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Europeanizing Patriarchy:  
The EU's Common Agricultural Policy

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Non-discrimination on the basis of gender has become a fundamental right in the European Union (EU), and the EU has made the pursuit of gender equality one of its main goals. The 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam adds the promotion of equality of women and men to the list of major tasks of the Community and stipulates that the task be pursued in all its activities. Even before the treaty wrote "mainstreaming" into EU law, gender equality policy emerged as the only common social policy with far-reaching implications. Gender equality norms have increasingly been included into various EU policy areas, and member-states have been forced to adapt domestic practices. Thus, legal frameworks and policy pronouncements signal the apparent end of patriarchy in Europe.

But, while gender-equality norms seem to diffuse in the EU, scholars have observed differences in the way in which they have impacted domestic practices and in the degree to which different EU bureaucracies have been receptive to a gender perspective. Jupille and Caporaso (2001) find that the EU's gender equality policy has effected more change in the UK than in France; Ostner and Lewis (1995) describe two "needle ears" that reduce the effectiveness of the policy -- a limited EU agenda that focuses on workplaces to the exclusion of the private sphere and difficulties in domestic level policy implementation particularly in "strong breadwinner states" such as Ireland and Germany (see also Hoskins, 1995). Elgstrom (2000) traces the considerable level of indifference and resistance that "norm entrepreneurs" have encountered in the EU when seeking to implement the Council resolution on integrating gender issues in development cooperation; and Pollack and Hafner-Burton (2000) find that the Directorates-General with a neo-liberal outlook are the most resistant to gender mainstreaming.

While difficulties at the national level are to be expected -- after all the pervasiveness of patriarchy at the state levels has been extensively documented -- difficulties at the EU level are not immediately explained. They point to an under-studied phenomenon, i.e. the EU as a patriarchal regime. There is now a broad range of literature that documents the enmeshing of gender and international economic politics and the approach needs extending to the study of the

EU. According to this literature, economic liberalization has proceeded in parallel with women's liberation. In the liberal discursive economy of international organization, women are no longer housewives but workers freed from the shackles of the patriarchal family (Whitworth, 1994; Prügl, 1999). In the new era of globalized production, liberalized trade, and weakened welfare states gender constructs have taken on new shape and effect new outcomes. A rhetoric of hypermasculinity facilitates new practices of exploitation -- often perpetrated on the female body (Ling, 2001; Hooper, 2001; Price 2000). Furthermore, despite a construction of women as workers equal to men, the expectation that women perform most of unpaid housework and care work remains unchanged, creating contradictory arrangements when women seek to reconcile the role of worker with the demands of domestic work. A disproportionate number of women earn income from their homes (including in the informal sector) with remuneration far below that of workers outside the home and often without any social protection (Prügl, 1996). Furthermore, it is typically women who work as assisting spouses on farms or in family businesses, a practice that enmeshes the rules of dependent employment and marriage contracts, often precluding a right to pay or social security.

Starting from the assumptions in this literature, i.e. that gender orders and economic orders intersect to produce unequal and often unjust outcomes, this paper probes the European Union as a site where gender relations are negotiated. I focus on the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) because it is its oldest and most extensive common policy. My purpose is to probe gender politics at the formation of the CAP, in particular the relevance of the EU's early commitment to the family farm as the appropriate social mode of regulating the agricultural sector. The preservation of the family farm has been an integral part of the CAP from its inception. The final resolution of the Stresa Conference of 1958, where member states developed the outlines of the CAP, asserts the "unanimous will to preserve the familial character" of European agriculture (Conférence, p. 223). In this way the CAP has helped perpetuate a rural gender order that constructs male farmers as owners and heads of the enterprise and their wives as assisting spouses, rarely able to accrue an independent income or independent ownership of land. Given the need to modernize farming in Europe, the commitment to the family farm seems counter-intuitive. A rationalization of production methods along the lines of

industry, together with industrial-style labor relations, might have been the more logical approach.

This paper starts from the presumption that gender politics in European agriculture are part of a larger process of patriarchal rule operating at the level of the European Union. It probes how and why the family farm came to be the unquestioned anchor of the EU's common agricultural policy, and how the commitment to the family farm contributes to a European formation of patriarchy. I first provide an overview of the changing social organization of farming in Europe. Second, I probe the meanings that the family farm assumed in national discourses and the rhetorical purposes for which it was deployed. I focus my treatment on debates in the 1950s and 60s in the two countries which have been instrumental in formulating the CAP, namely Germany and France. In a final step, I argue that a confluence of ambiguous meanings in national discourses on family farming made for easy agreement at the international level, while affirming concordance about the legitimacy of patriarchal family farms within an EEC network of elites.

### The Social Organization of Farming in Europe: What is the Family Farm?

European farming today is overwhelmingly family farming. In 1997, almost 80 percent of the total agricultural labor force in the fifteen member states consisted of family labor. There are national variations related to the degree of modernization of agriculture. However, even in Denmark and the United Kingdom, where agriculture is most extensively professionalized, family labor accounted for at least 60 percent of the agricultural work force (EUROSTAT, 2000). Family farming is characterized by a distinct gender division of labor that assigns men the role of the "farmer" and women the role of "assisting spouse." Indeed, in 1997, over 60 percent of men in the agricultural labor force were classified as "farm managers," whereas about half of all women were classified as "spouses" (EUROSTAT, 2001).

Often considered a traditional form of economic organization, European family farming is rather a modern phenomenon that developed in parallel with Fordism after the second World War. Two political-economic processes made the modern family farms possible. First is the

“liberation” of European peasantry from feudal dependencies and share-cropping arrangements. Land reforms introduced liberal property rights and the rule of private law into the agricultural sector. This process occurred earlier in Western and Northern Europe, creating small- and medium-size agricultural holdings. In contrast, Eastern European countries instituted land reform only with national independence after the first World War, and large latifundia remained in existence in Southern Europe until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Ambrosius and Hubbard, 1989: 171-72).

The second factor enabling the creation of family farms was the “second agricultural revolution” of the mid-20th century. Employment opportunities in industry led to an accelerated exodus of agricultural labor after the second World War, encouraging the substitution of labor for capital. Mechanization (tractors, harvesters, etc.), the use of chemicals (fertilizers, pesticides), the introduction of new breeds of animals and new strains of crops, new methods of cultivation and animal husbandry all led to an enormous surge in productivity of labor and land (Ambrosius and Hubbard, 1989: 174-180). The development of Fordism as an industrial regime of accumulation and mode of regulation was thus paralleled by the creation of the modern family farm, not only as a productive unit, but also as a regulatory mode that helped stabilize farm incomes. According to functionalists, it did so by enabling a flexible deployment of labor in response to the vagaries of weather and biological growth cycles and to insecure income situations. The family organization of farming allowed the combination of off-farm and on-farm income earning as a form of social insurance (Rieger, 1995a, pp. 29-30).

The family farm differs profoundly from other economic organizations because it regulates economic practices not simply through the rules of private laws, but through the rules of family law as well. In other words, rules that regulate the relations of strangers with regard to labor relations and property (“private” law) intersect with rules that regulate private relations with regard to marriage, parentage and inheritance (family law). In this way family farms bring into public view gender orders construed as private much more extensively than this is the case in the industrial or service sectors. This order departs profoundly from the rhetoric of equality that has dominated talk about gender in the post World War II era.

Family farms in Western Europe are characterized by a thoroughly unequal division of labor that creates men as “farmers” and women as “assisting wives.” Typically, the role of the

farmer is to manage the farm, the role of the wife is to do all housework and a diverse array of farm work that often differs by region and by the size of a farm. Typically, farm wives have little influence on commercial decisions affecting the farm, they lack autonomy in their farm work, and often are assigned the least-valued tasks. Furthermore, they have no independent control over farm income, and have only recently acquired pension rights. Women inherit farms only when there are no sons, and if they get married, husbands typically take on the management of the farm while women become farm wives, losing control over their property and the income it produces (Delphy and Leonard, 1992; Whatmore, 1992; Schmitt, 1997).

This broad picture of the patriarchal family farm hides the considerable diversity in agricultural gender divisions of labor. Modernization clearly has impacted gender regimes. For example, in her study of women in agriculture in England, Sarah Whatmore (1991: 83) found that women's status differed depending on the degree to which a farm was "commoditized." On the surface, the status of women in large and rationalized farms was higher than in farms that relied exclusively on family labor. They were more likely to receive a wage and more likely to appear as business partners. Apparently, however, farmers engaged in these practices mostly for tax purposes, and women's wages usually were merely a token. Unlike farm wives in less rationalized farms, those in modernized farms rarely had control over or self-initiated projects -- they were casualized labor, "incorporated wives," housewives. In contrast, the "farming women" in less rationalized farms retained a distinctive status that valued their unique work contribution to the agricultural enterprise.

The unitary image of the family farm also hides the reality of part-time farming in many European countries. In 1997, only 27 percent of men and 12 percent of women worked in agriculture full time. Women were more likely to work in agriculture full time in Northern Europe (40 percent in Denmark, 32 percent in Ireland, 30 percent in Finland), and less likely to do so in the South (4 percent in Greece, 6 percent in Austria, 7 percent in Italy [EUROSTAT 2001]), reflecting perhaps the higher professionalization of agriculture and the higher productivity of farms in the North. In contrast, part-time farming means that both women and men earn additional income off the farm, depending on opportunities.

Outside opportunities have influenced the gender composition of agricultural labor. In some Mediterranean states, for example, there has been a tendency towards a feminization of

agricultural employment, especially in locations where alternative employment opportunities exist for men in industry. In Italy, Mary Braithwaite (1994, p. 63) observed that women made up an increasing share of agricultural employment, and in the Northern Italian province of Udine, women's participation in agriculture has been declining at a slower rate than men's (Overbeek et al., 1998, p. 58). In Portugal, the number of men employed in agriculture is decreasing, but the number of women has remained virtually stable (Schunter-Kleemann 1995, p. 198). But in Germany as well, the agricultural labor force is feminizing as men increasingly work off the farm and women take on tasks traditionally reserved for men (Schunter-Kleemann, 1995, p. 199; Rieger, 1995b, p. 87).<sup>1</sup> Thus, even though women may often work part-time on smaller farms, they appear to increasingly do most of the work on such forms.

Indeed, part-time farming is sometimes associated with a disproportionate number of women managing farms. In 1997, almost 20 percent of all farms in Europe were managed by women. They were much more likely to be located in regions where small farms predominate. Women's share among farm managers was 29 percent in Austria, 24 percent in Italy, 21 percent in France, 20 percent in Greece, and 19 percent in Portugal, compared to lows of 6-9 percent in the Netherlands, Denmark, Ireland, and Germany.<sup>2</sup> The holdings of female farm managers were smaller economically than those of men, with 82 percent of women's farms classified as small compared to 68 percent of men's (EUROSTAT, 2001). Braithwaite (1994, p. 57) describes the pattern in Spain: "Many female farm entrepreneurs are heads of small, economically unviable farms. The larger the farm, the less likely is a woman to be running it;" and Schunter-Kleemann (1995, p. 198) recounts the pattern for Portugal: "A majority of very small family farms in the north, predominantly worked by women, is juxtaposed to the extensive agriculture in the Alentejo." Again there may be a trend towards feminization in some regions. In Italy the

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<sup>1</sup>These tendencies are in contrast to developments in Greece where agricultural modernization in the absence of alternative employment opportunities has entailed a much more pronounced exodus from farming for women than for men, resulting in a "masculinization" of Greek agriculture where the ratio of men to women in agriculture increased from 1.7:1 in 1971 to 2.8:1 in 1991 (Overbeek et al. 1998, p. 27).

<sup>2</sup>The fact that not more women in Germany are registered as managers of the farm is surprising given the disproportionate number of part-time farms in the country.

percentage of farms run by women increased from 22 percent in 1988 to 26 percent in 1990 (Braithwaite 1994, p. 63), a trend confirmed by Overbeek et al.'s (1998, p. 65) findings in Udine, a province with a high presence of small farms. And Karin Bachmann (1999, p. 164) reports from Austria that the number of female managers of farms is increasing while that of men is decreasing.

The European family farm today thus covers a diverse range of organizational forms, and it is likely that family farms in the late 1950s exhibited as much diversity as they do today. Functionalists argue that family farms have survived because of their ability to adapt flexibly to the vagaries of nature and the market, and the diversity among family farms may support their argument. Yet, in the face of intense state intervention to stabilize agricultural prices, the functionalist argument also finds its limits.<sup>3</sup> The reasons why family farms mutated typically has not been adaptations to natural adversity. Functionalism cannot convincingly answer the question why the European family farm persists. Contrary to functionalist suggestions that credit the survival of the family farm with its flexibility, policy makers have long sought to counteract instability in agricultural markets not through family farming, but through market intervention, i.e. price policy. To understand the survival of family farming therefore requires a look at European agricultural politics. The fact that European policy makers at Stresa so unproblematically agreed on the need to preserve the family farm, and that they failed account for the diverse forms in which it appears, should make us ask about the political purposes that this singular construct served. In what follows, I probe the meanings of the concept in different contexts in order to gauge rules that informed rhetoric about the family farm together with the type of rule that such talk effected.<sup>4</sup>

### The Rhetoric of Family Farming at the CAP's Creation

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<sup>3</sup>Rieger (1995a) argues that it is precisely the erratic shifts in government intervention that today needs the flexibility of family farming. The unpredictability of state policy has replaced the nature as a source of instability for farmers. I doubt that this is a sufficient explanation for the persistence of family farming in Europe.

<sup>4</sup>On rules and rule in social theory and International Relations see Onuf, 1989.



The documents of the Stresa conference convey a broad agreement that EU member states wanted to ensure the continued existence of family farms as a basic organizational unit of agricultural production. This was not an economic decision. Delegates agreed on preserving the family farm for other, only vaguely specified reasons. Heinrich Lübke, the German minister of agriculture, suggested that the preservation of the family farm was necessary for reasons of both social and political order. Sicco Mansholt, the EEC's agricultural commissioner, apparently agreed: Preserving the family farm was not merely an economic matter, but above all a social, sociological and political affair (Conférence, 1958, pp. 47, 96).

But Mansholt also realized that the commitment to the family farm potentially contradicted the Commission goal, i.e. the modernization of European agriculture. At Stresa he insisted that the commitment to the preservation of the family farm could never be founded on political or sociological considerations alone, but is justified because of the family farm's economic importance. He continued immediately to talk about the modernization of farms, the creation of a "healthy structure" of agriculture and the anticipated disappearance of "sub-marginal" enterprises (Conférence, 1958, p. 112). Mansholt was not alone in his caution. Family farms did not figure at all in the talk of the Dutch agricultural minister at Stresa, who instead emphasized the importance of free trade and competition. The Dutch vision was one of European agriculture as "normalized," i.e. as operating by the same market principles as industry. In this view preserving family farms was clearly secondary to enhancing agricultural efficiency.

But Mansholt and the Dutch were a minority. Despite their considerably different policy interests in agriculture, the French and the Germans in particular agreed that the family farm needed preserving. Appealing to the unique structure of European agriculture, the fact that it consisted largely of family farms, allowed them to argue that agriculture was exceptional. Because it was exceptional, it could not be subjected to the same free-market rules as industry. It deserved a common policy that included subsidization.

The fact that the family farm provided a joint frame of reference for negotiators as they developed the outlines of the CAP, complements existing explanations of the origins of the CAP. Whether or not Moravcsik (1998) is right in asserting that national economic interests alone

explain the creation of the CAP<sup>5</sup>, his explanation (as much as one focusing exclusively on geo-strategic arguments) is incomplete if it ignores the rules of discourse that made possible an agreement. It hides the discursive dimensions of power, in particular the patriarchal order that informed and provided a common underpinning to the debates about the CAP.

German and French themes in arguments for the preservation of the family farm differed in national contexts, and there is little doubt that the trope of the family farm evoked different meanings for negotiators from different countries. Yet, in the international arena these subtleties submerged under a general agreement that family farms were important. The following review of national discourses provides an understanding of national themes that validated the family farm. Juxtaposing these discourses to European-level negotiations illustrates not only intersections of meanings, but also the ambiguity that facilitates communication and ultimately lends itself to reaching agreement. In other words, juxtaposing different discursive arenas allows for an exploration of the construction of commonality.

### **West Germany**

For German negotiators at Stresa, the preservation of the family farm was a central preoccupation. Unlike Mansholt, who took up the theme, economic reasons were not what motivated the German agricultural minister, Heinrich Lübke's, preoccupation with family farming. His commitment stemmed from other reasons. Some of these reasons emerge from the German policy approach to agriculture institutionalized in the aftermath of the country's 1955 agricultural law. Others pertain to cultural preoccupations revealed in discourses around agriculture.

West German agriculture was small-scale agriculture. In 1959, two-thirds of German farms had an area of ten hectares or less (Averyt, 1977, p. 8). On the basis of its 1955 *Landwirtschaftsgesetz* (agricultural law), the German government developed extensive measures for structural improvement together with a comprehensive agricultural social policy. The purpose was to "equalise [*sic*] the social situation of people working agriculture with that of

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<sup>5</sup>See debate in *Journal of Cold War Studies* 2, 2 (Spring 2000).

comparable professions” (Hendriks, 1991, p. 38). The social purposes of Germany’s agricultural policy were accomplished in particular through high price supports. As a result German agricultural prices at the beginning of the 1960s were the highest in Europe, leading to a situation where the equalization of prices under a common agricultural policy meant severe price cuts for German farmers (Lindberg, 1963, p. 243). The German commitment to raising agricultural incomes as a matter of social policy led to the preservation of an extensive sector of part-time farming. Indeed, “the importance of part-time farming has ... been called the distinguishing mark of German agriculture” (Averyt, 1977, p. 14). Rather than abandoning agriculture as farms were increasingly less able to support entire families; “husbands usually found jobs in light industry in the immediate vicinity while the wives, children, and grandparents continued to run the farms” (ibid., p. 14) In 2000, 57 percent of all German farming households derived the majority of their income from off-farm occupations. The rhetorical appeal to preserving family farming contributed to this development.

In the 1950s and 1960s, three themes dominate German domestic discourse on family farming. They revolve around: (1) creating a bulwark against Communism; (2) romantic ideas of the German nation; (3) notions of masculinity. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU), together with its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Socialist Union (CSU), formed the majority in West German governments throughout the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s. Their conservative philosophy, a mix of free market economics and Catholic social thought, guided policy-making in the agricultural sector and included a firm commitment to family farming. The significance of family farms for conservatives lay in their size and type of ownership. Small and medium-size family farms constituted a middle-ground between the East Elbian large land-owners, the Junkers, that had played a key role in bringing the Nazis to power, and the large-scale socialist style agriculture that agglomerated small land-holdings and turn these as well as the Junker estates into large “agricultural production units.” Private ownership and free enterprise, so the argument, guaranteed the political stability of the countryside against extremism.

Although German farmers are notoriously conservative and in the 1960s expressed their discontent with the CAP by defecting massively to the extreme right-wing NPD, conservative discourse conjured up the specter of communism rather than a Nazi threat. Supporting family farms by guaranteeing prices had kept communism out of the German country side. This was in

contrast to communist agitation in rural France and Italy, so the argument went. The comparison with Eastern Europe showed West German agricultural leaders in addition, that their farming system was much more efficient, and this became an argument against structural policies geared towards modernizing and enlarging farms. Edmund Rehwinkel, the long-time leader of the *Deutscher Bauernverband* (DBV) reacted against Commission proposals (that later entered into the doomed Mansholt plan) for structural reform in the late 1960s by conjuring up communist failure. Structural policy, according to Rehwinkel “threatened the existence of the family farm and aimed at the formation of huge collective farms, which would throw European farmers in kolkhozy” (Averyt, 1977, p. 56). Arguments in support of family farming got thus entangled in arguments about the superiority of the Western economic and political system. With the Cold War border running through Germany, the West German government enlisted family farmers to stabilize the front, the *Zonenrandgebiete*. Here it fostered industry to counteract an exodus from farming, to provide an off-farm source of income to male farmers while their spouses and other family members continued to operate small and relatively inefficient farms (Hendriks, 1991, pp. 36, 76-77).

In addition to seeing family farming as a bulwark against communism, German conservative politicians, supported by the DBV, evoked notions of German romanticism in order to celebrate rural life. In this context they connected family farming to national identity and the essence of national values. “A nation without farmers is no nation,” declared Franz Josef Strauß, leader of the CSU, and insisted that the rural sector was a “treasure trove of Christian attitudes and way of life” (Hendriks, 1991, p. 92). What exactly these Christian attitudes were is never quite spelled out, but they apparently connect to family farming. Both major churches in Germany, in their policy statements on agriculture, have affirmed their commitment to the “independence of the family farm” (ibid., p. 211). Hendriks summarizes reasons the Evangelische Kirche Deutschlands (EKD) supports family farming over “agricultural factories.” It not only provides “a high degree of satisfaction, in terms of independence, entrepreneurial initiative, control over working hours,” but also “closeness to the spouse, nature and animals, and a sense of knowledge about growth, maturing and death” (ibid., p. 209). The vision of free enterprise here merges with that of a harmonious oneness with nature (including apparently the

spouse) to paint family farming as an ideal of social organization that avoids the pitfalls of individualism and estrangement from nature characteristic of industrial society.

Church and conservative policies and statements celebrate a patriarchal order, and agricultural policies seek to preserve a rural masculinity that guides the rhetoric about family farming. The exaltation of the value of independence in family farming clearly pertains to the male farmer. For the “helping spouse” there is not independence; on the contrary, her situation is characterized by total dependence. Yet, the independence of the farmer is a key motive in arguments about price supports, still the dominant form of intervention in the CAP. The DBV, as well as the EKD, have rejected direct subsidies as a means of supporting German farmers on the basis of arguments that invoke their independence (Hendriks, 1991, pp. 156, 210). Subsidies would threaten the farmer’s status, turn him into a feminized welfare recipient rather than maintain him as the self-supporting figure of the romantic imagination. Hendriks (p. 148) suggests that the policies of the DBV respond to a *Statusangst* (status insecurity) that results from the farmers’ realization that they are valued no longer for their economic contribution and productivity, but as carriers of particular values. Arguably, *Statusangst* intertwines various layers of insecurity, including gender insecurities that accompany any process of social change.

## France

The German commitment to the family farm at Stresa reflects German agricultural policies in the post-War era. The same cannot be said of the French. For the French, the Stresa conference happened at the end of an era. During the fourth republic, agricultural organizations across the political spectrum professed their commitment to the family farm. A dominant theme in virtually all organizations was to raise prices; structural reform was secondary. This changed fundamentally with the creation of the fifth republic. A “relentless modernizer,” Charles DeGaulle believed that economic modernization, including the modernization of agriculture, would enhance French *grandeur* (Hoffmann, 2000, p. 69). Accordingly, the Gaullist government established a corporatist relationship with the *Centre National des Jeunes Agriculteurs* (CNJA), a reformist movement of young farmers that emerged from militant left Catholicism and advocated structural reform. In the early 1960s CNJA merged with the *Fédération Nationale des Syndicats*

*d'Exploitants Agricoles* (FNSEA), an organization dominated by conservatives and traditionally committed to high prices and the preservation of family farms. The influence of CNJA functionaries led to a change in FNSEA's "prices first" policy and "challenged one of the FNSEA's most fundamental principles; the notion that all family farms could be saved" (Keeler, 1987, p. 60).

The preservation of the family farm became a secondary preoccupation for a French government intent on modernizing the farming sector. With 26.6 percent of its population employed in agriculture (compared to 17.9 in West Germany), and 16 percent of its GNP derived from agriculture (compared to 8.4 percent in West Germany), the agricultural sector was economically much more important to the French than the Germans (Lindberg, 1963, p. 221). Like West Germany, France had a large number of small farms, however, proportionately there were more French than German medium to large-scale farms (Averyt, 1977, p. 22). The challenge for the French was to modernize and reduce the large number of small farms, which were severely undercapitalized. The agricultural orientation law of 1960s was modeled after the German law in that it calls for "parity" of agricultural incomes with those in industry, but it seeks to accomplish this through long-term structural reform rather than high prices (Averyt, 1977, p. 30; Keeler, 1987, p. 65).

Despite this reorientation, the family farm was not off the agenda of French agricultural politics. The goal of the government's policy was to develop "dynamic middle-sized family farms -- farms that would support two UTH (*unité de travailleurs hommes*) and thus allow for the utilization of modern technical methods of production and the efficient employment of labor and capital" (Keeler, 1987, p. 65). Smaller family farms also should receive a chance for survival. The law provided for "group agriculture" by providing the legal foundation for the merger and communal operation of contiguous family farms (*ibid.*, p. 66). Not surprisingly, the provisions of the law were controversial and gave strength to rival union movements that emerged in the early 1960s.

Three themes, resembling the ones in West Germany, characterize the debate over agricultural policy and the status of the family farm in France. The first uses Cold War rhetoric in order to both oppose and support structural modernization, employing the trope of the family

farm to fuel the argument. The second links French farmers to republican values to argue for a form of development that balances industry and agriculture. The third centers around gender.

Even before the CNJA reformers gained influence in the Gaullist government, their program of structural reform was attacked, and, as in the West German context, the specter of collectivized agriculture offered the rhetorical material for the attack. FNSEA leaders accused the CNJA of wanting to create a totalitarian *kolkhoz*, “of supporting theses which will lead us infallibly to absolute *dirigisme* and even the *kolkhoz*” (cited in Keeler, 1987, p. 61). This was not a new theme in the French debate.

The threat of collectivization Soviet style had haunted French farmers even before World War II, under Leon Blum’s Popular Front government, and became an issue in the context of the 1937 International Exposition in Paris. Here the French government presented a model village that captured its vision of a modernized French countryside. It included a town hall, a school (displaying a “domestic science” class for girls and a “manual skills class” for boys), a post office, a health clinic, public baths, a fire station, and water and electric utilities. It also had a building housing various professional farmers’ organizations, a community center, a union meeting hall, and numerous working cooperatives. There was a covered marketplace and an inn, but no church. A medium-size farm displayed the government’s vision of agricultural modernity: A four-bedroom farmhouse designed for a twenty-hectare farm (Peer, 1996, pp. 30-31). Conservative critics knew how to interpret what they saw: “Cooperatives here, cooperatives there; a silo instead of a church. Hum! This smells very much like a *kolkhoz*!” And again: “In correct French, one could translate this simply with an essentially French word of French origin: ‘*kolkhoz*’” (cited in Peer, 1996, p. 34). A guided modernization of family farms that sought their preservation was associated with Soviet-style collectivization because it employed forms of organization, i.e. production cooperatives, that contradicted the image of the independent farmer.

The French left’s vision of modern agriculture was to counteract the massive death of small family farms that had begun after the first World War and continues today. This was the program of DeGaulle’s post-World War II government, when he appointed a socialist resistance leader, Pierre Tanguy-Prigent, as his agricultural minister. Tanguy sought to modernize French agriculture through the formation of cooperatives that would voluntarily merge small family farms (Keeler, 1987, p. 39). His battle cry was taken up again in the 1960s by the newly formed

*Movement de Défense des Exploitants Familiaux* (MODEF). Founded in 1959 by socialists and communists in the South and the Massif Central, areas where small farms predominate, MODEF became a means of organizing rural opposition against Gaullist agricultural policies of modernization (ibid., p. 84). However, unlike their left predecessors, MODEF gave up on a program of cooperative formation and modernization, and instead now organized its arguments purely around the preservation of the family farm. The appeal to the family farm turned from a battle cry for modernization (through cooperatives) to one that fiercely opposes modernization.

The second theme in French discourse around agriculture centered on the balance between rural/agricultural and urban/industrial life, ultimately reduced to a demand for a balance in incomes. For the French, as for the Germans, equalizing agricultural incomes was a matter of creating social and political stability. Unlike the for Germans, the French preoccupation built on a pre-War policy to stemming the rural exodus in order to maintain an equilibrium between industry and agriculture. Whereas for the Germans the family farm offered a bulwark against outside communism, for the French the peasant was the fortress against an internal enemy as well: i.e. the urban proletariat. Cities brewed revolution, including the not-too-far-off Paris Commune in 1871 and the massive demonstrations during the Popular Front government in the 1930s. The French watched with concern the rural exodus that began in the 1920, inveighed on the dangers of “overindustrialization”, and the government embarked on a conscious policy, not of industrialization as in Germany, but of maintaining a “healthy” equilibrium between industry and agriculture (Peer, 1996, p. 23).

These themes reappeared in the political rhetoric of FNSEA leaders after the war. Echoing Strauß’s nationalist celebration of the peasant, we find Pierre Halle, the FNSEA delegate to the *Confédération Européenne de l’Agriculture*, exalting the values of the peasant for European integration from a French perspective. There will be no rapprochement of European nations without the peasants, he proclaimed in 1949, “one will not build Europe without the peasants” (cited in Muth, 1970, p. 71). He immediately follows this announcement by outlining the “deep human values” of the European peasants:

... hard work, economy, patience, tenacity, resistance against nature’s blows. The peace-loving peasant who is attached to his soil and his tools is passionately for the independence of the family and for individual liberty ...



The peasant's love for peace make him the ideal partner in European reconciliation. His love of individual liberty and the independence of the family make him a republican, a bastion of French-type European values against the communist threat. But the peasant apparently also anchors Europeanness in ways that he rhooors nations. He connects the European project to the European soil, works this soil and resists nature's interference with his own designs tenaciously and patiently, he is the creator of a national (agri)culture. In light of this unique role of the peasant, it is necessary in the construction of Europe to maintain a "just and harmonious equilibrium" between agriculture and industry (quoted in Muth, 1970, p. 72). Muth deliberates that maintaining such an equilibrium may contradict the proposal to preserve all family farms. But that is clearly not what Halle even wanted to consider. The values that the peasant stood for were not those of a modernized farmer; they were those of a romanticized farmer, one that invariably comes with a wife.

Rhetoric that invokes the family farm thus always is also a rhetoric about gender relations although women are amazingly invisible in such talk and notions of threatened masculinity much less prevalent in the French literature (at least in the one I have examined so far) than in Germany. But French, like German rhetoric, clearly constructs the family farm as a patriarchal regime. Most clearly, romantic notions of family farmers envision a male head of the farm with a (mostly female) family entourage that serves as an unpaid labor force. In this romantic version, women appeared in the 1937 exhibition mostly as participants in folk festivals and dressed in traditional provincial costumes (Peer, 1996, p. 38), apparently evoking the national essence of France. Such notions do influence public policy proposals such as the demands for equalizing wages between industry and agriculture. The communist MODEF, for example, demanded that each farm worked by a husband and wife should receive an income "equivalent to at least one [average male] wage" (quoted in Delphy and Leonard, 1992, p. 220). Apparently, the wife's labor is not worth a wage. Constructs of public policy used to measure farm labor, such as the UTH (unité de travailleurs hommes), i.e. man work unit, deny the value of women's work, and statistical practices that routinely assign a man the title "farmer," regardless of what he says his main activity is, and a woman the title "family helper," even if she calls herself farmer, are built on and perpetuate often false understandings of divisions of labor on farms (ibid., p. 217).

Constructing the family farm as one that matches a particular patriarchal order apparently is necessary for it to fulfill its rhetorical purposes.

Especially interesting in a French context preoccupied with agricultural modernization is the question of how such modernization has affected gender divisions of labor and the roles of women and men in agricultural households. The image of domestic science classes for farm girls in the 1937 exhibition reveals an aspiration of modernizers to make farm women into housewives. This was not only the case in the government's Rural Center, but also in LeCorbusier's Modern Times Pavilion which provided the farm house with all the commodities LeCorbusier found desirable in urban living: "air, water, sun, electricity, heat, and all the domestic conveniences to liberate the farmer's wife" (cited in Peer, 1996, p. 40). The family farms of the modernizers thus resembled urban households consisting of workers and housewives, defacto destroying "the family farm" as the balancer of urban/industrial excess.

#### The Family Farm at Stresa: Europeanizing Patriarchy

Very little of this rich rhetoric entered into the deliberations at Stresa, at least as recorded in the reports, leaving us to speculate about why negotiator invoked the family farm. Concerns about mooring a European identity, in the same form that the family farm served to anchor national identities, were not salient at Stresa. There was little talk about the unique values preserved in a countryside populated by family farms. Apparently, these were national preoccupations that negotiators found inappropriate to introduce to an international audience. Similarly, talk about gender was not explicit; the threat of rural masculinity apparently not (yet?) a European-level problem at the end of the 1950s, Fordist patriarchy well-entrenched, not under attack from a feminist movement, and victims of agricultural restructuring able to find jobs in industry that allowed them to slip in the role of a "breadwinner."

What then did the appeal to the family farm accomplish at Stresa. I would suggest that it served to cement the notion of agricultural exceptionalism at the European level. While the French and the Germans both wanted to modernize their agricultural sector, they were unwilling to do so through liberalization. Interest group politics and electoral considerations played a role

in this preference, as various authors have argued. But these reasons could not be adduced in international negotiations. The appeal to the family farm allowed negotiators to argue for an approach to agriculture contrary to free-market principles. Cold War rhetoric and the French theme of overindustrialization helped make the argument at the European level as well, developing a commonality between German concerns about the stability of the countryside (bought with high agricultural prices) and the Dutch/Commission concern with modernization.

Mansholt's address to the conference, concerned to mollify resistance against modernization, illustrates the rhetorical potency of the family farm: Did modernization entail a revolution of farming structures? Not at all, he insisted. On the one hand, it was absolutely necessary to maintain "the rhythm of agriculture" in "this period of industrial revolution." But this rhythm ties the hands of agriculture, and that is why it needs to be modernized so that it can hold its position. Does this mean that agriculture should be industrialized Russian style? Absolutely not. It is not "political or moral considerations" that lead him to reject this approach, but "objective motives founded on real facts." These "real facts" are elaborated as follows:

Production that is centered around plants and animals, that is attached to the soil and depends on atmospheric conditions requires intense and permanent daily care. The farmer must become one with his farm. This means for us, that there can be no question of totally revising the deep structure of our countries. We must improve and modernize our farms (Conférence, p. 111).

In this logic it was the modernization of agriculture that made possible its preservation and the preservation of the family farm whose unique character consisted in its deep attachment to the soil. The ambiguity of the concept family farm thus offered a terrain of easy agreement for both modernizers and those skeptical of rapid modernization. The common purpose of both was the preservation of the family farm.

Is it fair to suggest that the deliberations at Stresa were initial steps towards Europeanizing patriarchy? Clearly, negotiators did not deliberate the rules of gender relations in agriculture, but they did deliberate creating a European mode of agricultural regulation based on family farming. To the extent that family farming constitutes a patriarchal regime, negotiators contribute to a Europeanization of patriarchy. They introduced into European discourse a national concept that had served to cement women's subordination in the countryside, and helped

develop within an EEC network of elites a commitment to this patriarchal mode of regulation of the agricultural sector. The patriarchal character of the family farm did not lessen its legitimacy - indeed it may have eased agreement in an assembly consisting, with one exception, exclusively of men.<sup>6</sup> Probing the rhetorical significance of "the family farm" at Stresa makes visible a different power politics: The outcomes of negotiations are often built as much on an alignment of regimes of truth as on an alignment of diverse national interests. At both levels of debate power matters, and at the first level at least, it is frequently coded in terms of gender.

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<sup>6</sup>The one exception was Dr. Elisabeth Lünenburger of the Zentralverband der katholischen Frauen- und Müttergemeinschaften who was a women's NGO representative on the German delegation.

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