captured and sent to Germany, to camps or to their death, and still others joined the resistance movement." The war had made

them realize that the rural world was much more capable of holding up in times of crisis and that this was the place they all chose to stay. Most important was the high level of optimism triggered by the return to peace, the young farmers' newly found conviction and their belief that a better society was possible.

The post-war years, however, were no easy time. Economically production was slow to start especially due to the difficulty of finding seeds, spare parts, gasoline, fertilizers and insecticides. Paul, Max, Jean and Pierre lived on their respective family farms and worked the land with their parents. Jean recalled how he felt increasingly dissatisfied with this arrangement,

What I found most unbearable was the fact that I had no way of deciding anything for myself. When I needed money, I had to ask for it. If I wanted to go out I had to say with whom and where. My father became especially suspicious of the local chapter of the youth Christian movement I joined in 1946. He thought that this was just a bunch of nonsense while for all of us young guys, it was certainly the most important thing in our lives.

True, the importance of the Jeunesse Agricole Chretienne, (JAC), or Christian Youth Group, was tremendous in the region of Meilleux after the war. Our four partners-to-be did participate in JAC activities, as indeed did many of their fellow young men and women. The consequences of this grass roots movement were far-reaching. First it cemented the community of the young in a countryside which had traditionally remained much more atomized. Second, it provided young people with new opportunities, experiences and contributed to the enlargement of their horizons. Third, it influenced in a dramatic way the perception that young farmers had of themselves.

In Moissieu, JAC leadership devoted a great deal of energy to organizing leisure activities and social meetings. It was in that context that JAC members from Moissieu undertook their first day trip to a ski resort and their first weekend on the French Riviera. Meetings of the association were held weekly, the main purpose being to allow for a time of reflexion best translated as introspection. Paul argued,

It was there that we came to realize that we were all in the same boat, that although we had the feeling that things were changing, we were all dissatisfied with our status and positions in the traditional farming structure. We also knew that we aspired to a future brighter than that of our parents from a material as well as a social point of view. After all, contrary to what they say, having fun was not so useless!

The JAC calendar included meetings with experts on agricultural matters, managerial possibilities and also guests that could relate to their judicial, fiscal and social status in the context of traditional farming. More importantly however, JAC was also a forum where rural youth, atomized in the process of labor, could come together to share a common identity and common concerns. Max, Paul, Jean and Pierre reminisce with great nostalgia, and the notion of "morality" appears repeatedly in their discourse. Those were "moral times" because the relationships established through the JAC movement were based on mutual respect. They were moral because of the deference involved in gender relationships. They were moral because every JAC member was concerned with the

other, the larger community. Most of all, it was moral to remain farmers.

It is in that context that some came to question the validity of the authoritative structure in agricultural endeavor. As Paul put it, "we had the strong feeling that all this would lead us to become the 'new man' generation." It is however interesting to note that despite the general feeling of dissatisfaction with the existing order and the high level of expectation in every participant, few took the step of translating those concerns into political terms and action. In fact only Max, Paul and Pierre ended up joining the young farmer agricultural union (CNCA) in 1947. Pierre explained, "after a while it was not enough just to talk about it. This is when I decided to do something about it."

A couple of years after he returned from the war, Max, who was living with his widowed father and one brother, married. The newlywed couple settled in the farmhouse and soon after the brother left for the city of Vienne where he had found a job. In 1950 Max's father passed away leaving the farm to Max and Berthe. In the late 1950s, Max was diagnosed with a degenerative disease of the eyes that gradually began impairing his vision. Although he was worried about the future--by then he had

three young children--he nevertheless refused a clerk's position at the local branch of the Cooperative Dauphinoise. "Somehow," he told me, "I could not get myself to become a 9 to 5 worker." By then, Max and Berthe were receiving tremendous help on the farm from Paul, Jean and Pierre. It was Max who in 1963 proposed to Paul to become associated in a GAEC. It was Paul who proposed to Jean and Pierre to join in. Paul remembers, "of course we had known all along that Max was seriously impaired. But we had been helping him so much that to us it did not really matter. We were de facto already GAEC associates." And so the deal was made. Paul, Jean and Pierre felt that Max's experience, commitment and dynamism could offset his diminishing physical abilities. They all recognized that in order to legalize the GAEC association they had to hide the extent of Max's physical impairment that would not have made him eligible because of the law's equality in work requirement.

The first year was spent reorganizing the four family farms into a larger, more efficiently run structure (see following chapter). They all raised cows and heifers and decided to regroup the cows at Paul's and the heifers at Pierre's. Pierre was the only one who grew tobacco, but it soon appeared that this was neither profitable nor

time efficient in the GAEC. Pierre's household at the time was composed of his wife, Simone, and his grandfather who had moved in with them when Pierre's father died. Theoretically retired, the grandfather still contributed a great deal of labor to Pierre's agricultural enterprise. Although he was not overtly opposed to GAEC association, he could never understand the reasons behind the exchange of cows and heifers. Pierre's barn was filled with heifers, but the old man was convinced that this was foul play. Pierre himself gradually began to resent the abandonment of his tobacco crops. For reasons that were never explicit, he felt a strong attachment to this particular activity. According to Max, Pierre never showed real commitment to the GAEC. "He was always dragging his feet, annoyed by any prospect of change." Pierre's short-lived GAEC experience illustrates a critical problem of such association, that is the necessity of common objectives. For the next four years GAEC du Dolon survived as a three-member association. Then it was Jean's turn to withdraw.

"We had seen it coming," Paul remembered, "things were getting increasingly bad at home. The couple was in a real impasse." The problem came from Irene, his wife. When I interviewed her in 1988, she did recognize that

beyond any doubt the GAEC had brought them a great deal of material gains and financial security. At the time of the original association, Jean was the least well off of the lot. The size of his land was about half (i.e. 12 hectares) that of the others and he worked it with very little, worn and outdated machinery. He raised a couple of cows. Before the GAEC grouping, Jean, Irene and their son Mathieu ran the farm as a traditional family entity. Irene and Mathieu were in charge of cattle, Pierre and Mathieu of the farming. Irene grew a large kitchen garden and from July to September processed fruit and vegetables in glass jars for the winter. They never went on a vacation and rarely visited friends or relatives. After Jean joined the GAEC, all this changed and she became increasingly alienated and frustrated. She recalls, "the GAEC did not mean less work--on the contrary. What it meant was that Jean was away from home most of the time. Before I could call him from the kitchen window when I needed help." But ultimately she resented two unavoidable consequences of GAEC association.

The first one was that in the reshuffling of cattle she lost her heifers. As a result she was left with the kitchen garden and processing activities alone which, she argued, are the least rewarding activities because they

are not perceived as "noble" agricultural tasks. By 1973 Jean and Irene bought a large capacity deep freeze that cut down her labor applied to processing tremendously. The second one was that the GAEC had made her give up her weekly outing to the farmers' market of Meilleux. Ever since they had been married, Jean had been driving Irene there in the old tractor around 9 o'clock in the morning every Wednesday. He would come back at noon to pick her up. They might even sometimes have a drink with friends at one of the numerous cafes. Those trips were Irene's only contact with the outside world. It was then that she could do some shopping. More importantly it was then that she would meet people and learn about the latest news and gossip. She recalls, "I did not have many friends like people do today. I do not drive and we did not get the phone until 1985, and now Jean was gone working with the boys." Mathieu meanwhile had also lost out when his father joined the GAEC. Due to the lack of sufficient land, he was not able to become a GAEC partner. He eventually left, went to school to learn mechanics and joined the farm again only after his father's withdrawal from the GAEC.

For Jean, however, leaving the GAEC was a tragedy. He explained, "before the GAEC, I had reached such a point

of stagnation that I even considered selling out and going to work at the ski shoe factory. But I hated the idea. In the mid-1960's, it was clear that we were in an impasse. I had been able to hold up mainly because Paul was lending me some of his machinery, and had helped me out financially on several occasions. Paul and I had always had a very nice relationship, and I would often try to reciprocate by helping him out as much as I could. So when he and Max came to me with the idea of joint farming, I was elated." Paul and Max recall how Jean was by far the most enthusiastic of them all.

True, he did invest much time and energy in their association. And also true he was no longer able to drive his wife to the market of Meilleux every Wednesday morning. "How could I tell the guys that I had to be off on Wednesdays? What one can do on a family farm is not always what can be done in a professional association," Jean argued. But, by 1982 Max's health had seriously deteriorated and he retired, selling part of his share to Paul's son Andre.

To all four GAEC members du Dolon was a valuable and cherished experience. Looking back however they all agree that communality was not as easy to achieve as they thought it would have been. But they all argue that the

development of the rural community ought to take place through the enhancement of communal patterns. Agriculture is not just a productive activity, it is still a way of life.

Since the dissolution of the communal GAEC, Paul has been associated with his son Andre. Since then too Paul and his wife Marie have been devoted to local causes of the village. They are today the leaders of a project aimed at developing a nautical site that could attract tourists and urban weekenders. They particularly want to prevent the installation of an outside tourist industry and to promote local farmers' interests. Their next project is to write a local history book, to prepare exhibits on past local customs, and in other ways enhance the attraction of the region for tourists.

For Paul, a father and son association "misses the real purpose of the GAEC." Although he enjoys working with his son and hopes that one day his younger son Regis, now 12, will take over his part of the association, he still argues that the true greatness of joint farming resides in its potential to develop community through communal labor.

GAEC la Deroy

GAEC la Deroy was created in 1978 between Lucien and his son Luc. The motivations to create a joint farming unit were much more practical. Luc had gone to an agricultural school and when he returned from mandatory military service he began working on the family farm. To him, GAEC association was particularly valuable in the redefinition of the notions of authority. He did not want to remain on the farm unless he obtained the legal status of co-operator. Such status, he argued, would provide clarity and a guarantee that his emotional investment would be rewarded. Farming was something he wanted to do and he claimed that family farming was superior to business farming. But agriculture had to be viable enough to provide for a decent standard of living. As such, he saw himself as a modern entrepreneur and agriculture as a way to achieve his life's goals. Luc never belonged to any political or social organization but he believed that the greatest contribution of his father's generation had been the redefinition of generational relationships and the idea that farming could become modern activity.

Lucien and his wife met in an inter-village JAC meeting. For Lucien, constituting a GAEC with his son was somehow an insurance that the farm will stay in the family. Although he found the idea of communal GAECs very attractive, he himself could not think of anyone with whom he could have associated. He said, "I would have been too worried about the possibility that something would go wrong." To him, farming still ought to be a family affair. He condoned the notion of generational equality. "I would never want my son to work on the farm with no official status, as was the case when I was growing up," he argued. For Luc and Lucien a GAEC association made perfect sense.

It is worth noting that the contemporary GAEC ideology offers two contrasting outcomes. Communal GAEC associates emphasize individual and societal improvement while kin GAEC partners appear more pragmatically individualistic. And yet, all claim their affiliation to the same grass roots rural movement and its leaders. It is my belief that such a dichotomy in the actualization of "the spirit of the GAEC" today can best be understood through the analysis of GAEC ideological precursors. This will be my next task.

Ideological Roots

JAC (Catholic Youth Movement)

As an independent movement the JAC was born in 1929, but in reality was an off-shoot of the French Youth Catholic Association, (Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Francaise, ACJF), or , a church-sponsored organization launched in the 1890s to rechristianize the French population. Before World War II, the JAC was essentially a Catholic organization whose main goal was to "bring joy back to the village" (JACF 1937). The JAC's main ideological creed rested on sanctification of agricultural labor and the development of a set of religious-agricultural rituals aimed at celebrating the cycle of nature and agricultural work. Gradually, the technological aspect of production became, over the years, an integral part of the youth movement symbolism. The JAC generation hoped to promote a vision of the rural experience as a promising and fulfilling one based on the development of technocratic capacity and human resources locally available. By raising issues of quality of life,

the JAC generation collided with their seniors who had not rebelled against what had been handed down to them by their fathers (Duby 1976: 342-346).

In the aftermath of World War II, the youth movement grew in membership, radicalized its views, and became overtly involved in local and national politics. More importantly its confessional dimension declined to the benefit of a more laicized philosophy and social activities. For instance, the number of religious celebrations decreased while new goals and purposes were introduced. The JAC movement became a center of learning where training sessions were organized to enhance the youths' agricultural knowledge. Likewise JAC leadership implemented programs in which young farmers and aspiring farmers could improve their ability to analyze, criticize, and articulate their views and express themselves. This innovation in JAC goals reflected the awareness that peasants, as opposed to urban dwellers, were awkward in dealing with the outside world, and that self-awareness and confidence were keys to a better life. JAC meetings were organized at the village level, the smallest unit of rural community life, but also among villages, on a regional level, giving those young farmers an occasion to widen their horizon beyond what previous generations had

been limited to (JAC papers). It is evident, talking to former JAC members, that this totalizing experience, which was not confined to the technical aspect of rural life but encompassed its human and social dimension had an enormous impact on people's outlook on the world. It was the beginning of what Michel Debatisse (1963) later called "La Revolution Silencieuse," or silent revolution.

At the core of this new rural philosophy were the notions that 1) individuals are capable of improving as human beings through their own actions, and 2) rural communities can be made better places in which to live. Those two dimensions were united in a dialectical relationship: the fate of the social environment being directly dependent on individual actions, and in turn the fate of individuals being greatly enhanced by the community. In the pursuit of a viable agricultural future, both were necessarily intrinsically linked to each other. But the most important focus resides in the individualism of the philosophy. People can make a difference in their own lives, they can also make a difference as a group sharing the same plight and the same interest. Interestingly, the JAC discourse did not offer a class-oriented explanation to the French peasantry of its underprivileged position in the society, even though

it vehemently denounced the evils of capitalism (Her view and Vial 1972). The JAC movement searched for an original, unique path of rural development that could contribute to an enhancement of the status of farmers and allow them to derive pride from being peasants.

Rene Colson and Motorisation et Avenir Rural

Rene Colson, general secretary of the JAC between 1943 and 1942, best articulated the farmers' options to concretize JAC's general philosophical principles. He has been widely hailed as the father of GAEC farming (Rambaud 1973: 30) and most of his economic and social proposals appeared in his 1950 work Motorisation and Avenir Rural, or "Mechanization and Rural Future."

Born in 1913 in the department of Northern France, he began working on the family farm before World War II. Upon returning from the front, Colson was determined to leave the countryside to escape the hard work and limited rewards that he had witnessed at home. But when his father died, he felt compelled to return to the farm to help out his mother and younger siblings, and in the process sought for ways to improve agriculturalists'

lives. A non-practicing Catholic, he was aware of the already massive organizing work that the JAC had achieved all over rural France, and of the secularizing tendencies that had begun to emerge in the post-World War II era. At the 1945 national meeting, the JAC faction emphasizing the concrete needs of young farmers, leisure and better quality of life, educational and professional training, won supremacy over the more conservative faction worried about the abandonment of the movement's initial goal and Christian philosophy. It was then that Rene Colson was elected General Secretary of the association. He remained so until 1948. He died prematurely in 1951, one year after the publication of Motorisation et Avenir Rural which so much influenced the institutionalization of group farming in France.

The starting point of Colson's analysis was the belief that the agricultural sector and the peasantry of the nation played a very unique and indispensable role in the life of the society as a whole. In 1947 he claimed that agriculture ought to "feed the nation," "be a reserve of life and vitality for the country," and "sustain a way of life which promotes the development of man" (Colson 1976: 100). But Colson was concerned by the post-war state-induced push for mechanization and agricultural

modernization that could, he thought, eventually lead to the disappearance of the small- and medium-sized farmer. The problem, he argued, was less the extent of mechanization itself than the increase in the acreage of farming units that would be required to accommodate new machinery. Colson did recognize that machines could play a positive role in alleviating farming work and giving farmers more protection against production hazards, writing:

In order to succeed we need to fight not the machinery, but the spirit of capitalism that presided over its introduction, and the structures it created.

(1976: 82)

He was convinced that peasant militancy ought to target the structural problems of the rural sector. As early as 1946, Colson exhorted farmers to unite and combine their means of production and their labor as well (1976: 67). He deplored that the idea of association and joint farming was not widespread in the rural world, and expressed nostalgia for the past that had seen more of it.

For Colson the path toward farming association did not reside in the traditional cooperative farm whose legal requirement of seven members represented a major obstacle to small scale joint farming. The optimal solution, according to Colson, lay in the institutionalization of agricultural groupings along the legal lines of civil societies which would allow more flexibility in the conditions of formation. Colson set the ideal number of participants in a joint venture between two and seven. Such a small number, he argued, would be conducive to real collegiality in the decision-making process, as well as to reaching a stable equilibrium between financial support and labor participation. Once constituted, joint farming units, because of their size and performance, could find a niche in the larger already existing cooperative structure by obtaining membership as a group rather than as individual households. Colson repeatedly emphasized the necessity to pressure the state for recognition of joint farming associations at the same level as the agricultural cooperative. At the time Colson was writing, only traditional cooperative farms could benefit from state preferential treatment. The main problem with the proposal that he envisioned was the incompatibility between civil status and state favoritism, especially in

the form of Credit Agricole loans at low interest rates, and state subsidies (Colson 1950).

One decade after Rene Colson died, the state resolved this issue. Under heavy pressure from the CNJA, greatly inspired by the Catholic Youth Movement and Rene Colson's ideology, the French government institutionalized the GAEC structure--civil societies for joint farming enjoying a great deal of state protection and favoritism.

I propose that communal GAECs are direct-line descendants of the ideological turmoil of the post-World War II era. They show concerns for the rural community and for the rural future in social terms. They still see the development of individuals and of the society as interdependent. In contrast, kin-GAECs have deleted the social component, and by placing all of the emphasis on personal development they have become the epitome of capitalist ethics. This thesis however reveals that both are entitled to their ancestral claim, and that this was made possible by the lack of a class analysis on the part of Colson and the JAC followers. Although they came very close to making such an analysis, they never actually spelled it out, thus allowing future followers to leave out social considerations without experiencing any sense of abandoning their ideological charter.

CHAPTER VI

GAEC AS SITE OF PRODUCTION

The previous chapter has examined the ideological motivations behind the farmers' decision to opt for a GAEC productive arrangement. With no exception all emphasized the superiority of such an arrangement over any other type of agricultural organization. We were nevertheless able to identify two distinct sets of ideological justifications, both traceable to a common ancestral grassroots agrarian movement, and thus to explain the commonality of the "spirit of the GAEC" claim.

The following section proposes to investigate the concrete reality of the process of production itself within the GAEC framework. It is clear, from surveys and preliminary observation, that some GAECs are able to achieve economic success, and others are not. The analysis here is primarily concerned with the level of economic success and productive viability in the GAEC

movement.

The stability of a specific productive form is dependent on the ability of the unit to reproduce the physical capabilities necessary to start a new cycle of production. This reproduction, in turn, is linked to the internal characteristics of the productive structure itself, as well as to the relations of the productive system to the social formation. Among the most important characteristics of the productive system are 1) land tenure; 2) productive types; 3) agriculture income; and 4) mechanisms of surplus extraction.

In this chapter I shall demonstrate that communal GAECs achieved the state goals of structural enlargement through land concentration, and of modern entrepreneurship through improved management and more efficient labor organization. As a result, they contributed to enhance the economic status of the unit of production and of GAEC members' respective households. I will also maintain that the ability of communal GAECs to successfully reproduce as productive units and to expand productive levels is greatly influenced by their low susceptibility to surplus extraction, in turn leading to a low level of indebtedness. The ratio of indebtedness over productive outcome in communal GAECs is not disproportionate. In

contrast, I shall demonstrate that the level of economic success of kin GAECs is unstable over time. Over time--from formation to the older member's retirement--some kin GAECs (GAEC le Janin) are capable of reproducing themselves as productive units while others (e.g., GAEC Maronia) are not, depending on the concrete factors of production and most importantly on the GAEC's ability to put social compensatory mechanisms to work (Chapter VII). But kin GAECs are highly unstable forms in the process of transformation induced by generational differences between members. My argument here is that the institutionalization of kin GAECs, by generating a higher level of surplus extraction from the young generation, jeopardizes not only the GAEC, as a productive unit, but more importantly the very existence of the family farm itself in the process of generational transmission. To understand the effects of surplus extraction on the economic unit and on the household requires that we first examine the productive outcome of the farming unit, and secondly the mechanisms of surplus extraction. Agricultural incomes are estimated in terms of the difference between the two.

In this chapter, I intend to show that 1) access to land is not, in the GAEC context, a significant source of

surplus extraction; 2) patterns of crop diversification reflect the relationship of the productive units to the social formation, and are an adaptation to EEC imposed productive directionality, and 3) surplus extraction places the greatest burden on the younger generation.

Land Tenure

Rent versus ownership

One of the most basic characteristics of any agrarian system resides in the ways in which people and land are related to each other. Such bonds are physical, related to the human work applied to the land to produce, but they are most importantly social and legal in that they establish a set of rights and/or duties among individuals, among social groupings and between individuals and the state. For instance, land ownership might be a farmer's privilege, but in a capitalist framework ownership establishes a set of duties toward the state through taxation. The rental or lease of land by a farmer entails a complex set of relationships between landowners and renters, including the grant of access to

productive resources in exchange for financial compensation.

Scholarly work on rural differentiation emphasizes the importance of rent, as a mechanism of surplus extraction, in bringing about social stratification. In Wolf's words (1966: 3-4) peasants are "rural cultivators whose surpluses are transferred to a dominant group of rulers." The concept of rent however is neither fixed nor static and must be analyzed in its historical specificity (Shanin 1971, Wolf 1983). In addition, as Roseberry (1978) points out, rent as a source of surplus extraction may or may not be an efficient mode of appropriation. It is my contention that the relation of people to the land in the GAEC context is not a significant source of surplus extraction.

The GAEC law does not specify land tenure requirements. However, there are very few instances of GAECs operating on rented or leased land, partly due to the fact that GAEC law targetted medium-sized landowner farmers, and partly because of the unstable and less predictable nature of rental agreements. Banks are less willing to loan to renters, perceived as long term high risk cases, and in so doing retard or impede agricultural modernization on rented farms.

GAEC la Visette (case #1) however, is one such exception where Louis and his son Bruno cultivate a 44 hectare agricultural estate in which land, barns, and the farmhouse are leased from the local aristocrat absentee landlord who still owns a run-down castle and one quarter of the total arable land in the village. Louis took over his father's 30 hectares of leased land and the buildings lease 35 years ago. In 1981 Louis and Bruno formed the GAEC la Visette. Using a state grant to young farmers, Bruno leased another 14 hectares from the same landlord. Upon GAEC formation the lease for the total 44 hectares of arable land was renegotiated and extended from nine to twelve years. The yearly rent was fixed at 7,000 FF.

Although Bruno and Louis contend that the rent itself is very reasonable, they are nevertheless not satisfied with the leasing arrangement which they see as limiting their potential for agricultural innovation. High cost prohibits them from acquiring land, however. Concretely they grow crops that do not require sophisticated technology. Due to uncertainty in the long term future (the landlord has threatened several times to sell off all of his estate), and low resale value of agricultural machinery, they have not capitalized the farming unit as much as they would like. As a result,

Bruno and Louis must work longer hours in order to offset the farm's low level of modernity and grow crops that do not require sophisticated technology..

Specifically, they grow wheat and corn, most of it for national markets, vegetables for the local market and keep 10 dairy cows for the local milk transformation plant. They work the fields with two obsolete tractors and argue that they could cut down planting and harvest time in half were they able to use more modern equipment. Milking, done twice a day with a mechanical milker, requires about two-and-a-half hours work each time; it could be completed in about one hour with less supervision using an electrical milker. Acquiring energy-and time-saving devices would require Louis and Bruno to take out a loan and contract a debt. It is worth noting that GAEC la Visette is the only one in my fieldwork sample that is not indebted to the bank and/or private individuals.

Bruno and Louis have, in recent years, seen their income drop as a result of the lower productivity level resulting from serious drought conditions in the southeast of France. Traditionally around Meilleux orchards and land cultivated in vegetables benefit from a good irrigation system. Such is not the case however in cereal

and grain areas. The future of wheat and maize growers depends on the extension of irrigation systems to the fields. Bruno and Louis' landlord is not willing to invest in making such an improvement, and they are not capable of assuming the cost. So, in 1987, they started a farmers' association to try to get the state, the region and the local community involved in the construction of an irrigation system for the entire farming community. To this day they have not been successful.

Overall, it appears that GAEC associations on rented land have not significantly improved their agricultural performance, although GAEC participants stress the superiority of personal relationships in a GAEC context as opposed to the traditional family farming organization. But in fact, the large majority of GAECs involve farmer-owned agricultural units, although not infrequently some rented land is added to the estate. In the context of rental agricultural estates, the limitations imposed on farmers are not linked to the rent itself, but to the limitations of the productive potential due to the lack of permanency of the tenure.

Concentration versus constriction

Lawmakers had hoped that the institution of the GAEC association would contribute to the structural transformation of rural France, i.e., the concentration of individual farms into a larger productive units better adapted to modern technology and more efficient cultivation. To weed out the smallest and the underprivileged farming sector, a minimal acreage requirement of 16 hectares per associate was introduced. The law, however, does not specify that each associate must bring 16 hectares to the GAEC. The only thing it says is that the total GAEC acreage, divided by the number of associates, should be equal or superior to 16 ha.

The analysis of land movement and transaction reveals that the GAEC system has led to two distinct structural outcomes depending on the kin/non-kin nature of each GAEC. GAECs constituted among neighbors did create a larger structure because of the association taking place between already settled farmers, and led to communal GAEC farms. Such a type of GAEC was widespread in the early years of the GAEC movement, and concretized the legally

stated structural goals. In contrast, kin GAECs, formed most typically between fathers and sons, generate the contraction of the productive units. Kin GAECs are associations in which most frequently the older associate brings most or all of the land, assuming that he is able to meet the minimal acreage requirement for two partners. When the younger partner lives in his father's household, the agricultural economic unit overlaps the agricultural household. But when the son settles his own household, usually upon marriage, the overlapping of one agricultural unit with two distinct households leads to the contraction of agricultural resources.

In short the structural outcome of GAEC associations is not identical for all GAECs.

The GAEC du Dolon (case study #2) was constituted in 1971 between four neighboring farmers, and illustrates the case of a communal GAEC. Upon association, Paul contributed 28 hectares, Max 25 hectares, Jean 20 hectares and Pierre 18 hectares to the 91 hectare GAEC. The four had contiguous land and, with the exception of Max who was 10 years older, were of the same age. By all standards, a 91 hectare farm is a large agricultural unit in France. All four raised cows and heifers which, after unification, amounted to herds of 65 and 42 respectively. Land,

buildings and cattle were all paid for before entry.

The first year of the GAEC's life was spent reorganizing farming activities and labor to fit the GAEC framework. Cows were centralized in Paul's barns after completion of an additional building, and the heifers went to Pierre's. Soon after, the GAEC acquired an automated milking system and automatic herd feeder with a 3.5 percent loan from Credit Agricole on a 10 year term. The automation of the milking process resulted in a greater productive outcome as well as more rational labor organization. Only one person was needed to supervise the cattle milking and feeding process which resulted in more free time and a week end off for GAEC partners after work shifts were assigned. Farming was performed communally and here too the four partners reorganized the production through centralizing the crops in space and acquiring machinery suited to large scale cultivation.

Indeed, GAEC records show a net improvement in productive outcome. The four partners estimated that starting in 1973 GAEC production was up one third from the combined pre-GAEC productive level. Such an increase however did not immediately reflect upon the income of the respective GAEC partner's household, primarily as a consequence of debt repayment, although all agree that

some financial improvement took place. In 1977 Pierre withdrew from the association as a result of a household conflict situation triggered by his partnership in the GAEC. Two years later Jean did the same. (Those situations will be analyzed in the following chapter.) Accordingly, the basis for communal farming had to be reconsidered and readjusted to a new situation. It is important to note, however, that the split in the coalition happened at a time when it was evident that the GAEC framework had led to significant improvement in the economic unit per se as well as, although to a lesser extent, in the household resources. Such improvement was indeed directly linked to the structural transformation of the farming entity, as envisioned by the GAEC lawmakers.

The GAEC La Deroy (case study #3) was constituted in 1978 by Lucien and his son Luc, and illustrates a case of kin-embedded GAEC. In 1977 Luc, upon returning from military service, settled on his father's 33 hectare farm. In 1978 both decided to formalize their association in a GAEC partnership. Luc devoted a state grant to young farmers in payment of lawyers' fees for the establishment of GAEC status and to buy off some of his father's shares. With the exception of one rented hectare in fruit trees there has not been any territorial expansion since

the GAEC formation. Nevertheless father and son agree that agricultural performances have been enhanced since their association through qualitative and quantitative improvement in the labor process. It is however difficult to estimate such improvement numerically because of the lack of or inconsistency in record keeping that characterize kin GAECs. Lucien and Luc lived under the same roof until 1981 when Luc married and moved to a house a couple of miles down the road from his parents. Since then the GAEC agricultural income must meet the needs of two separate households, and since Lucien controls more shares than Luc, his reward for capital is much greater. Luc's lower level of income is compensated, however, by his wife's financial contribution (she is a full time working registered nurse). Indeed the issue of complementary income brought to the household of a kin GAEC member is an essential element of the survival of kin-embedded GAECs (and will be developed in the following chapter). Clearly, kin-embedded GAECs do not fulfill the structural transformation of GAEC units into larger entities, and state financial aid to young farmers is rarely applied to territorial expansion goals. Yet it is today the most popular arrangement in the GAEC movement. An explanation for such success will be attempted through

analysis of the nature of social relations in the GAEC framework (see the next chapter). Having considered GAEC land tenure arrangements, we need to proceed to analyze production trends in the context of the GAEC association.

Production

Asked if they could point to qualitative change in the process of production since their association in a GAEC, farmers repeatedly stressed an increase in crop diversification and the motivation to develop managerial and technical capacities. They all contrasted market conditions to the ones of previous generations largely involved in monocrop agriculture. Historical records (Talon 1985) indicate that wheat growing associated with small scale herding and/or minor tobacco leaf crops characterized agriculture production around Meilleux up to World War II. Today cereal and/or grain crops and dairy farming are still essential. But farmers in the GAEC context have developed a new range of productive activities. In contrast, fieldwork data indicate that single-household smaller farms are comparatively more traditional in the sense that they do not innovate as much

as GAEC farms do. It is interesting to note that agribusinesses also rely on monocropping as far as agricultural production is concerned. Agricultural diversification is perceived as a necessity by GAEC participants.

GAEC farmers rationalize agricultural diversification in terms of economic security as well as being a challenge in their agricultural endeavor. It is my contention however, that such diversification reflects the adaptation of the agricultural unit to the pressure created by EEC policies as mediated by intervention of the French state. This happens in two ways. First, diversity counteracts market fluctuations artificially induced by EEC policies. As was detailed in Chapter II, EEC subsidy policies affect various agricultural products differently, and GAEC associations have taken advantage of their agricultural dynamism to reorient production towards subsidized products. Second, diversification allows farmers to devote a greater part of their total production toward local and regional markets less influenced by EEC and governmental rules.

The successful promotion and development of new crops depends on the level of dynamism and the rapid capacity of adaptation of the farming unit. In that

respect the GAEC framework offers considerable advantages. Kin-GAEC younger partners, who underwent formal training in the agricultural schools put in place by the 1960 to 62 reform, show enough confidence to assume the risks involved in innovative agriculture. It is they who provide the impetus to try new crops--soy beans, vegetables and fruits--and who, in most cases, communicate their enthusiasm to the older GAEC partners. In short, the collaboration between fathers with their life experience and sons and their dynamic knowledge is especially fruitful in the GAEC framework. Our task now is to look in more detail at specifically important crops and agricultural activities in the area of Meilleux.

The cultivation of cereal is an important sector of French agriculture. France ranks third among all European producers for overall cereal cultivation, fifth for wheat and sixth for maize (FAO Yearbook 1987: 114, 117, 125). Although southeastern France is by no means the most important cereal growing area, wheat and maize growing are common activities to all GAECs there. Statistical analysis however indicates that the percentage of wheat and/or maize to the total production has decreased in favor of non-cereal crops (see Table below), especially since the early 1980s.

When Paul and his son Pascal formed GAEC le Janin in 1981 (case study #4), 62 out of a total 82 hectares was planted in wheat and 22 in maize. This had been the characteristic of the family farm for 25 years. By 1985 however 35 hectares were devoted to wheat cultivation, 18 hectares to maize, 18 hectares to colza and 11 to fruit and vegetables. More recently, Pascal has tried to develop a substantial tomato production. In 1988 he attended a conference on a new specie of tomato--fairling --that, they thought, could be adapted to open field cultivation and changing consumer behavior. They planned to test the new plants in 1989 and if successful to expand tomato production.

Pascal and Paul explained that they had no plan to further lessen wheat and maize cultivation because, on one hand, they are low risk crops and on the other they do not require intensive labor. GAEC le Janin owns adequate machinery for tilling, planting and harvesting maize and wheat, and all that is needed is a daily inspection tour of the field to evaluate growth progress and to control pest bacteria or insects.

The decision to introduce colza was dictated by financial advantages balanced against labor requirements. Colza is a resistant, problem-free crop the price of which

has been stable over the years. Paul and Pascal sell their colza crop to a regional cooperative for transformation. Growing fruits and vegetables on the other hand, presents more risk and demands more labor, especially during harvest season. Paul and Pascal however explained that as a result of the combination of a favorable climate and the geographical proximity of Lyon, the second largest city in France, fruit and vegetable production is a rewarding option for the GAEC. It takes Paul about one hour to bring the harvest to the central market of Lyon. He makes the trip four times a week from late Spring to mid-Fall. Paul and Pascal are satisfied with the current orientation of their GAEC association. The informal division of labor--Paul is in charge of marketing and accounting and Pascal responsible for the production--has led to greater efficiency of the farming unit.

If the drop in the price of wheat led GAEC Le Janin to diversity, the drop in the price of milk and the establishment of quotas incite Claire and her father Marius, GAEC associates since 1981, to search for alternate solutions. GAEC Maronia (case study #5) is essentially a dairy farm. In 1980 after divorcing her husband, Claire moved back to the family farm. She had

graduated from agricultural school and showed a definite interest in becoming a farmer. By 1980, however, her father, thinking of retirement, had begun to decapitalize and had sold part of the herd. In 1981 Claire applied for a state grant to young farmers and a loan from the Credit Agricole to buy back 12 cows. All went fairly well until 1985 when the EEC policies led to a drop in the price of milk that had earlier been supported, and later to the establishment of quotas. GAEC Maronia, depending exclusively on milk production, saw a drastic reduction of its yearly income. In 1985 Claire and Marius converted part of the land to tobacco. The French government has a monopoly over the sale of tobacco which they felt would help secure their income. The juxtaposition of tobacco growing to dairy farming turned out to be disastrous. Both are labor intensive activities. Tobacco leaves must be picked by hand, sorted out one by one, hung on a rope to dry, selected and packed. In 1982 Claire was raising two young children and, with her father aging, did not believe that GAEC Maronia could sustain itself much longer.

In Meilleux cereal growers and dairy farmers articulate the same worries: 1) sharp income reduction from cereals and milk production; 2) no assurance of a better future; and 3) consequently productive

rearrangements are needed. They all agree that the mid-1960's to the late 1970's were especially favorable years for agriculture, but that significant deterioration had taken place since.

Increasing difficulties for agriculturalists in contemporary France have ushered in a new era of rural depopulation. Indeed, as we have already seen, farming population dropped from 13.6 percent of the total active population in 1970 to 8.6 percent in 1980 to 6.1 percent in 1987 (FAO Yearbook 1988: 75). Hardship in the agricultural world is linked to growing EEC interference in its member states' rural sector. The history of the EEC reveals that rural policies have never been set in order to prevent unwanted or unnecessary hard choice. Indeed, policies are set once a particular problem has reached endemic proportions. The question of wheat and milk overproduction is an old one, but it was not before the EEC was confronted with tons of rotting wheat and milk that it began the attempt to curtail such overproduction.

For instance, in 1962 the EEC introduced a target price policy which guaranteed a fixed price for unlimited production of wheat and maize. In 1982 however a guaranteed threshold policy was implemented and accordingly a production threshold is fixed every year by

EEC committees. Everything produced in excess of the threshold is paid for at a lower price level. Meanwhile the EEC reduced the community level of import-substitutes such as manioc from Thailand, corn-gluten feed and bran from the USA, that had been price-wise very advantageous to dairy farmers for feeding their cattle (National Policies 1989: 65-68). In the 1980s those measures combined to diminish cereal growers' income level.

For the past 20 years and up to 1984, milk production was promoted through a combination of price and income support measures for unlimited quantities of milk. For more than 20 years therefore, it was not demand and supply fluctuation that determined dairy prices but an artificially EEC supported financial system. Those policies engendered significant overproduction, so much so that milk products exceeded consumption level by 14 percent and in 1981 butter production exceeded consumption by 20 percent. The gap between production and consumption is bound to increase still further as a result of consumers' change of attitude (National Policies 1989: 125-127). In 1984, the EEC responded to these dramatic shifts in production trends by introducing a quota system. The system set up a ceiling in the amount of milk produced, calculated at the 1981 total production level

plus one percent. EEC state members are instructed and, in turn, each nation imposed restrictions upon its producers. If quota are exceeded, a levy is imposed on the producers at the rate of 75 percent of target price for excess by individuals and 100 percent by collectives (National Policies 1989: 69-77). In addition, a co-responsibility levy is imposed on farmers each year and ranges from 0.5 percent to 2.5 percent of the target price.

To farmers, co-responsibility levies are synonymous with taxation and have contributed to decrease their net income. The quota system hinders their capacity to increase their potential as dairy farmers as well as forces them to adjust their production to the EEC satisfaction. In Meilleux, GAECs have not been exempt from EEC impact. Some of them, as GAEC le Janin, have been able to restructure and survive. Others, as GAEC Maronia, probably will not.

It is worth noting that while communal GAECs were more popular in earlier prosperous times, the tremendous expansion of kin embedded GAECs, as was shown in Chapter III, corresponds to the period of rising difficulties in French agriculture. Fluctuation in the financial level of any productive entity not only entails the analysis of the level of variation, in increase or

decrease of income, but also leads to the question of distribution of resources and in turn to the issue of the social organization of the work place. These propositions are key to understand the historical shift in GAEC forms. The latter will be addressed in Chapter VI and the former in the next section.

Agricultural Income

Statistical studies of EEC state members reveal that although producer prices have increased in nominal terms, they have fallen in real terms, as a result of inflationary trends in all countries except Greece (National Policies 1989: 18). In French farming, real income improved until 1973, dropped sharply between 1974 and 1979, rose again in early 1980's although the rate of increase is being inflated by the previous year's plunge, and dropped again since 1982 (FAO statistics 1988).

GAEC associations are not immune to adverse economic conditions. However, a comparison of fieldwork data on GAEC and non-GAEC farms leads to the conclusion that the compensatory mechanisms to cope with decreasing income devised by both groups are very different in nature.

Non-GAEC agriculturalists complement their agricultural income by extending out to the industrial world. GAEC farmers, on the other hand, cope with severe economic conditions by developing further the economic potential of GAEC/household resources. Depending on the economic viability of each GAEC, the development is sometimes limited to the GAEC per se, either to intensification of the GAEC partners labor or to the restructuring of productive patterns. Often enough however, either because the economic context is most detrimental or because GAEC resources are stretched to their limits, the process of intensification is carried out through the involvement of GAEC non-partners/household members into GAEC/household economic units. This process takes one of two forms: 1) physical involvement of a household member in GAEC labor activities; 2) a household member securing income through wage labor. This point is crucial in the analysis of contemporary kin-GAEC success, but will be developed in the following chapter devoted to the social relations of production.

GAEC de Goubet formed in 1978 by Robert and his son Roland (case study #6) is primarily a dairy farm. For the first couple of years GAEC agricultural activities were performed by the father and his unmarried son who lived

with the older couple. Beginning in 1984, in the face of a shrinking income, Roland's mother has been processing part of the milk production into cheese and heavy cream and started up an organically grown vegetable garden. Because the farm is located on a road especially busy with urban dwellers going up to their country homes, she sells most of her production on week-ends. She told me that her earnings cover pretty much all of the household daily expenses. In 1987, Roland married and moved across the road to a rented house. When I met them, his wife was actively looking for a job as a clerk or salesperson. Until 1985 GAEC du Goubet hired the services of the local veterinarian to care for the cows. Since then however Roland's brother has become a veterinarian himself. Although he lives some 75 miles away from the GAEC, he always comes down to check up on the herd or for any emergency. Both Roland and Robert pointed out that, although it is not always convenient because of the distance, they have been able to save substantially.

The history of GAEC Maronia (case study #5) on the other hand is one of the only instances in my fieldwork data where no compensatory mechanism can be applied to counteract shrinking agricultural income. Marius, being a widower, and Claire, being divorced, are not able to

mobilize any household member to ensure the economic survival of the GAEC. In the long run, the lack of available financial and/or labor resources might very well make the difference between GAEC's survival or disappearance.

The net income of any productive unit is the difference between total income and whatever is being extracted from it. Surplus extraction raises the question of relationships between the productive unit and the state, and is crucial in evaluating the viability of economic entities.

Surplus Extraction

Extraction is the process through which part of the surplus is transferred from agricultural producers to non-producers. The GAEC case which, as was shown earlier, most frequently involves farmers' ownership of the land, shows the state to be the main beneficiary of such transfers through a taxation system and state credit policies. Access to credit was indeed a cornerstone of the GAEC law. Taxes imposed on GAEC farmers are the same as the ones imposed on non-GAEC farmers.

Ready access to credit has enticed farmers to modernize. In doing so, however, they have contracted debts despite the advantageous terms of state loans to the GAECs. But the most important surplus extraction mechanism by the state is embedded in the debt contracted by the young to ensure transgenerational ownership. Loans to buy off siblings or father's shares do not benefit from preferential rates because they are taken up individually by the young farmer. Gutelman (1974) describing the social relationships at work in farming productive units claims that the surplus extraction involved in generational transmission in fact makes each generation buy the agricultural estate anew. This notion is totally relevant to the study of kin-embedded GAEC farming. I shall maintain that the relationship of the younger generation to the agricultural unit is the source of greater extraction in the GAEC framework than in the traditional farming context. In the latter, aspiring farmers pay off their siblings; in the former they must compensate their siblings and their father as well. Instead of being restricted to one generation, the GAEC extends the young farmers' obligations to a two-generational level.

Taxation

French farmers are subject to a variety of taxes. There is no preferential system for GAECs, which fall under the general category of farms.

First, farmers are subject to a land tax payable by landowners who can recover up to 20 percent from the tenants. This tax is levied on the basis of an imputed rent (four-fifths of rental value) fixed by each commune and taking into consideration the type of crops and the estate. Part of such a tax is used to finance chambers of commerce and the farmers' social security system. Buildings not used in farming activities are exempt.

Secondly, farmers have to pay an income tax as well. The majority of farmers are still taxed on a flat rate profit basis which is basically a taxation system based on national profits and determined by a regional commission. Some farmers, however, are taxed on a real income basis, and since the threshold of taxation has in recent years been lowered, one can predict that in the future, more and more farmers will pay taxes based on the real income. In 1987 the threshold was 500.000 FF, in

1988 455m000 FF, and was projected to be 380,000 FF in the coming years. By French standards however, those levels represent significantly high agricultural income. In 1988, only 15 percent of the farming population chose real income tax over a flat rate tax.

Taxation is one process of surplus extraction, payment of interest to a banking institution another.

Credit

One of the cornerstones of the GAEC law was to institutionalize and facilitate credit to GAEC farmers for structural farming improvements. Credit access or denial and preferential loans are determined by the Credit Agricole, a powerful banking institution, acting in accordance to governmental development plans and agrarian objectives.

There are several types of preferential loans that benefit GAEC formation: 1) modernization loans for financing up to 100 percent of the farm expansion at 4.5 percent to 5.5 percent interest for 15 years; 2) special loans to young farmers to help finance 80 percent of capitalization needs upon their settlement at 4 percent

interest for 15 years; 3) stock/farming loans to help finance 80 percent of farming building construction and 60 percent livestock acquisition at 6.5 percent interest for 8 years (Credit Agricole sources). It is worth noting that the preferential treatment of young farmers is the most rewarding financially. In addition to special loans, every aspiring agriculturalist between the ages of 18 and 35 is eligible to receive the DJA, a state grant, upon settlement in farming. In 1988 the DJA was valued at FF 25,000. In the GAEC context, preferential treatment of the younger generation has contributed to the improvement of the GAEC as a whole.

GAEC starters or members in Meilleux rely extensively on credit. Most of them, with the exception of GAEC la Visette (case study #4), show high levels of indebtedness. Because of the prohibitive cost of land, GAECs rarely borrow to expand territorially. Most typically, credit is associated with an increase in the capitalization of the productive unit after GAEC formation. Modernization of dairy farms and of farming machinery are two obvious outcomes of state/banking policies in Meilleux. The financial burden linked to GAEC farming improvement falls upon the GAEC, as an economic entity.

Paul and Pascal at GAEC le Janin (case study #4) have, since 1981, considerably modernized the farm. Over the years they have acquired two new tractors (a 90 horse power four by four for cereal cultivation and a 68 horsepower two wheel drive for fruit and vegetable crops) and a pickup truck to take fruit and vegetables to the central market in Lyon. They chose not to buy a thresher because of its high cost and limited use, but instead joined the local CUMA, agricultural machinery lending cooperative, which had acquired a very efficient one in 1980. Paul and Pascal explained that they have so far been successful in balancing the advantages against the disadvantages of taking out loans. They are not overextended but feel that they have reached the limit beyond which their capacity for consumption will start decreasing.

This is not the case however at the GAEC du Goubet (case study #6). When Roland and Robert formed their GAEC they decided to devote all their energy to dairy farming, and acquired the most modern system of stabulation, an automated barn, on an eight year loan at 6.3 percent interest rate. Although the cost of stabilization was high (FF 120,000), and because of the relative short term of the loan, monthly repayments represented 35 percent of

their net monthly income. But in 1984, when the EEC introduced co-responsibility levies and quotas, the GAEC income dropped by 20 percent while monthly debt repayment stayed the same. As was seen earlier, they managed to survive through household labor intensification.

Overall, the cost of modernization falls upon the GAEC as a whole. In communal GAECs, such as in the early days of GAEC le Dolon (case study #2), this is all there is. Everything that each partner brought to the GAEC was paid for, since all were already practicing farmers. The case is very different however in kin-embedded GAECs that results from the partnership between one established farmer (most typically the father) and a younger person (his son) who does not have any capital to bring to the association. The state grant to young farmers (DJA) is often channeled to building up their capital contribution (i.e., land rental, piece of equipment, buying off some of the father's social shares etc.). But part of the younger generation's accumulation process is also achieved by taking out personal loans, as young farmers, from the Credit Agricole. This is crucial because, due to its nature, such debt falls upon the sons as individuals. In other words, the generational differences between GAEC partners creates a situation in which the older,

better-off generation must only meet the GAEC's social debt while the younger generation is found with the GAEC's social debt as well as a personal debt.

Moreover, this trend is further exacerbated by the question of farm inheritance in the French context of the partible inheritance system under which all siblings are eligible to equal shares of the farming state upon the death of the head of household. The legal requirements of inheritance and the specificity of the GAEC structure make it impossible for a father to hand over the estate to his son, even though they are GAEC partners, unless some measures to compensate the remaining siblings are taken. When succession is anticipated, while the GAEC still functions as such, it is the responsibility of the son or daughter associated to buy off their siblings' rights to inheritance. It is financially more effective from the heir's point of view to settle inheritance earlier rather than later in the life of the GAEC because financial arrangements are calculated on the estate value at the time of legal succession and not upon parents' death. One can only assume that the value of GAEC will increase over time. Concretely, the process of generational transmission contributes to increase the younger generation's level of indebtedness. There is yet another

factor that further heightens indebtedness among young GAEC farmers. What happens to the structure of a GAEC upon retirement of one of its members at times jeopardizes the very existence of the farm.

The GAEC law institutionalized GAEC units by giving them a legal, fiscal, and social status independent from traditional farming and farming industries. Accordingly, the formation of a GAEC, its life and cessation, are ruled and controlled by regional committees under direct governmental supervision. State intervention in every detail in GAECs functioning led to the creation of an enterprise whose co-ownership is made up of all GAEC members, but whose capital belongs to each associate proportionally to their original contribution. A retiring member is not allowed to give away his/her shares to the remaining associates. He has to sell them in order for the buyer to become a legal GAEC co-owner. Meanwhile, a GAEC needs at least two members to be recognized as such.

Concretely, communal GAECs have not encountered too much difficulty in addressing this issue. Since they are often composed of several members, various types of arrangements can be made (i.e. buying off of shares by outside farmers or potential farmers, dividing up shares among remaining members, transferring the shares to one or

several of the departing associate heirs, etc.). But the issue of retirement in a father-son/daughter GAEC is much more critical. One solution consists of selling off shares to a prospective GAEC farmer. This however is not an easy solution since the nature of kin-embedded GAEC would be drastically altered in the event of association with non-kin members. Another consists of selling off of father's share to another kin member (cousin, son, daughter, etc.). Yet another consists of substituting the mother for the father until she herself retires, which is legally feasible providing that husband and wife were married under a "communal property legal agreement." But when none of the above propositions are feasible, the only option might be for the son/daughter to revert to a single household farm. This however can be legally achieved only if the young partner buys off the father's shares which, in turn, is feasible only through contracting more debt. It is worth noting that young GAEC farmers do not benefit from preferential interest rates when they borrow money for buying off inheritance shares or their partners' GAEC shares. The disproportionate level of indebtedness among the younger generation is the crucial limiting factor in the ability of kin-GAECs to reproduce themselves as viable economic units over time.

In this chapter, I have shown the greater superiority of communal GAECs to achieve economic success. But the GAEC cases reveal that the success of a particular form of production cannot be explained only in economic terms. Despite their objective success, communal farms tend to disappear. Despite their limited objective success, kin-embedded GAECs are today the most popular form. I shall maintain that this trend is explainable in terms of the social relations of production and of the social relationship between productive units and households. This will be next task.

CHAPTER VII

GAEC: SOCIAL RELATIONS

In Chapter VI I have analyzed some important physical features of the productive process on GAEC farms and concluded that the increase in kin-GAECs seems to reflect their capacity to adapt to rising difficulties in the agricultural world. The adaptive potential of the GAEC form however is not exclusively explainable by the physical factor of production terms. It is my contention that the disappearance of communal GAECs and the success of kin-GAECs as well are contingent upon the nature of social relations that each form entails, and that special attention should be devoted to the relationships between household and GAEC as a productive unit. More specifically the analysis will focus on generational ties and gender relationships.

Fluctuations in levels of production have direct consequences on the ability of any economic entity to

consume. In economic terms, the net income represents what is left from total income after surplus extraction. In practical terms, the net income determines the level of consumption of economic agents. In a competitive economic framework the ability of anyone to consume depends strictly on the level of such income. GAECs are no exception to that rule since they compete in a capitalist environment. Modern enterprises, they intend to maximize production and consumption.

The study of consumption patterns entails two levels of analysis. First, productive consumption refers to that part of net income devoted to the reproduction of the physical conditions necessary to a new cycle of production, such as tool and machinery maintenance, seeds, chemical products, etc., as well as to the expansion of the existing economic entity in savings, new machinery, land, cattle, investments, etc. Second, personal consumption is derived from that portion of net income applied to household needs, part of which is spent and part of which is saved up for future consumption.

Concretely, the site where productive consumption decisions are made and implemented is the productive unit itself, i.e., the GAEC. More specifically, it is the group of legally associated GAEC partners that is

responsible for all decisions regarding productive and reproductive processes of the farm. In contrast, the site where personal consumption decisions are made is the household of each GAEC partner, and includes legally declared GAEC associate(s) and non-GAEC members as well. In communal GAECs the two spheres are distinct. In a kin-embedded GAEC the boundaries between the two tend to be more fuzzy.

The flexibility of levels of consumption and of labor involvement in a family-embedded productive unit is the basis for a great deal of theorizing about agriculture (Chayanov 1966), and is well-documented historically (Friedmann 1918) and ethnographically (Long 1984).

Here, I shall contend that the superior adaptive potential of kin-GAECs to a changing economic context resides in their ability to blur the distinction between GAEC and household. This is not however feasible in communal GAECs and might very well have led to the disappearance of such farms. The degree of flexibility between household and GAEC boundaries is important in two respects. First, flexibility allows people to emphasize productive over personal consumption at times, and vice versa. The amount of resources allocated to households is fixed in the legal provisions of GAEC formation. Communal

GAECs enforce such provisions, kin-GAECs do not necessarily. Kin-GAECs allocate resources for productive or personal consumption depending on the current needs of the GAEC and the household. Ongoing reevaluation of such needs provides for better adjustment to changing conditions at the GAEC as well as household level.

Second, this flexibility allows non-GAEC members to become involved in the GAEC life. In the context of communal GAECs, GAEC partners carry out the process of production, manage the unit, decide the GAEC future. Communal GAECs lead to the segregation of household members both physically, since decisions are taken in meetings at the GAEC headquarters, and psychologically since household members are not involved in decisions regarding the GAEC. Such separation creates a great deal of resentment from non-GAEC household members who, in pre-GAEC times, had been greatly involved in the traditional family farm. In fact, the institutionalization of communal GAECs has created a clear distinction within the household, where there were none before, between those who are part of the productive process and those who are not, thereby excluding an entire sector of the population from agriculture.

In contrast, kin-GAECs do not induce such a

dichotomy between GAEC and household. Although the legal basis for the distinction between GAEC and non-GAEC members is the same in communal and kin-embedded farms, in practice such distinction does not exist since after all, "We are family." Non-GAEC household members still feel part of the farming process emotionally . In addition their involvement is very practical as well.

I shall contend that the study of social relations in the GAEC framework reveals that 1) in the work place, social interaction in the productive sphere has benefitted from the GAEC arrangement, which is particularly conducive to efficient division of labor and effective management, thereby enhancing the farmers' quality of life (see below Division of Labor); 2) gender relations in GAEC/household interaction are characterized by a process of exclusion and segregation in communal GAECs, by a process of incorporation and subsequent exploitation in kin-embedded GAECs (see below Gender Relations); 3) the essence of generational relationships is determined by their inclusion in the productive and in the domestic spheres as well, concretized by the shift from relations of production to relations of consumption (see below Generational Relations).

Division of Labor

Not being able to have a regular life, to go off on a vacation or to stay late in bed on a Sunday morning were widespread complaints among farmers who asked for structural reforms in agriculture. Indeed, the GAEC framework, with its emphasis on human resources management, has improved the everyday life of joint farmers, even in the absence of a lot of new labor-saving technology. Some activities are more demanding than others and one can simply argue that those surrounding livestock care have most benefitted from this new labor organization.

The greatest advantage of a large agricultural unit made up of several farmers is that work shifts can be arranged. For example each partner of GAEC du Dolon (case study #2) works one out of every four weekends, except during harvest time when all work all the time. GAEC association allows farmers to go on a vacation. For instance, Luc from GAEC du Deroy (case study #3) takes his wife and children for a one week vacation three times a year, while Lucien prefers going off for three weeks in

October.

The division of labor in GAECs is technical as well as temporal. Pascal, at GAEC le Janin (case study #4) is in charge of the maintenance of the irrigation system as well as the detection of crop diseases while Paul markets their production. Luc, at GAEC la Deroy (case study #3), has taken over the accounting and bureaucratic tasks while Lucien keeps up the machinery. Every GAEC member supported the view that a more efficient organization of labor was a direct outcome of GAEC structure. It is this new rationality in the labor process, they argue, which contributes to a decrease in the qualitative gap between urban inhabitants and farmers.

A new set of time-consuming activities and functions, however, emanates from the very nature of GAECs and their high level of institutionalization. Such duties reflect the bureaucratization process created by lawmakers and are not existent in traditional family farming. Legal texts urge GAEC associates to hold daily meetings for work assignment and more formal sessions when problems arise, or to discuss new orientations, expansion and so on. GAEC partners must keep minutes, records and notarize important resolutions, and above all keep daily accounting records over the entire lifespan of the GAEC. It is the

prerogative of the Departmental Commission on GAECs to inspect such records at any time. Although the legislature provided for continuous supervision of GAECs by the regional committees, in most instances these committees intervene only during formation and dissolution stages.

Fieldwork data indicate that there is great discrepancy in the way in which those legal recommendations are enforced as between communal and kin GAECs. In a communal setting, those rules are followed to the letter and there is a great deal of emphasis placed on social and personal accountability. Kin GAECs' records, on the other hand, are very sketchy and include only the most critical decisions such as land addition, etc. Communal GAECs hold daily meetings and do record minutes. From computation of such records, it is estimated that on the average, the four partners of GAEC du Dolon (case study #2) spent over one hour a day in such meetings. Routine sessions were held in the morning at the GAEC headquarters, and dealt with labor assignment and/or organization. More formal meetings took place in the evening after supper. In the kin GAEC setting on the other hand, the level of formality is much lower. With the exception of GAEC du Goubet (case study #6) no GAEC

headquarters are identifiable as separate offices. The GAEC's office is typically limited to a desk and a file cabinet in the kitchen. There is no physical separation between GAEC and household as in the case of communal GAECs. Daily meetings are usually limited to informal chats at breakfast time, and formal discussions always take place around the dinner table in the evening, whether the two partners live under the same roof or not.

The significance of the bureaucratization of joint farming and the resulting discrepancy between communal and kin GAECs is four-fold: 1) due to bureaucratic requirements, farmers in the communal structure have longer work days and are away from their farmhouse for a greater length of time daily; 2) because all decisions are made in the GAEC's office, respective household members are physically and socially severed from the life of the GAEC; 3) the familial nature of kin GAECs, leading to the nonobservance of legal bureaucratic requirements, does not result in labor intensification; 4) the widespread lack of official GAEC headquarters detached from the household sphere is conducive to non-GAEC household members' participation in the life of the kin-GAEC. Having identified the changing nature of the household/productive unit's dynamism in the institution of GAECs, it is

necessary to further analyze the basis for exclusion/participation. Field data seem to indicate a strong correlation between rules of participation and gender composition in joint farming. Accordingly the next section will be devoted to gender relationships.

Gender Relations

The degree of involvement of non-GAEC household members in the GAEC varies depending on the nature of the GAEC, and must be analyzed in terms of its physical aspect, i.e. labor participation as well as its emotional dimension, i.e. alienation for the production process. The great majority of kin-GAECs are formed between male farmers. National statistics indicate that 95 percent of all kin GAECs in existence in 1987 resulted from associations between kin related men (Ministry of Agriculture 1988). Our local sample corroborates the national trend. With the exception of GAEC Maronia (case study #5) every GAEC links male agriculturists in a joint-farming endeavor. Therefore, talking about non-GAEC household members is another way of talking about the role of women in the GAEC structure.

The role of women in family-embedded farms has undergone a scholarly re-evaluation since the mid-1970s. This body of research has clearly proven that unless gender relations are placed in the larger context of the integration of the household in the productive sphere, women and men are thought to be complementary, when in fact their relationships are based on inequality and are characterized by differential power (Haney and Knowles 1988; Rosenfeld 1985; Nash and Fernandez-Kelly 1983; Safa and Nash 1976; Young et al. 1981; etc.)

The economic contribution of women can assume various forms: 1) direct contribution of free labor to GAEC activities and/or 2) income contribution through agricultural/external to the GAEC activity and/or contribution through non-agricultural employment.

At GAEC la Blondiere (case study #8) Gilles and his brother Yves have developed a successful cut flowers business. Their production, mostly grown in a greenhouse, is partly shipped to Lyon central floral market, partly to local florists. When Monique, who had trained as an accountant, married Gilles, she took over the GAEC bookkeeping and gradually all secretarial functions. She estimates that on average she spends five hours a day, five days a week working for the GAEC. Both Gilles and

Yves acknowledge that, because of the perishable nature of their production and high level of productive investment, Monique's work and skills are vital to the GAEC. Monique expresses satisfaction and is proud of her role. However, she resents the fact that her sister-in-law Agnes does not show any interest in and does not contribute any work to the GAEC. Monique is especially resentful because the proceeds of the GAEC are equally divided between the two households. Although she has a good working relationship with Yves, she is not on speaking terms with Agnes.

In the final stage of GAEC du Dolon (case study #2), currently a father and son association, reliance on non-paid labor is important. Although the GAEC legal partnership is between Paul and his son Andre, week-end livestock duties are assigned to Paul and his wife on the one hand and Andre and his 13-year-old brother on the other. There is no clear delimitation in the farming work process either. Father, mother and son are often seen working together or separately in the fields. None of them was capable of giving a qualitative estimate of Marie's participation. Field data however seem to indicate that she provided between four hours to six hours daily work to the GAEC agricultural activities. Asked why she did not become the third partner of the GAEC du Dolon,

she pointed to the inability to meet the SMI (minimal acreage required) requirements for three. GAEC du Dolon is a 33 hectare farm and in order to be a three-member GAEC it would require 48 hectares. Since the GAEC law prohibits GAEC association between husband and wife in a two member formation, they had no choice but to exclude her. Marie was not bitter about it, since she felt that the first priority was for her children to succeed. She did not resent her non-paid labor participation because "it stays in the family."

In some instances, women's contribution to household income is achieved through the development of an agricultural skill separate from GAEC activities, but taking place within the farm structure. Robert's wife Anne, in GAEC du Goubet (case study #6), transforms part of the GAEC milk production herself, while the rest is sold to the local cooperative. She started processing milk into heavy cream and cheese for local sale six years ago after the EEC instituted milk quotas and co-responsibility levies which led to diminishing returns in milk production. Although time-consuming, Anne's milk processing activity does not require any significant financial investment. Because she markets her production herself, she has cut down intermediaries' cost thereby

maximizing her profit. And because it is a home-based industry she has, so far, been able to escape taxation. She wished she could increase her production although labor and market limitations make it improbable.

At GAEC la Visette (case study #1) Marie, Louis' wife, has recently increased her kitchen garden production for local sale. From June to October she takes her produce to the market of Meilleux every Wednesday, thereby increasing the household resources significantly. Overall, women's financial contribution resulting from agricultural non-paid labor or from separate farming activity is most frequently encountered among the older generation in kin-embedded GAECs.

In contrast younger women tend to derive their income from non-agricultural work. Such is the case at GAEC La Deroy (case study #3). Arlette, Luc's wife, is a full time registered nurse at the city hospital. She is interested in her career, involved in the nursing union and completely disconnected from GAEC activities. To her, farming is just a way of making a living and she sees her husband's partnership with his father as a business venture. Luc and Arlette live in a house down the road from Luc's father and GAEC partner Lucien. Both households are in constant relation and form a tight

family. The GAEC's headquarters are in Lucien and Marthe's kitchen where all decisions regarding the GAEC's life are made. Arlette however does not feel excluded because first of all, she has a professional interest of her own and secondly, the two households routinely have dinner together twice a week at Lucien and Marthe's house where a lot is said about the GAEC's life.

At GAEC du Goubet (case study #6) where Roland, the son, recently married, the same pattern seems to emerge. His wife Chantal is actively looking for a job as a clerk. Meanwhile, she has been helping out in the work of the GAEC. She expresses a strong feeling of frustration resulting from lack of recognition and rising tension between her mother-in-law and herself. Chantal felt that she was assigned menial tasks, such as picking up walnuts, that took her away from the farm/barn compound during the day while Anne's processing activities kept her at the center of the GAEC, and of all decisions.

At GAEC Mas Fontaine (case study #7) both brothers married school teachers. Both households are very close both physically and socially, leading to a situation where the respective children are raised together and the two families share a lot more than economic cooperation.

The contribution of women to the economic stability

of the family farm through work participation (Maret and Copp 1982, Reimer 1986) or non-agricultural wage labor (Rosenfeld 1985) has long been noted. In a GAEC framework where women are not GAEC members, it is nevertheless their involvement and economic contribution that determines to a great extent the level of economic viability of joint farming. In traditional single household farms, women do have a status of "co-operator" of the farm. In contrast, the GAEC system by providing a rigid legal definition of GAEC participants excludes from any recognition the non-members. As a result while women's economic participation has increased, their social recognition has been lost. Furthermore, it is women's contribution in labor as well as in financial security that allows GAEC members to remain full-time farmers, a necessary condition for the GAEC form of joint-farming. A comparative analysis of GAEC farming and single household family agriculture in Meilleux reveals that, in the past decade, over 50 percent of single household farmers have contracted at least part time industrial employment which GAEC farmers have not. In addition, the generational arrangement among women (i.e., older ones working in agriculture and younger ones in non-agricultural sectors) has proved adaptive to joint family farming by averting

any source of tension between the two generations. Due to GAEC rules, especially regarding minimal acreage requirements, it is very unlikely that the wives of the two kin-GAEC partners (i.e., mother-in-law and daughter-in-law) could both become equal, legal GAEC partners. Therefore their status in relation to GAEC formation is bound to be problematic. The differential contribution between the two generations helps create two distinct spheres, the agricultural vs. non-agricultural, where authority and status are not similarly defined. Moreover, the younger generation's wage contribution helps, to some extent, to reduce the high level of indebtedness of the younger partner in a kin-GAEC by providing regular income to the household. In conclusion, the level of success of kin-embedded GAECs is more related to the nature of the relationships between GAEC partners and non-partners, than to the intrinsic quality of the GAEC system as such.

Relationships between GAEC and non-GAEC members are very different in a communal setting. To some extent the explanation for the failure of communal GAECs is to be found in such links. In the communal days of GAEC du Dolon (case study #2) neither Berthe, Irene or Simone provided any labor to the GAEC or had any say in its

orientation. As time went by, they increasingly resented such alienation. Before their husbands formed a joint farming association, they had been involved in the labor as well as the decision making process of the family farm. Most importantly they participated in taking care of the livestock, in harvesting and field planting. Husbands and wives saw each other a lot during the day, and all decisions were taken communally in the kitchen. Now, Berthe, Irene and Simone complained that they have "lost their husbands to the GAEC," as well as their status of co-operator.

Marie, Paul's wife, was the only one who did not feel this way. She kept the GAEC books and she did not consider herself alienated from the production process, despite her recognition that the women's involvement in farming had diminished with the new work organization. It is worth noting that the headquarters of the GAEC office were located on Paul's and Marie's premises, in a tiny room next to the kitchen. There, the four partners held daily meetings except during the winter when they had to move into Marie's kitchen due to lack of heat in the office. Those physical considerations are important to understand the differential sense of alienation of Berthe, Irene and Simone on the one hand, and Marie on the other.

Before the GAEC was formed, the four women were involved in field farming as well as livestock care taking. In addition, they all grew a kitchen garden for fresh fruit and vegetables in warm months, and as a source for preserved food in the winter. Kitchen gardening is typically envisioned as a woman's domain. It is true that traditionally, women provided most of the labor on a daily basis. Men, however, would participate in heavy tasks, such as tilling, as well as urgent ones, such as harvesting vegetables for preserves. GAEC association however has led to a separation between men and women's agricultural domains as a result of labor intensification with the GAEC. GAEC has contributed to remove women's labor from the men's domain and men's labor from the women's domain.

Generational Relations

For numerous reasons, the ways in which resources are allocated to the GAEC and to the household(s) varies a great deal between associations, and within each GAEC over time as well. Legal provisions, state of the GAEC and life cycle are important considerations.

In general terms, GAEC legal regulations call for the payment of a monthly salary to each partner for at least minimum wage value, and at the end of the fiscal year the award of interest for capital contribution proportional to each partner's original contribution, unless GAEC participants have indicated their willingness to reward capital contributions equally. Above all, the law requires that all monetary transactions be carefully recorded and accounted for.

At GAEC du Dolon (case study #2), on the basis of initial contribution in land, cattle, building and machinery, it was decided that Paul and Max brought 30 percent of the total capital each, and Jean and Pierre 20 percent respectively. In 1970, the year of the GAEC's formation, no investment was made but the GAEC decided that all profits should be left to the GAEC fund for future investment. During that year each partner drew a monthly income of 1500 FF. In 1971, the profit left in the bank was channeled to productive improvements, and for the following three years the GAEC partners agreed to withdraw only half of their shares so as to increase their collective capital.

This sketchy description of routine accounting relationships between GAEC partners in a communal setting

reveals some problematic aspects of the communal form of GAEC association: 1) although communal GAECs are formed between farmers who have been engaged in mutual aid for years and sometimes generations, the GAEC system injects financial consideration and relationships into those existing social relations traditionally embedded in reciprocity; 2) although the reward of labor, i.e. monthly payment, is the same for all members, the reward of capital, allocated according to the initial capital contributions, replicates any pre-existing hierarchy among the members, while at the same time, the financial burden linked to productive consumption and expansion rests equally upon every GAEC partner; 3) although it appears that, initially at least, the smallest farmers have benefitted the most from the GAEC arrangement, essentially due to productivity increases and financial security, in the long run the more endowed farmers are at greater advantage; 4) it is significant that, as a rule, the smallest farmers are the first to drop out of the joint-farming associations in spite of the general acknowledgment of economic betterment; 5) in ideological terms, pre-existing inequalities remain symbolized as was shown by the centralizing role that Paul--his wife and his farmhouse--played at the GAEC du Dolon.

The most important outcome of communal GAEC legalization has been the introduction of clear boundaries between productive consumption and personal consumption which parallel the social dichotomy between production unit and household. In traditional family farming, characteristic of pre-GAEC times, decisions to allocate resources were made by the household which, at times, would devote more resources to buying productive equipment and at other times consumer goods. In a communal GAEC setting such flexibility is not feasible. As Simone stated, "we have become just like auto workers." It is a fact that communal GAECs tend to follow legislative rules very closely.

In contrast, kin-embedded GAECs have a strikingly different relation to finances. Whereas accounting books are well kept in communal GAECs, they are often non-existent in kin-embedded associations, especially in father-son GAECs. Indeed, there are as many variations in finance handling as there are GAECs. However the common organizing principle seems to be: to all according to their needs and not according to the law. In contrast to communal GAECs, household and productive unit, at least to some extent, overlap. So do productive consumption and personal consumption. Because "it stays in the family,"

there is room for fluidity and flexibility in the kin-GAEC framework. From a practical point of view then, it is possible to assume that kin-GAEC associations induce a reversal to traditional family farming.

GAEC de la Visette (case study #1) is an example of a kin-embedded GAEC which, in many instances, reproduces traditional farming. Louis and Bruno, who is single, live with Bruno's mother under the same roof. Neither Louis nor Bruno get their monthly salary, as the law proscribes. They instead leave all of it within the GAEC fund and withdraw money as needs occur. As was noted earlier, they minimize productive expansion because of temporary land rental agreements. Since the farmhouse is also leased from the landlord they do not engage in home improvement or redecoration. Most of the profits left after rents, taxes, and necessary consumption is saved for the eventual possibility of leaving agriculture altogether.

At GAEC le Janin (case study #4), Paul and Pascal do not allocate resources under any specific rule. Until recently, Paul, his wife and Pascal lived in the family farm house. Ten years ago, Paul and his wife moved from the old family farm to a brand new well-equipped house built on the same compound. Today the old building is used for agricultural storage and activities such as

poultry raising. When Pascal married four years ago, he had a brand new house built for himself about 300 feet from his parents. The building is very impressive, built on two levels with beautiful tile, wooden floors etc. Pascal explained that one-third of the building cost of his house was taken from the GAEC's circulation fund and used as collateral to obtain a personal loan from the bank. It was Paul's as well as Pascal's understanding that the amount taken from the GAEC fund was a gift and not a loan. There was no expectation that it would be paid back.

Such expenses are imposed by life cycle necessities. Because kin-GAECs are most typically established between members of two generations, this issue of life cycle is critical for the members themselves and to the GAEC as a unit as well. Among important factors are the following: 1) typically a bachelor son enters a GAEC association with his father upon his return from mandatory military service; 2) despite state grants and preferential loans for young farmers the discrepancy between son and father relative to their respective assets and financial worth is enormous; 3) a few years after GAEC formation the son marries, sets up a separate household, starts a family, thereby increasing his needs, while his

parents' needs remain at a much lower level; 4) the decision of the father to retire ushers in a financial crisis for the son who needs to face the inheritance pay-off of his siblings, the buying up of the father's shares unless another farmer joins the association, reimbursement of loans for settlement and for life improvement as well. It is my argument that the level of indebtedness of the younger generation in fact threatens the long term stability of a kin-GAEC system, and determines whether or not a GAEC is capable of reproducing itself as such. The success of kin GAEC associations as reflected in a statistical analysis of the GAEC trend (Minister of Agriculture 1988) is, we project, very temporary.

While communal GAECs introduce monetary relationships and financial rigidity, kin-GAECs often do not. The attitude toward financial matters is very lenient. Because of the changing nature of the notion of authority between farming partners, linked to the concept of equality in GAEC partnership, kin-GAEC relationships are very different from the traditional single household farming context. Indeed family ties in a GAEC context are very tight, relations very amicable and casual. The drawback however seems to be that GAEC associates neglect

to follow the financial guard lines of the law. Since in practice the state intervenes only exceptionally in working GAECs, there is no possibility to prevent the financial catastrophe that becomes obvious at the time of dissolution or retirement. The significance of this is that, during the lifetime of the GAEC, participants are able to circumvent the legal requirements so as to adapt to their needs at any time, both at the production and consumption level. Not only does the GAEC framework not provide for long term stability, but it does indeed carry in it the seeds of its own destruction.

In this chapter I have shown that the stability of a GAEC formation is contingent upon the economic performance and the underlying social integration of the unit of production and the domestic unit. The observation of the legal provisions of the GAEC law alone, and the approval of a GAEC by the departmental GAEC committee, do not by themselves ensure the success of the GAEC experience. It is the interpretation and the manipulation of those legal requirements and their adaptation to the specific GAEC context that ultimately lead to GAEC success or failure.

As was noted previously, the limitations of communal GAECs reside in part in their inability to adapt to rapidly changing economic conditions. More importantly

however, it is the social implication of the GAEC communal form, particularly the disjunction between household and productive units, that leads to their disappearance or their transformation.

In contrast the ability of kin GAEC structures to mobilize household resources contributes to their growing success. The flexibility linked to the familial nature of the association allows GAECs to avoid some of the legal weight and in doing so to rapidly adopt new economic strategies and promote the well being of the farm. It is however kin-GAECs that carry the seeds for long term instability because of state policies on inheritance and GAEC dissolution. On average kin GAECs are stable for about one decade, between the time a GAEC is formed and the time one member leaves. In the long run, the most dramatic outcome is the high level of indebtedness which threatens the very existence of the GAEC system and ultimately family farming as a whole. The GAEC framework makes it difficult for the younger generation to remain in farming past the first decade, and it makes it impossible to revert to the single household farm.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The young farmers who voiced their anger in the wake of World War II hoped to achieve a more just and equal social order in harmony with their rural environment. They expressed their reservations toward capitalism and feared its consequences for human life. They talked about communality and enthusiastically welcomed the legal package prepared by lawmakers and politicians responding to social unrest and problems of productive performance. And so were born the GAECs. But instead of creating communality, the law has engendered inequality, established a powerful instrument of control over women and the young. Recreating patriarchal domination in agriculture, it has also made the farmers increasingly dependent on the state. Today the GAEC movement is still very much alive and sustained by an ideology that has allowed the farmers to interpret, to act and to

reinterpret their commitment.

The paradox of the GAEC movement is that communality failed because it generated alienation. Marx pointed out (1964: 106-119) that alienation in a capitalist society results from 1) the estrangement from the products of labor, 2) the estrangement from the means of production, and 3) the loss of a sense of meaningful involvement in the production process. For communal farmers the GAEC framework created a context for reducing alienation. As individual farmers before forming a communal association, they already had a sense of involvement and control over their work. But the GAEC law, by institutionalizing communal labor, gave them a sense of meaningful involvement with other human beings in the process of production. Unfortunately the GAEC system, by introducing a strict dichotomy between members and non-members, engendered alienation among the non-members. To them, the GAEC took away their sense of belonging. The reversal of the kin-embedded GAEC is in many ways a desalienating process.

The GAEC movement whether concretized in communal or in kin-embedded forms, represents a significant attempt to redefine the relationships of farmers to the larger environment. Rogers, pointing to the resilience of local

cultural forms in the face of growing involvement of the state in the farming community argues that this is possible because:

St. Foyans have opted in significant measure for closer conformity to local notions of the appropriate, incorporating new elements quite selectively, and then in forms amenable to local structures.

(1991: 35)

In other words, in St. Foy today, farmers have found the traditional ostal system well adapted to shifting economic conditions, and have, to some extent, remodelled it to fit local rules and current circumstances. It is my contention that the GAEC movement, at its origin, with its strong communal orientation was in fact a conscious attempt to reinvent a peasant culture and to redefine "notions of the appropriate." In Meilleux, such redefinition led to a displacement of the significant social unit of production from the household to the community. In that case, it was not the survival of "local notions of the appropriate" that prevailed but a

set of newly articulated values. The influence of the war, as an extraordinary experience in the life of the young farmers of Meilleux, and the enthusiasm and permissiveness that followed were absolutely critical to the invention of new local notions.

This new ideological outlook on the farming community matured at the grassroots level. But the actual implementation of those values fell under tight state control, which eventually led to a clash between grassroots aspirations and state demands. The evolution of the GAEC movement into more and more kin-embedded forms indicates its superior adaptiveness to shifting economic conditions. But as was noted earlier this pattern reproduces a more traditional family organization, and actualizes it by introducing the notion of separate residence. In doing so, the organization of a kin-based GAEC has led to a maximization of the household social resources to the benefit of the GAEC farm. Here again, however, it is foreseeable that state requirements on, and control over, GAEC farmers will create a conflictual situation for the farming unit. The case study of the GAEC reveals how people, in the face of state encroachment, have nevertheless managed to ensure some continuity in the movement in general by shifting the

emphasis from community to kinship, in other words by grounding the "local notions of the appropriate" into real and not created experience. This case study shows that reinforcement of kin bonds within the format of GAEC law proves to be the most viable means for expanding the framework of agricultural family operations.

APPENDIX

Case Study #1: GAEC La VisetteType

Father (Louis) and son (Bruno) association.
Formed in 1987.

Land

44 hectares, all rented
Father's contribution: 30
Son's contribution: 14

Capitalization

One all-purpose tractor

Production:

Farming: 42 hectares in wheat and maize
 2 hectares in soy
Livestock: 10 dairy cows

Household:

Louis, his wife Marie, and son Bruno live under the same roof in an old farm house leased from the same landlord.

Division of Labor:

None between Louis and Bruno, but one between Louis and Bruno in charge of production on one hand, and Marie responsible for distribution on the other. In addition, she grows a large kitchen garden for local sale on the Beaurepaire market. Marie's income is drawn exclusively from the kitchen garden production.

Prospect for the future:

Father wishes to retire in five years.

Solution #1: Bruno's sister and her husband join the GAEC. This is possible, however, only if land addition takes place to fulfill the minimum acreage requirement for three farmers.

Solution #2: GAEC dissolution and abandonment of farming.

Social/political activities:

Louis is farmers' union representative.

Louis and Bruno are involved in lobbying for irrigation project for the region.

Case study #2: GAEC du Dolon

Type

Communal GAEC from 1969 to 1982

Father (Paul) and son (Andre) GAEC since 1982.

Transformation

First stage (1969-1977): Four-member association between Paul, Max, Jean and Pierre. Neighbors and longtime friends.

Second stage (1977-1979): Three-member association between Paul, Max and Jean. GAEC headquarters at Paul's.

Third stage (1979-1982): Two-member association between Paul and Max. GAEC headquarters at Paul's.

Fourth stage (1982-present): Father (Paul) and son (Andre) association. GAEC headquarters at Paul and Andre's.

Land:

First stage: GAEC has 83 hectares; 28 hectares brought by Paul, 25 by Max, 18 by Pierre and 12 by Jean.

Second stage: 65 hectares

Third stage: 53 hectares

Fourth stage: 34 hectares. Father contributed 28 hectares, son 6 hectares bought from Max.

Production:First stage:

Farming: 78 hectares in wheat and maize
4 hectares in tobacco, abandoned
two years later

Livestock: 45 dairy cows
30 heifers

Second stage:

Farming: 65 hectares in wheat and maize
Livestock: 40 dairy cows
24 heifers

Third stage:

Farming: 53 hectares in wheat and maize

Livestock: 35 dairy cows

20 heifers

Third stage:

Farming: 53 hectares in wheat and maize

Livestock: 35 dairy cows

20 heifers

Fourth stage:

Farming: 20 hectares in wheat and maize

5 hectares in colza

8 hectares in soy

Livestock: 20 dairy cows

0 heifers

Household:

First, second and third stage: households

separated from the GAEC.

Fourth stage: Paul, his wife, and sons Andre and

Regis, (the younger), live under the same roof,

in a sturdy farm house on top of a hill

overlooking their fields.

Division of Labor in the fourth stage:

Although there are technically only two GAEC associates, the four family members are seen working together. Week-end chores are alternately shared by Paul and his wife, and Andre and Regis.

Prospect for the future:

Paul will retire in a couple of years. His shares will be taken over by Regis, who is now undergoing agricultural school training, and the GAEC will become a brother-brother association.

Case Study #3: GAEC La Deroy

Type

Father (Lucien) and son (Luc) association.

Formed in 1978.

GAEC office and legal address at Lucien's house.

Land

34 Hectares

Father's contribution: 33 hectares

Son's contribution: 1 rented fruit orchard
hectare

Capitalization

Machinery for fruit production, i.e. sprayers,
pick-up truck.

Production:

Before GAEC formation:	24 hectares in wheat
	8 hectares in maize
	1 hectare in tobacco
Today:	20 hectares in wheat
	2 hectares in maize
	3 hectares in tobacco
	9 hectares in fruit trees

Household:

1978-1981: Lucien, his wife Lucie and son Luc lived under the same roof.

1981-present: Luc has established separate residence with his wife Arlette and their children in a newly built house down the road from Lucien. Intensive exchange between the two nuclear families involving shared meals at least once a week, Lucie babysitting the children when Arlette works, Arlette drives her mother-in-law to town for shopping and errands. Luc and Arlette take a one week vacation three times a

year at a ski or seaside resort. Lucien and Lucie are off three weeks in October, during which they usually travel to a warm country for a week. Both families live in modern, comfortable houses. Arlette is a registered nurse and works full-time at the local hospital where she is a nurses' union representative.

Division of Labor:

Luc is in charge of the accounting and paper work. In production, however, there is no visible division of labor. Lucie helps with the paper work. Because they do not have livestock, the question of permanency on the farm is not as crucial.

Prospect for the future:

Luc has two sisters and one brother, all settled in Grenoble. One sister is a nurse; the other sister and the brother are white collar workers. None of them show any interest in the farm. Luc and Lucien had the value of the farm estimated in

order for Luc to start the process of buying off his siblings. In the long run, although Luc wishes to maintain a GAEC organization, he was not sure if association with a non-kin partner would work out. On the other hand, the farm was too large to work alone, and he was not thrilled at the only possible alternative, i.e. revert to a single family farm with one hired laborer. Luc disliked the employer/employee relation of authority. In addition, he was not convinced that he would be financially able to face the cost of being an employer.

Case Study #4: GAEC Le Janin

Type

Father (Paul) and son (Pascal) association.

Formed in 1981.

GAEC headquarters in Paul's farmhouse kitchen

Land

82 Hectares

Father's contribution: 70

Son's contribution: 12

By 1970 Paul controlled 70 hectares of land (he owns 60 and rents 10). In 1980, one year before GAEC formation, Pascal acquired 12 hectares with a state grant through viager from an elderly lady neighbor. Viager is a widespread legal procedure under which a living person sells her/his estate (or part of it) to another person who cannot make use of it until the original owner dies. The

price of such transactions is often much lower than market value. In 1981 the elderly lady died. Pascal became the owner of her estate and added it to his father's 70 hectares to form GAEC le Janin.

Capitalization:

GAEC Le Janin has acquired three new tractors

- o 90 horsepower tractor for tilling at a cost of FF200.000
- o 68 horsepower tractor for fruits and vegetables and fruit trees at a cost of FF135.000
- o 35 horsepower for transportation at a cost of FF95.000

All were bought on credit from Credit Agricole on ten year terms with interest at 3.5 percent, 4.5 percent and 4.5 percent respectively. On average, monthly reimbursements total FF3.200.

Irrigation system.Production:

Before GAEC formation:

Farming = three quarters in wheat, one quarter in maize

Livestock = 10 dairy cows.

After GAEC formation:

Farming: 35 hectares in wheat and maize
 18 hectares in maize
 18 hectares in colza
 11 hectares in fruit and vegetables

Livestock: 0 cows

 12 pigs

Sophisticated irrigation system well kept by
Pascal

Household:

Paul and his wife live in a modern house built 15 years ago next to the old familial house today used as storage space. The new house, the old one and a couple of barns make up a large structure with an imposing inner yard.

Upon marriage, Pascal moved to a newly built house 100 meters down the road from the farm.

Pascal's wife works as a post office clerk in Beurepaire. She has a cordial although somewhat distant attitude toward her in-laws. The two families however typically share Sunday dinners in Paul's home. Pascal takes his lunch with his parents every day.

Division of Labor:

Paul is responsible for marketing. Three times a week between June and October he takes the production to a central market in Lyon.

Pascal who obtained an advanced degree from an agricultural school is in charge of the technical and specialized aspects of the production, i.e. maintenance of the irrigation system, soil analysis to determine if any minerals ought to be added, detection of crop diseases, research on new plants etc. In 1988-89 he was about to start a new venture in tomato growing. Other than that, there is no division of labor between father and son.

Paul's wife cares for the pigs, and for years she has been saying that she wanted to get rid of them. In addition she provides a great deal of labor during fruit and vegetable harvest season and supervises the couple of high school students who help them out then.

The GAEC is a member of the Cooperative Dauphinoise which distributes cereals and grains. It is also a member of the CUMA of Beaurepaire through which Paul and Pascal have access to threshers and to the machinery adapted to stony land.

Prospect for the future:

Pascal has two sisters. One is married and settled in Grenoble. The younger one, a student in agricultural college, wants to return to the farm. She will most probably join the GAEC transforming it into a father-son-daughter association, which in the future will turn into a brother-sister GAEC.

Case Study #5: GAEC Maronia

Type

Father (Marius) and daughter (Claire) association.
Formed in 1981
Headquarters at the farmhouse.

Land

26 hectares, owned by the father before GAEC
No irrigation, stony area
Plots of land are dispersed, hence complicating
the process of production.

Capitalization

None since GAEC formation.
Marius contributed all-purpose tractor to the
GAEC.
GAEC is a member of the CUMA from which they
borrow a thresher.

Production:

Farming: 20 hectares in wheat
3 hectares in tobacco
3 hectares in pasture land

Livestock: 26 dairy cows

Milk sold to the Cooperative
Dauphinoise.

Father owned 14 cows before GAEC
association; Claire used state grant
and Credit Agricole loan to acquire
12 cows.

Household:

Live under the same roof in an old, decrepit
farmhouse. Family includes Marius, a widower,
his daughter Claire a divorcee and her two young
children aged five and three.

Division of Labor:

Marius operates the tractor most of the time, although Claire occasionally does too. Claire and Marius alternate milking, which is done completely manually. Both share tobacco duties. In addition, Claire is in charge of housekeeping, food shopping and taking care of the two children who once every other weekend spend two days with their father. Clearly, Claire is overworked, especially in the Fall when tobacco is harvested.

Prospect for the future:

Prospects for the future are bleak. Marius would like to retire in two years. In 1986 Claire's sister asks for her share of the farm inheritance in order to buy herself an apartment in Grenoble where she is a psychiatric nurse. Claire took out a loan for FF150.000 on a 25-year term. Her monthly installments are over FF5.000. As a result, she has not been able to save, and can barely face all her expenses.

She hopes to be able to remain in the GAEC association after her father retires. But she is very skeptical about finding an outside GAEC partner who could buy Marius' shares because of poor farming conditions (scattered land, stony ground, outdated farm and storage buildings, etc.). To make the farm competitive would require a great deal of capital and improvement, something that cannot be considered today because of Marius' lack of optimism and her own financial overextension.

Case Study #6: GAEC du GoubetType

Father (Robert) and son (Roland) association.

Formed in 1978.

GAEC headquarters are in an office located apart from the farmhouse.

Land

35 hectares, all contributed by the father.

Capitalization

Since 1978 the GAEC acquired a tractor and a high-tech automated barn.

Production:

Farming: 35 hectares in cereals, part of which is sold to the Cooperative Dauphinoise, part of which is stored for winter cattle feed.

Livestock: 35 dairy cows. Roland used a state grant to buy off part of his father's herd as his social capital contribution.

Household:

From 1978 to 1987 Robert, his wife Anne, and Roland lived under the same roof in an old, sturdy but comfortable house surrounded by impressive storage barns and the newly built automated barn for cows.

When Roland married in 1987 he moved across the street with his bride in a rented house.

Division of Labor:

There is no division of labor between father and son. They alternate on duty week ends. Because of the high level of automation, one person is enough to care for the herd. Roland appears to be a bit more involved in paper work. Robert's wife, Anne, has in recent years set up a small

business of home processed milk products that she sells to city folks on their way to country houses. Roland's wife, Chantal, is looking for a job in Beaurepaire. Meanwhile she has been marginally helping out on the farm.

Relationships between Chantal and her mother-in-law Anne are not very friendly. Chantal tries to minimize visits to her in-laws.

Prospect for the future:

Robert plans to retire in three years, at which point Anne will replace him for probably another two years. Such substitution is possible when a couple is married under communal property law. Roland has one brother who is finishing up veterinarian school. The question of buying him off has not so far been raised.

Since the GAEC has been legalized, Robert and Roland have addressed the question of farm inheritance. Every month Robert withdraws in salary twice the amount of Roland. This

difference is aimed at building up Roland's investment in the GAEC, since it is counted as a financial contribution to the GAEC.

Case Study #7: GAEC Mas Fontaine

Type

Brother (Paul) and Brother (Jean Marc)
association.

Formed in 1984.

From 1977 to 1984 the GAEC association was
between Paul and his father. Jean Marc, who was
working in Africa on social projects, came back
and replaced his father.

GAEC headquarters are non-existent.

Capitalization

None, with the exception of a prefabricated
building with fixed roof and plastic rolling
walls to dry out tobacco leaves.

Production:

Farming: tobacco

Livestock: 15 dairy cows

Household:

Paul, his wife, and their child live in an old, simple farmhouse. Jean Marc, his wife and two young children live in a separate house across from the courtyard, otherwise surrounded by two other agricultural buildings. The two nuclear families are very close to each other. They share meals frequently, especially in the summer when a big outside table is set up in the yard. The three children are practically raised together.

Division of Labor:

None between Paul and Jean Marc. Because of the nature of their production, they spend a great

deal of time together, doing routine tasks as sorting tobacco leaves, hanging them, turning them over, etc. They also do the milking and clean up the barns together. Besides being brothers, they are also best friends.

Prospect for the future:

Paul and Jean Marc are the only siblings. When their father died they collectively inherited the farm. Since the father-son former GAEC association was set up on a 50/50 percent share basis, the buying off of the heir balanced the selling off of GAEC shares. From a practical point of view, this meant that Jean Marc could join the GAEC without contracting any debt.

They have been reconsidering the production as a whole. Tobacco is a very labor intensive activity, but financially secure because of the state buying monopoly. Dairy cows on the other hand are not as rewarding financially since the introduction of quotas. Paul and Jean Marc also argue that in order to be economically efficient

they would have to increase the herd to at least 30 head of cattle. That in turn would trigger a need for modernization which would lead to indebtedness. So far, they have not taken out any loans.

Both their wives are school teachers and undoubtedly their income contribution has so far allowed GAEC production to go on.

Case Study #8: GAEC La Blondiere

Type

Brother (Gilles) and brother (Yves) association.
Formed in 1965 as a Father-brother-brother
association. Transformed in 1975 to a
Brother-brother GAEC.

Land

Very little due to the intensity of their
production. The minimum area requirement applies
differently for intensive cultivation in open
houses.

Capitalization

Heavy. Always in search of new technology to
assure more competitiveness on the market very
much dominated by production from the Netherlands.

Process of capitalization involves expansion of greenhouses; heating system; humidifying system; seeds, chemicals and fertilizers; electronic control mechanisms; computer system to improve marketing, etc.

Household:

Each nuclear family lives on one end of a very long, magnificent medieval structure. In between are located GAEC headquarters.

There is almost no interaction between the two families since the two wives are not on speaking terms.

Division of Labor:

Very strict. Gilles is in charge of marketing and distribution. Yves is responsible for technical aspects of production. The two supervise workers. Monique does all the

accounting. Agnes on the other hand is completely detached from the GAEC.

Due to the nature of the production, which requires constant supervision, Francis and Paul have been able to hire five workers, each of them trained in a specific aspect of cut flower production. This possibility was included in the GAEC but represents a highly unusual instance.

Prospect for the future:

None of the younger generation is interested in taking over the business. Gilles and Yves foresee that they would have to sell their business, which because it is very efficient, should not be too difficult.

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