



**The Political Economy of Young Prospective Farmers'
Access to Farmland: Insights from Industrialised
Agriculture in Canada**

A Research Paper presented by:

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Canada

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of
MASTERS OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Major:
Agrarian and Environmental Studies (AES)

Specialisation:
Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD)

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The Hague, The Netherlands
December 2013

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Acknowledgements

To my friends at ISS, we have been through an amazing adventure over the last fifteen months and I could not have done it without you all. Thank you not only for keeping me sane, but also for inspiring me with your incredible perseverance. You have quickly become some of the most important people in my life and I know that no matter where we all are in the world, we will find each other again. A special thank you to my fellow AESers – the small but mighty major – I am so honoured to have been a part of such an intelligent and interesting group of people. I have learned so much from you, not just in class, but also in our everyday conversations. You have all inspired me endlessly and motivated me to stay focused throughout this journey.

To my parents, my brother, and my family at home – particularly my aunt who has been a constant support throughout my academic journey in so many ways – I could not have done this without you. Thank you for listening to me, through both the exciting and stressful moments, and for never doubting my ability to succeed in my endeavours.

To Roy, thank you for all of your insightful suggestions and for being excited about my research even in its initial undeveloped stages. Your knowledge on young people in rural areas and their relationship to agriculture has been so valuable in helping me to expand my AES-based perspectives to include other theories and concepts that I may not have had the opportunity to explore otherwise.

And to Jun, your enthusiasm for analysing and understanding agrarian and rural issues is an inspiration. Thank you for always supporting my (often vague) ideas and for encouraging me to challenge myself and to broaden the scope of my research, even when I felt overwhelmed. I could not have asked for a better supervisor or convenor and will carry with me what I have learned from you throughout my future endeavours.

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List of Acronyms

AGRI	→ Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food
CBC	→ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CEJA	→ European Council of Young Farmers
CYFF	→ Canadian Young Farmers' Forum
EU	→ European Union
FAO	→ Food and Agriculture Organisation
FCC	→ Farm Credit Canada
FRAQ	→ Federation of Young Farmers of Quebec
IFAD	→ International Fund for Agricultural Development
MIJARC	→ International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth
NFFN	→ National Future Farmers' Network
NSAC	→ Nova Scotia Agricultural College
NSDA	→ Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture
NSFA	→ Nova Scotia Farmers' Association
NSFA	→ Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture
NSYF	→ Nova Scotia Young Farmers
PFPP	→ People's Food Policy Project
YPF	→ Young Prospective Farmer

Abstract

Reasons behind the mass exodus of young people from the countryside have become very clear, as it is understandable that they are generally repelled by the agricultural sector's instability and the poorly compensated labour it offers. However, the real paradox exists in why some young people still want to farm, especially when they are not from farming families and do not automatically have access to the resources or property required to enter the sector easily. Very little analysis has been done on this intriguing segment of the population and *how* they are able to gain access to the necessary resources (loans, grants and education) required to be successful – particularly when their governments fail to implement policies that adequately address the obstacles they face. Positioned within an agrarian political economy framework, this analysis of how young farmers' social position, familial background, and age impact their opportunities asks: *How do structural factors impact prospective farmers' ability to gain access to land, and what are the political and economic institutions that facilitate or hinder this access? How have the mobilisation efforts by young farmers' organisations induced structural change?* The Canadian province of Nova Scotia serves as a case study of an economically weak region within a highly industrialised Northern country, one that actively engages in agriculture in all ten of its provinces, and yet is facing many of the same rural development problems as countries in the Global South. Nova Scotia also contains a significant number of new farmers under the age of 35, and the unity and agency of their communities has contributed to the formation of a number of organisations that have emerged provincially, nationally, and internationally. The implication of this research is to draw attention to the existence of mobilised groups of young farmers globally and the impacts they are making on agricultural policies, demonstrating that many young people *do* still want to farm and illuminating the necessity for governments to provide them more support in their pursuit of agricultural careers.

Relevance to Development Studies

Young people's lack of interest in agriculture has been gaining an increasing amount of attention in both academic and policy discourse worldwide, but there has been significantly less focus on how prospective farmers who *are interested* in working in the sector will be able to gain access to the necessary land and resources. There is a widely held belief that younger generations would rather migrate into urban areas in search of more viable employment opportunities, leaving the agricultural sector in the hands of the aging rural population. However, the number of organisations and projects that have been established by prospective farmers around the world paints a different picture – illustrating not only that many young people still have a strong interest in agriculture, but that they are also taking an active role in mobilising to ensure their interests are recognised in national and international arenas. This is an important issue to address in light of increasing concerns over who will be our next generation of farmers that are emerging globally alongside the adoption of a large-scale industrial agricultural model, which employs

fewer farmworkers and places less importance on the transfer of agricultural knowledge from one generation to the next. While the tendency for young people to prefer non-farm employment is not being contested here, this is an expected phenomenon considering the low value placed on agricultural work. My aim is to draw attention to those who *do* wish to enter into the sector and how rural socioeconomic and political structures may hinder or facilitate their access. Furthermore, in the broader context of development studies, an analysis of farming in contemporary Nova Scotia provides a relevant micro illustration of an issue facing countries globally. Despite being located in a wealthy, industrialised Northern country, Nova Scotia is considerably less “developed” than the rest of the provinces – struggling with fewer job opportunities, little investment in rural areas, and a weaker economy. Thus, through a broader lens, this research illustrates the difficulties facing rural communities around the world, as young prospective farmers find a decreasing number of livelihood opportunities available to them in agriculture. The importance of this issue should also be considered in relation to the interconnectedness of food markets on an international scale, within which the difficulties facing farmers in foreign countries also has a significant impact on the import and export of food in our home countries.

Keywords

Young prospective farmers; class analysis; land and resource access; Nova Scotia; Canada; young farmers’ organisations; agricultural policies; agrarian political economy.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Why do Young Farmers Matter?

If visions of a future based on sustainable smallholder-based agriculture are to be realized, and if young people are going to have a place in that future, these problems [of access] have to be taken seriously and given much more attention than has been the case in recent policy debate, and in recent research.

–Ben White (2012)

1.1) The Critical Role of Young Farmers in the Future of Agriculture

In the past few years, young farmers have received an increasing amount of attention from scholars and policymakers, as their widespread departure from rural areas becomes a pressing concern. These studies have focused predominantly on reasons why young farmers are leaving in search of more viable employment opportunities in urban areas, as well as on strategies for increasing their interest in the agricultural sector (Tadele & Gella, 2012; Bennell, 2007). The importance of understanding why young people are abandoning the countryside is not debatable, and it has become very clear why they are often repelled by the agricultural sector's instability and poorly compensated labour. However, the real paradox exists in *why some young people still want to farm*, especially when they are not from farming families and do not automatically have access to the resources or property required to enter the sector easily. Yet, very little analysis has been done on this intriguing segment of the young farmer population. Why are they still interested and how to they overcome accessibility obstacles?

It is common to assume that younger generations today are disinterested in farming, as many societies perceive this as an occupation requiring endless toil for little economic gain. Many parents around the world – even those who farm themselves – encourage their children to migrate to urban areas where they will have access to better educational and employment opportunities, and this has meant the agricultural sector has been left almost solely in the hands of aging rural populations. This creates a worsening problem of older farmers being forced to work much longer than they want to because there is a shortage of successors interested in learning the trade and inheriting their businesses (Anyidoho et al., 2012, 20-22; Sumberg et al., 2012; Tadele & Gella, 2012, 34-35). As a result, there has been very little generational renewal in the sector, which in turn means less new, innovative knowledge is being introduced into agricultural production. It has also caused many retiring farmers, who have become physically incapable of continuing to work, to be forced to sell their land to large agribusinesses, which are constantly seeking to expand their production output. This sets into motion a domino effect in which the growing prevalence of agribusinesses increases both the demand for and price of land, making it increasingly more difficult for young prospective farmers to obtain enough capital to purchase property. This cycle is perpetuated by large-scale industrial agriculture – a model that is capital, energy and technology-intensive, while requiring little human labour – progressively taking

over the sector worldwide and creating an environment where it is nearly impossible for new farmers or small-scale agriculture to survive (Chinsinga & Chasukwa, 2012; Lerohl & Unterschultz, 2000, 6-7; Carbone & Subioli, 2008, 1-7).

Like any young person who is entering the job market, beginning farmers are generally at a disadvantage when competing for employment opportunities due to their lack of work experience, skills, and undeveloped professional networks. Certainly, farming stands apart from other types of employment in that it is much more aptly defined as a lifestyle or an ideology than simply a job, due to the time, labour and complete devotion that it demands. And as a lifestyle, every aspect of a farmer's life has the potential to create obstacles to their success, including their ethnicity, gender, and their family's socioeconomic status (Bennell, 2007). For example, a young man from a well established large-scale farming family will likely be able to enter the agricultural sector easier than a young woman from a small-scale farming family or a non-farming background, due to differing levels of experience working with industrial equipment, access to familial land or machinery, relatives who can co-sign on loans, and the connections available through their family name.

Barriers become further magnified when a young person wants to start their own farm and must face the challenge of acquiring a piece of land. This has become a very prevalent issue in most countries around the world alongside the growth of large-scale industrial agriculture, which requires a smaller number of workers to maintain large production outputs, and those who are hired preferably have prior experience with large equipment and possess management skills (Pouliot, 2011, 4-7; Bennell, 2007; RBC, 2000, 7-8). Thus, it is not surprising that the number of young farmers working in the sector is decreasing drastically around the world, dropping 11.5 per cent to 9 per cent (2001 to 2006) in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2006) and 9 per cent to 6 per cent (1990 to 2012) overall in EU member countries (European Commission, 2012, 3; RGC, 2000, 2). And this is not just an issue faced by highly industrialised Northern countries – governments in Asia, Africa and Latin America are experiencing similar problems in trying to ensure young people remain interested in and able to access careers in farming, amidst growing fears of foreign dependency and questioning who will produce their food (Chinsinga & Chasukwa, 2012; Tadele & Gella, 2012; White, 2010 & 2012).

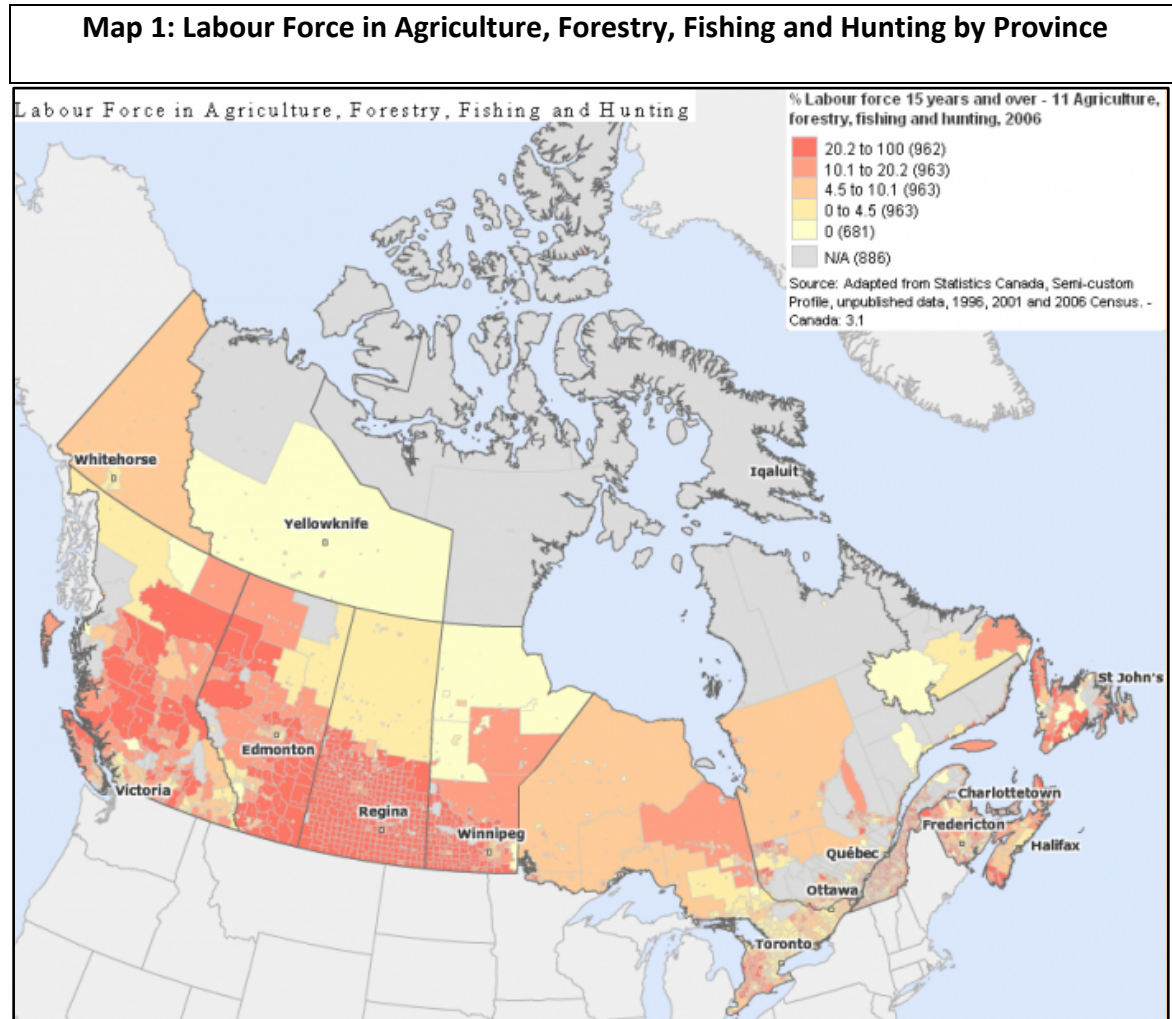
However, we are witnessing a glimmer of hope in the emergence of organisations established by prospective farmers around the world. These organisations appear in many different contexts, with different goals, and include the involvement of young people from many different backgrounds. Yet their commonality is that they all seek change for the future of agriculture and acknowledgment in policy agendas that young farmers deserve support from both the public and private sectors. Their existence illustrates the will of young farmers to take an active role in ensuring their interests are recognised in national and international arenas. Their activities are becoming increasingly more important in light of global preference for industrialised agriculture and genetically modified crops, which negate the importance of intergenerational transfer of agricultural knowledge (NSYF, 2013; La Vía Campesina, 2013; AGRI, 2010; Holt-Giménez et al., 2010).

The dominance of industrial agriculture is certainly not the only barrier affecting young farmers' ability to acquire land and employment; there are many other issues involved, including the increasing prominence of land grabbing and land concentration that is occurring globally (for an in-depth discussion of this see Borras et al., 2013, 6-28). However, this research focuses particularly on how this agricultural model may be disproportionately excluding some groups of young farmers based on their socioeconomic positions in society. This type of exclusion emerges in many different ways, but here I will analyse whether policies and programmes implemented in Northern countries are specifically supporting young farmers interested in industrial agriculture, because their governments believe that this is a highly efficient, productive and low cost model. These young farmers, who are generally from wealthy farming families, have more access to loans, grants and the familial resources required to obtain formal agricultural education. Meanwhile, those from non-farming or small-scale farming backgrounds who wish to pursue alternative models of agriculture, generally cannot afford to attend university and are faced with many additional obstacles when beginning their careers (Pouliot, 2011, 4-12; AGRI, 2010, 7-9). In this research, I will conduct an exploration into whether such uneven opportunities are both causes and consequences of class-based inequalities, both within and between communities.

The idea of "young prospective farmers" (henceforth referred to as YPFs) can be interpreted in many different ways. In the interest of clarification I will use a definition of "young farmers" that is based *partially* on those provided by the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum (CYFF) and the Federation of Young Farmers of Quebec (FRAQ). YPFs are people between the ages of 18 and 35 who wish to work in agriculture but have not yet been able to integrate fully into, or become fully employed by the sector due to various reasons. This includes people from both non-farming and farming backgrounds, but does not include those who have been able to establish themselves easily in the sector as the result of family connections and wealth (Haalboom, 2013, 6; AGRI, 2010, 6).

While the tendency for young people to prefer non-farm employment is certainly prevalent, the aim of this research is to draw more attention to those who *do* wish to work in this sector and how structural factors may hinder or facilitate their ability to do so. Additionally, this research focuses specifically on the most prominent difficulty they face – accessing land. In a survey carried out by the International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth (MIJARC), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), approximately 52 per cent of young farmers said that obtaining land was their biggest challenge when beginning their careers (MIJARC et al., 2012, 8). Acquiring land is certainly not only an issue for young farmers in small or arid countries in the Global South (see Borras et al., 2013, 6-28). As the second largest country in the world, Canada is commonly assumed to be land-abundant. However, a vast amount of its land cannot be used for agriculture, particularly in the cold northern regions and some of the rocky coastal areas. Furthermore, the majority of farming takes place in the four western provinces which have concentrated areas of flatland, making it relatively easy for farms to expand due to little spatial limitation (see Map 1 below). This area is most often

targeted by large agri-businesses that buy up the land as soon as it becomes available. The high demand also increases prices in this region, thus finding farmland that is not only available, but also affordable for young farmers is becoming increasingly more challenging (MIJARC, 2012, 8-11; Pouliot, 2011, 4-8).



Source: Statistics Canada, 1996, 2001 and 2006 Censuses

Key aspects of agrarian political economy perspectives are utilised in this research as its tools of analysis, as this framework is useful for investigating “the social relations and dynamics of production and reproduction, property and power in agrarian formations and their processes of change, both historical and contemporary” (Bernstein, 2010, 1). A case study of the Atlantic Canadian province of Nova Scotia, a region with a significant amount of agricultural activity yet little rural economic development (Brent, 2002; Veltmeyer, 1978), will allow me to undertake a focused analysis of specific policies as they are applied to particular communities of young farmers. This approach seeks to illuminate how agricultural

policies are implemented at the local level, providing a relevant micro illustration of an issue facing countries globally. This contemporary case study also highlights the interconnectedness of the agricultural sector as it interacts on an international scale, with particular attention to how the future of domestic agriculture can also be significantly affected by the difficulties facing young farmers in foreign countries.

Thus, while the reasons for the mass migration of young people from the countryside have become very comprehensible, the real paradox exists in why some young people still choose to farm, especially when they are not able to inherit the land and resources required to smoothly transition into the sector. Research and policy analyses have tended to neglect this compelling section of the young farmer population, and little attention has been focused on *how* they are able to gain access to loans, grants and education necessary to be successful in their pursuit of agricultural careers.

1.2) Research Question and Objectives

Thus, the main question I am seeking to answer is:

How do structural factors impact prospective farmers' ability to gain access to land, and what are the political and economic institutions that facilitate or hinder this access? How have the mobilisation efforts by young farmers' organisations induced structural change?

The objectives of my research are to:

1) Examine whether the increasingly industrialised agricultural sector is disproportionately excluding *prospective farmers*, who face many obstacles in accessing both land and employment opportunities due to their lack of finances and perceptions that they are unskilled or inexperienced. While it is widely acknowledged that large-scale industrial agriculture displaces labour and excludes most farmers, some may argue young people are preferred to operate these types of farms due to the perception that they have more technological education and skills. Thus, from the outset I will view this as a problematic issue, within which I intend to empirically investigate whether exclusionary processes exist and if they can be connected to social structure in rural areas.

2) Engage with the argument that younger generations are turning away from agriculture through a discussion of the activities of young farmers' organisations in Canada (such as Nova Scotian Young Farmers and Canadian Young Farmers' Forum). I will highlight the perceptions these organisations have of current agricultural policies, how they have been working to gain recognition in decision-making processes, and why investment in young farmers is imperative to secure the future of the agricultural sector.

3) Analyse the interaction between the government and prospective farmers, both through the policies and programmes that have been implemented, as well as governmental responses to pressure from young farmers' organisations to extend more financial support. This includes the Canadian and provincial governments promotion of agricultural training and education initiatives and loan/grant

programs, and the underlying structural reasons that may explain political support or lack thereof.

4) Investigate whether more engagement from young farmers could lead to a transformation of the agricultural sector by placing more power in the hands of new generations, and how this potential transformation might impact the future of the sector.

I will engage with these objectives by discussing both the practical and theoretical context of young farmers and their interactions with the Canadian agricultural sector, laid out in the following chapters:

In Chapter 2, I will introduce the theoretical framework by first giving an overview of some of the key aspects of agrarian political economy that are applicable to this analysis. I will then discuss the correlation between the exclusionary nature of industrial agriculture and Marx's theory of the "disappearance of the peasantry", and how young farmers are contributing to processes of 'repeasantisation'. Finally, I will present my own social categorisation of young farmers, which is based on an expansion of traditional class divisions that accommodates the subcategory of 'age class'.

In Chapter 3, I will draw in the case study of Nova Scotia by first offering an historical context of Canadian class structure. I will then discuss more specific details of farming in Nova Scotia by examining data collected from Statistics Canada that illustrate the changes that have occurred in the province's agricultural sector in the last few years. Finally, I will look at interview-based research conducted with eight young farmers in Nova Scotia to provide vivid examples of their start-up experiences, their motivations and the challenges they faced.

In Chapter 4, I will review the policies implemented by the Canadian government intended to assist beginning farmers and the criteria required to be eligible for loan/grant and education programmes. For comparative purposes, I will then discuss similar policies introduced in France, highlighting how young farmers are addressed in a country of a similar political and economic context. This comparison is beneficial both in illuminating where the inadequacies in Canadian policies lie, while also illustrating the international relevance of the obstacles facing young farmers.

In Chapter 5, I will highlight the mobilisation efforts of young farmers through the formation of organisations that lobby for inclusion in agricultural policymaking, arguing that this demonstrates the emergence of a combination of class-consciousness and everyday politics.

Finally, in Chapter 6 I will present my concluding remarks on young farmers' implication in the future of global agriculture, as well as areas for further research in which what is presented here may serve as a useful entry point.

1.3) My Role as a Researcher and Methodology

As a Nova Scotian, I was raised by a non-farming family both in a relatively rural area outside of Halifax and in the agricultural region on the North Shore of the province. My family has always had a healthy relationship to food, maintaining

extensive backyard vegetable gardens and ingraining in me a strong appreciation for where food comes from. As a child living in a small province with a comparatively high number of small-scale farms (compared to the predominance of vast industrial farms in the Canadian Prairies), I was constantly exposed to the beauty of Nova Scotian farmland and understood this model of farming to be both a productive and sustainable one.

As I began to learn about the current plight of the global agricultural system during my university education, it peaked my interest in the future of the sector, and most importantly, future generations of farmers. I began to read more about young people being increasingly less interested in farming, but this made me think about the young farmers I know in Nova Scotia and wonder why no academics seemed to be researching people like them. This sparked the idea for my research paper and it and it has continued to evolve during the past few months. As someone from a non-farming background, and with few connections to those directly embedded in the agricultural sector, I knew it would be difficult for me to locate individuals who could provide the pivotal information required for my research. Furthermore, I knew I would need significantly more time than is permitted in the research paper process in order to collect all of the primary data relevant to this analysis. Thus, I opted to conduct my research predominantly via published secondary sources in order to be able to collect a wider range of information and carry out a more multifaceted analysis.

This research combines a theoretical and conceptual discussion with a concrete exploration of policies and young farmers' experiences, making use of various published sources such as government and policy documents, academic journals, and project documents. I have chosen to work with existing texts because I am interested in what sort of attention young farmers have received from their governments and this requires a careful look at the sorts of programmes that have already been implemented and reported on. Furthermore, the main advantage of using existing texts is that I have been able to access a wide variety of data that has already been recorded, which saves a significant amount of time and has allowed me to explore a larger range and quantity of data than I would have been able to collect through fieldwork. Having access to a variety of data has been important for me to be able to understand the numerous issues faced by young farmers, due to the fact that my research combines a discussion of different perspectives (O'Leary, 2010, 217-221).

Additionally, I have used a case study approach which focuses on Nova Scotia, while also bringing in some contextualising information from Canada as a whole, illustrating both how agricultural policies are implemented on the ground, and ways in which rural young people have acquired their own spaces to voice their opinions on rural and agricultural development. This case study approach has strengthened my research by allowing me to dig deeper into the literature that pertains to this specific location, which facilitates a more tangible understanding of how abstract ideas and theories can be applied in real life. This method has also enabled me to compare and contrast how young farmers' opportunities differ within Canada's varying socioeconomic and political contexts. The advantage of this approach is that it serves as a micro illustration of the macro issue of prospective

farmers' land access and global uncertainty about the future of the agricultural sector (O'Leary, 2010, 173-178). This method also highlights how the Nova Scotian context is relevant to broader issues in rural development by pointing to key similarities between the economic situation in this small coastal province and the issues facing young farmers that are discussed by scholars from around the world.

To supplement my use of existing texts, I conducted email interviews with Rebecca Sooksom, Resource Coordinator for ThinkFARM (Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture) and Brad McCallum, a member of Nova Scotia Young Farmers (NSYF), both of whom I was connected to through a mutual contact at Dalhousie University's Agricultural Campus (formerly the Nova Scotia Agricultural College). This provided me with information about the kinds of activities ThinkFARM and NSYF are involved in, which has been very useful in expanding my understanding of where their interests lie. Additionally, I also conducted email interviews with two members of La Vía Campesina Youth: Blain Snipstal, a farmer in Maryland and a member of the United States-based Rural Coalition, and Morgan Ody, a farmer in Bretagne and a member of the Confederation of Farmers in France, whose voices add important insights to this research.

1.4) Challenges and Limitations of this Research

During the research process, my biggest challenge has been finding academic literature related specifically to YPFs who wish to enter into the agricultural sector, particularly those located within the small farming communities of Nova Scotia. I was able to find many documents from governments and young farmers' organisations that discuss policies and programmes directed at increasing prospective farmers' access to land and resources (e.g.: loans and grants), but most current *academic* literature I have found focuses instead on young people's *lack of interest* in agricultural employment. It also has been challenging to locate many evaluative reports of young farmers' support programmes in Canada considering the relatively recent implementation of such initiatives.

Furthermore, when working with government policy reports it is important to always keep in mind their potential bias regarding the effectiveness of their own policies. Thus, I had to ensure that I crosschecked the information presented in these reports with numerous external sources, and locating reliable evaluative reports from autonomous sources on the implementation and results of these policies was often challenging. Additionally, working with existing texts entails sorting through an enormous amount of data that is not specifically related to your research question, which is not only time consuming, but also requires you to critically analyse how useful a piece of text will be in the broader framework of your research. You must also be constantly aware of the biases you have that may cause you to prioritise one piece of data while omitting another. During both the researching and writing processes, I have tried to monitor my own biases and look critically at all of the texts in order to ensure my research is presented in an accurate, well-rounded manner (O'Leary, 2010, 217-221).

By addressing the limitations of this research, I hope that others may explore further some of the gaps mentioned, using this as a base exploration upon which to

expand. While the focus here is from a class-based approach, my intention is not to suggest that this is an all-encompassing framework that facilitates a complete understanding of young farmers' accessibility issues. Rather, my aim is to demonstrate how this method of analysis can be reshaped to help explain and understand this issue, and despite its controversial nature, a class-based perspective can indeed still offer useful insights into contemporary analyses. There are certainly many other important aspects to consider in understanding the interplay between one's class, and intersectional factors like gender and ethnicity. While I do very briefly mention both, due to their complexity and the scope of this research, I was unable to carry out an in-depth discussion of these elements that would adequately address the extent of their entanglement with issues of class. The discourse on interrelations between gender, ethnicity and class would require substantial attention and I determined that this would not be significant to answering my research question, but would rather dilute the clarity of my discussion by attempting to cover too many heavy topics. Thus, this research will focus specifically on the effects class has on young farmers' ability to start their own farms in terms of the accessibility of land, without analysing the additional impact that their gender or ethnicity may have on this.

Chapter 2

An Examination of Young Prospective Farmers within an Agrarian Political Economy Framework

2.1) Key Elements Relevant to this Research

When analysing the interactions between and within groups of people in a society, the way individuals are categorised depends on the goal of the research and the theoretical framework employed. Sociologists for example, divide people into groups based on their positions (commonly referred to as classes) in society. One's class is determined by "the social relations of production between classes of producers (labour) and non-producers" (Bernstein, 2010, 124). Analysis of class stems from our desire to gain a better understanding of the social lives, political orientations, life experiences and behavioural patterns of our fellow human beings (Veltmeyer, 1986, 11-12). Proponents of class analysis argue that the root of all of these aspects of a society can be found in its class structure and the ways in which individuals fit into it. This does not mean that the class a person belongs to can explain *every* aspect of their life (Wright, 2000, 1-2). Certainly there are many variations in the experiences and beliefs of individuals within the same class, and thus they cannot necessarily be identified based on common aspirations or values. However, class can illuminate patterns in society by categorising people based on a common role in the means of production, which also accounts for their relationships with another classes (Bernstein, 2010, 101).

Conducting class analysis can certainly be problematic in today's post-industrialisation context – particularly in a country like Canada that is considered to be one of the most technologically and economically advanced. Many scholars and government officials argue that class no longer matters when trying to understand why some groups in a society have better access to opportunities and resources than others. Debates are quite divided on whether class analysis is still a relevant tool in the 21st Century, making this a complicated framework to undertake when examining a contemporary rural development issue such as YPFs seeking access to the agricultural sector (Wright, 2000, 1-3; Clark et al., 1993). While the challenges facing young farmers are certainly not a new phenomenon, the attention this issue has received from academics and policymakers is relatively recent, gaining prevalence alongside increasing concerns over the rapidly decreasing number of farmers worldwide.

While a traditional class analysis would attempt to divide young farmers mainly within Marx's three categories – the proletariat (wage workers), the petit-bourgeoisie (managers and small business owners) and the bourgeoisie (capitalists who own the means of production, such as land) – I argue that an expansion of this framework is pivotal when trying to understand the barriers facing YPFs (Clark & Lipset, 1991, 397-399; Veltmeyer, 1986, 13-20). There is a common tendency to simply categorise young farmers into the class of their parents, however analysing them within a more distinctive sub-class of their own, one which takes into account

the unique set of structural and institutional barriers they face due to their age, offers a much more comprehensive examination of why they face certain challenges.

This subcategory, which I define as ‘age class’, groups together people of the same biological age range who also occupy a similar socioeconomic position, in terms of the opportunities (education, employment, etc.) they have access to (Carbone & Subioli, 2008). Despite the cumbersomeness of ‘age class’, it is the most straightforward term I have found to encompass my argument on the importance of examining the intersection of class and generation in the study of young farmers. Most studies tend to place too much emphasis solely on one’s “youthness” or try to force young people into existing class categories that do not fully encapsulate all of the factors that impact their lives. While both raise important theoretical ideas, individually these studies have limitations. Thus, creating a binary between both concepts draws attention to the importance of their intersectionality when addressing young people working in agriculture. Generational factors also play an important role in this subcategory, meaning that those within the same group have similar objectives and face comparable problems, which are generally influenced by the shared experience of growing up in the same era.

In a time when experience and connections are considered the most important assets in the job market, it is becoming increasingly more difficult for young people to secure employment. Despite the uniqueness of farming careers, YPFs are not immune to these difficulties, and are generally considered less “hireable” due to their lack of work experience and skills, and their undeveloped professional networks (Carbone & Subioli, 2008, 3-7; Bollman, 1999). Such preferences have exclusionary outcomes that are occurring in most sectors of the capitalist job market, and the examination of this process is appropriately framed by Bernstein’s four questions on the social relations of production (2010, 22-24).

Exclusion, meaning one’s entrance into something is blocked, is a key concept to be addressed when conducting an analysis from a political economy perspective because it stems from a lack of recognition for the issues facing vulnerable groups (Edelman, 2013, 13). The “exclusion principle” is identified as one of the three elements of exploitation that exists at the core of social relations in a capitalist economic system. Exploitation emerges due to the “the appropriation of the surplus product of classes of producers by (dominant) classes of non-producers” (Bernstein, 2010, 126). This principle highlights the material wealth of the exploiter being dependent on the deprivation of the exploited, which is created by excluding the exploited from access to productive resources. In turn, this exclusion gives the exploiter an advantage because it allows him/her to appropriate the labour of the exploited who has no alternative way to earn a living (Wright, 2002, 31-32). I undertake a more detailed discussion of how young farmers are being excluded and exploited by those who control industrial agriculture in the following section.

2.2) Industrialised Agriculture and the Disappearance of the ‘Peasantry’

When analysing the predominance of large-scale industrial methods in the global agricultural system through a political economy lens, the broader consequences and patterns of exclusion become more recognisable. Governments

worldwide increasingly consider this model of agriculture to be the most efficient and lucrative method for producing the maximum amount of export crops at the lowest cost. It has become most popular in countries where industrialised methods of production are prominent, such as Canada, where it is favoured by policymakers for its potential to stimulate export yields, economic growth and infrastructural investment (see Map 2 below). However, the possibility that such rural development paths may negatively impact or exclude certain groups in society is often neglected (Stinchcombe, 1961, 165-167). On paper industrialisation appears to have positive capacities, such as bringing income to rural areas and creating employment opportunities in expanding agribusinesses. However, such machine-intensive production methods require little human labour and inexperienced young farmers are generally the least likely to be hired for the few jobs that are available, forcing most of them to seek non-farm employment away from home or accept lower wages than their older co-workers (Pouliot, 2011, 12).



Source: Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, 2011

YPFs who want to start their own farms, either by renting or buying land, struggle against even greater odds, and those who do manage to establish themselves usually come from wealthy farming families which can provide them

start-up assistance via direct loans or by acting as co-signers (Pouliot, 2011, 1-5). The Canadian government has implemented a few policies intended to support YPFs during the difficult start-up phase, yet applying for installation aid programmes has very specific requirements that exclude large groups of young farmers – particularly those from poorer backgrounds and non-farming families. For example, in the ‘Growing Forward’ (I and II) programmes, YPFs must possess a certain level of education and work experience in order to qualify for loans and grants (Statistics Canada, 2002). Additionally, mentorship programmes have been designed to pair YPFs with wealthy large-scale farmers who have a vested interest in promoting the benefits of industrial agriculture, and thus teach their mentees business management skills related specifically to this model (Statistics Canada, 2002). Through these programmes, it appears that the government has a particular agenda in regard to what type of agriculture it seeks to facilitate for the future of Canada’s food production industry, and young farmers who do not meet the criteria required to achieve these goals are given few opportunities to fully participate in the sector.

From a class-based perspective, industrial agriculture is both a progressive and exploitative model in that it produces goods efficiently by taking advantage of the labour power of low-paid workers, and is an expected outcome of the increasing growth and dominance of the capitalist system. Marx argued that the peasantry would eventually become fully proletarianised and leave the countryside in pursuit of jobs produced by industrialisation (e.g. factory work in urban areas) (Stinchcombe, 1961, 172). However, a class-based perspective also places great significance on the underlying social relations that emerge during the proletarianisation process and affect groups of people in different ways. It is important to acknowledge here that defining the term “peasant” has historically been both complicated and controversial, as it can be perceived from a number of definitional angles, including historical, social scientific, activist or normative (see Edelman, 2013 for an in-depth discussion of this), so in an attempt to clarify the term as it pertains to my research, I will use the most straightforward definition: “[an individual engaged in] household farming organised for simple reproduction, notably to supply its own food (subsistence)” (Bernstein, 2010, 3-4).

While the complex and multifaceted concept of class has been continuously debated and reframed since Marx’s mid-1800s publications, theories of how it shapes the structure of societies have been undoubtedly influential when attempting to understand social relations in the countryside. Bernstein furthers this analysis by constructing his four questions of “who gets what and how?” (2010, 22-24), which create a clear framework for examining who has access to specific resources and why. This is particularly useful when attempting to understand why capitalist development processes throughout history have marginalised and excluded some groups in society more than others (Bernstein, 2010, 1-10).

Agrarian political economy perspectives are useful when examining YPFs’ interaction with an industrialised agricultural system because it draws attention to the elite dominance controlling the sector. In the Canadian context, I would classify the ‘elite’ as an interlinked group composed of state officials who dictate crop pricing and policy implementation, and wealthy well-established farming families who control the means of production. This issue is also particularly relevant to

Marx's theory that industrialisation would eventually cause the peasantry to disappear, and poses the question: Is the corporate industrial agricultural system structured in such a way that most young farmers are being purposely excluded in order to push them toward wage labour jobs in urban areas? Certainly it is problematic to conceptualise present-day young farmers as "peasants", as Bernstein argues that this term should only be used when referring to pre-capitalist societies or those transitioning toward capitalism (Bernstein, 2010, 3-4). Thus, the idea of peasants existing in a highly industrialised country like Canada becomes even more problematic. Therefore, for the purposes of this discussion I will reframe the "disappearance of the peasantry" as the "disappearance of small-scale non-capitalist farmers", which more closely (although not perfectly) encapsulates YPFs who do not have the wealth or familial connections to immediately begin operating a large-scale industrial enterprise.

As an increasing number of young people turn away from the agricultural sector, either by choice or by necessity, the future of food production is called into question – who will comprise the next generation of farmers once the current generation has retired? Unless the organisation of the agricultural system witnesses a radical transformation, its future will likely involve a few wealthy agribusiness owners operating a few enormous, highly mechanised and industrialised farms employing a small number of wage labourers (Bennell, 2007, 5-7; RBC, 2000). Thus, the exclusionary processes affecting YPFs can certainly be considered an illustrative example supporting Marx's prediction, offering useful insights into the underlying causes of the dwindling number of young farmers.

2.3) Young Farmers as Part of the 'Repeasantisation' Process

As the industrial agricultural model becomes increasingly problematic both in terms of its effect on the environment and the limited number of jobs it provides, many young people are advocating alternative methods of farming that are small-scale and often organic. Even young people from non-farming backgrounds are recognising the importance of growing good food and are migrating or returning to the countryside to get involved in agriculture. These young farmers believe that the current industrialised methods of farming must change if global food production is going to be sustainable (Holt-Giménez et al., 2010, 231). In this context, interesting literature has recently emerged on the theory of 'repeasantisation' and how it is reshaping the structure of agricultural sectors worldwide. When linking this perspective to the obstacles facing YPFs, the dilemma of conceptualising them as peasants reappears. Rather than using the term 'repeasantisation', it may be more apt (though also more cumbersome) to say YPFs represent the re-emergence of 'small-scale non-capitalist farmerisation.' However, despite the conceptual awkwardness of applying peasant-related terminology to this discussion, the components of the theory are still very relevant.

Many agrarian political economy scholars, particularly those who have been influenced by the theoretical discourse of Alexander Chayanov, discuss the process of repeasantisation and how it affects contemporary understandings of rural transformations. Chayanov's work on the peasant economy in the 1900s argued in

favour of an agricultural model organised around cooperative peasant households. He believed that peasants' access to resources (such as land and equipment) was not primarily the result of class formation, but reflected where a household was located in its demographic cycle – meaning the ratio of working adults to dependents (consumers) living within a household. Dependents include children, elderly relatives, and other non-working adults who must be supported by what is produced by those working in that household (Bernstein, 2009, 59; Thorner, 1988, xiii-xviii). From this generational perspective, the worker-consumer ratio changes throughout the lives of the household members, as children grow up and become workers and parents get old and become non-workers, and this cyclical organisation of labour determines the family's economic status (Thorner, 1988, xiii-xviii).

This perspective also draws attention to land use in peasant farming being much more intensive and efficient than capitalist agriculture, because small-scale farms make use of every available patch of land, and without large machinery so more workers are required (Thorner, 1988, xv-xviii). Another important facet of this perspective is that peasants are self-exploitative because they are often forced to buy or rent land at high prices, while selling their products and labour at lower prices than capitalist farm owners are willing to because of the impact on profitability. Based on this reasoning, proponents of this perspective are sceptical of the argument that large-scale industrial farming is more efficient than small-scale farming, instead focusing on developing strategies for incorporating small-scale methods into the capitalist economic system (Bernstein, 2009, 59-61; Thorner, 1988, xvi-xvii).

In linking this perspective to YPFs, I suggest that they can be situated within discussions on the emergence of 'new peasantries', an idea that is especially prevalent in the work of Jan Douwe van der Ploeg. He argues that today's global agricultural system is organised around three development trajectories: industrialisation (obviously dominant), repeasantisation (widespread yet often hidden) and deactivation (newly emerging). These three processes exist in varying ways, yet each of them affect the nature of agricultural production by impacting employment levels and the quantity and quality of food produced – contributing to the impression that global agriculture is operating in disorganised chaos (Van der Ploeg, 2008, 1-3). When analysing YPFs, repeasantisation emerges as a relevant process because as many young people have become increasingly disenchanted with the current food production system, they have demonstrated a renewed interest in agriculture (Holt-Giménez, 2010, 231-234). Van der Ploeg defines the process of repeasantisation as "a modern expression of the fight for autonomy and survival in the context of deprivation and dependency," noting that the peasant condition is anything but static, experiencing constant fluctuations just as the corporate farming model is always evolving (Van der Ploeg, 2008, 7). Thus, as YPFs become increasingly more excluded from industrial agriculture, they seek new ways not only to survive, but also to challenge the ideology behind this model (Lee, 2007, 7-8).

For young farmers who are interested in working in agribusiness, there is more potential for public and private investors to support them in their endeavours. However, there are many YPFs who wish to follow another path, such as starting

small, organic, less machinery intensive farms or establishing cooperatives that produce food predominantly for local communities. These YPFs are often fundamentally against the structure of the current agricultural system and are seeking alternative methods of food production, which they believe can function within a capitalist economy while offering consumers more socially conscious choices when buying food (Pouliot, 2011, 7-13; Holt-Giménez, 2010, 231-234).

While the rapid outflow of young people from farming still constitutes a possible 'depeasantisation' process in line with arguments on the erosion of the peasantry, I would argue that those who are still interested in working in the sector, and even migrate from urban areas to pursue agricultural work, are helping to fuel a repeasantisation process. This is particularly evident in North America and Europe, but as Van der Ploeg notes it is also occurring in the Global South (Van der Ploeg, 2008, 35, 151-152). He draws attention to different degrees of "peasantness" in which some farmers may work part-time in agriculture and part-time in non-farm employment. This is particularly relevant in discussions of YPFs who may be working outside of the sector to support themselves or to save money to buy or rent their own piece of land. Some YPFs also work on other farmers' land in order to gain the experience they need to operate their own farms in the future or to qualify for loan or grant programmes (Van der Ploeg, 2008, 36-38). Theodor Shanin refers to this as "agriculture beyond the farm", in which rural society and its problems are no longer explicable in their own terms, but must be understood in relation to "agrarian capital beyond the countryside", meaning broader labour and capital flows that reach outside the agricultural economy (Bernstein, 2010, 110).

Thus, perspectives on the effectiveness of small-scale agricultural models and on the increasing prevalence of repeasantisation worldwide provide useful theoretical insights, complementing perspectives that acknowledge that inequalities and marginalisation are perpetuated by the industrial model. This perspective also draws attention to the limitations of large-scale farming, highlighting how young people in particular have become so alienated from this method of food production that they are seeking alternative strategies. But who are these young farmers and how can their social positions and the opportunities available to them be understood theoretically? The next section highlights how YPFs can be conceptualised in order to explain the added vulnerability they face in a sector that even for older, experienced farmers is teeming with marginalising and exploitative processes.

2.4) Categorising Young Farmers and the Inclusion of 'Age Class'

Class analysis has historically been a useful tool for locating people in relation to existing inequalities in both social structures and the distribution of material resources (Wright, 2000, 1-3; 2002, 2-6). This type of analysis can also help to situate current debates on why young people are turning away from the sector within a broader structural framework, which could be useful for governments and policymakers when implementing programmes that aim to increase young farmers' interest and success in the sector (Boreham et al., 1989, 70-73). And while many scholars argue that class theory is no longer relevant in today's globalised world,

others counter-argue that increasing interconnections and rapidly changing relations to modes of production have led to an expansion and modification of the meaning of class that incorporates new categories of social stratification (Clark & Lipset, 1991, 397-398). Herring and Agarwala note that while the decline of class analysis is beyond dispute, it is difficult to argue against the consequential elements of it that “always takes the material world seriously, and empirically: it is never simply a construction or an imaginary. Class structures relations among people; these relations are critical for understanding not only life chances, but also political behaviour” (2006, 323-324).

A traditional class analysis would attempt to divide young farmers into three groups (bourgeoisie, petit bourgeoisie and proletariat). However, as I began to compile information on young farmers in Canada, it became evident that establishing clear social groupings would be problematic – particularly in Nova Scotia where a large number of young small-scale farmers come from quite varied non-farming upbringings. Additionally, when conducting a case study on a country that claims to foster equal opportunities for everyone regardless of their background, literature on contemporary social differentiation is difficult to locate (Veltmeyer, 1981, 408-409). Although it can be argued that traditional class categories include farmers of all ages, I found it difficult to fit young farmers into these groups due to the lack of specificity regarding how one’s age could become a factor causing exclusion. YPFs are commonly classified based only on their family’s socioeconomic standing without taking into account their own individual status, simply because they are young and assumed to not be financially independent. However, I would argue that these young people constitute their own unique social category that incorporates the limitations and vulnerabilities they face due to both their age *and* class, especially considering they are working in one form or another (whether they are employed, operating their own farm or working on their family’s farm). Thus, I constructed an expanded and modified version of the traditional framework that organises young farmers into the following categories:

The large-scale industrial farmers’ class includes young farmers from wealthy, well-established farming families who have the ability to inherit their family’s farm or can obtain a piece of land and the necessary start-up capital to be relatively easily integrated into the agricultural sector. This group can be loosely understood in relation to Lenin’s “rich peasants”: emergent capitalist farmers who are able to accumulate assets and expand their production (Bernstein, 2010, 104). These young farmers will likely not need to acquire loans or grants from the government, but if they do need extra start-up money their families have many assets and will be accepted by banks as reliable co-signers. Young farmers in this category have also received a good agricultural education, either at a post-secondary institution or through practical experience working on their family’s farm and thus have all the opportunities and privileges to ensure that they will not be burdened by many obstacles even during the beginning stages of their careers.

The small-to-medium-scale farmers’ class includes young farmers who do not necessarily come from farming families, and those who do, generally come from small-to-medium scale farms and may not be able to inherit land from their parents. There are a few reasons for this – their family may have just enough land to pass on

the farm to only one of their children, or their parents may not be able to retire due to financial difficulties. This group can be loosely understood in relation to Lenin's "middle peasants": those who are able to reproduce their capital at the same rate as production, and their labour at the same rate as consumption (also generationally) (Bernstein, 2010, 104). These young farmers will have to pursue financial assistance from the government or banks for start-up costs, but could also be eligible for grants if they already have a significant amount of agricultural education or work experience. They will face countless obstacles when entering into the sector, namely because they will not always be able to acquire the necessary start-up capital and the cost of farmland has become quite high because of the demand created by the expansion of large-scale agricultural corporations. Those who do not come from farming backgrounds will be further limited by their lack of experience, which will not only affect their chance of success, but will also cast them as less advantageous investments for governments.

Finally, the wage workers' class includes young farmers who come either from non-farming backgrounds or from a small-scale farming family and are unable to acquire a piece of land (neither to rent or buy) because they do not qualify for grants and do not have any collateral to use for loans. This group can be loosely understood in relation to Lenin's "poor peasants": those who struggle to reproduce both their capital and their labour via their own farming (Bernstein, 2010, 104). Thus, these young farmers end up as wage workers on other people's farms, usually with the hope of saving enough money to eventually become an independent farmer themselves (see Matrix 1 below for further clarification).

Matrix 1: Social Categories of Young Prospective Farmers		
Large-Scale Industrial Farmers	Small-to-Medium-Scale Farmers	Wage Workers
A) From wealthy, well-established farming families with large-scale farms → Can inherit land	C) From families with small-to-medium scale farms and average wealth → Cannot inherit land, must buy/rent land	E) From families with small-scale farms and very little wealth → Cannot inherit land, must work on someone else's land
B) From non-farming family upper class families → Must buy their own land	D) From non-farming middle class families → Must buy/rent land	F) From non-farming lower class families → Must work on someone else's land

Source: Author's own construction

For the purposes of this research, I am focusing on young farmers from categories C and D because they are an anomaly in that they face similar obstacles when trying to obtain land as do those from categories E and F, yet instead of becoming wage workers on someone else's land, they often still manage to own land and become successful small business owners. Of particular interest here are those who come from non-farming families (category D) but decide by their own volition to pursue a career in farming, often due to the belief that alternative models of agriculture are possible. This raises questions of how they are able to acquire their land, through which pathways they have established themselves in the sector, and how the economic context of a particular region is consequential in this.

Conducting a case study of Nova Scotia is pertinent in exploring the experiences of young farmers in light of emergent research on the rising trend of young people from non-farming backgrounds to pursue agricultural careers in the province. These studies cite the accessibility of farmland as a major factor in the growing number of young people becoming interested in moving to the region from other parts of the country. One study in particular, carried out by Sarah Haalboom from 2012 to 2013, which I will discuss in the following chapter, focuses on the experiences of eight young farmers (that fit into category D) and how they overcame age and background-related obstacles to get their small-farm businesses off the ground. Alongside their familial and economic background, their age emerged as an important social subcategory hindering their access to the resources required to start their farms – being young meant they had little experience, few assets and less opportunities to receive loans or grants (Haalboom, 2013).

The necessity of land in agriculture means there is an additional difficulty facing young people, as they generally have not acquired enough credit history or capital to rent or buy their own piece of land. This forces them to look for work on someone else's farm or seek off-farm employment in order to be able to generate savings. The interaction between age and class can create intensified barriers between groups of young farmers and viable employment opportunities, which are further exacerbated by factors such as ethnicity and gender (Pouliot, 2011; Boreham et al., 1989, 75-78). Keeping in mind the heterogeneity of young farmers, this attempt to conduct a class analysis is certainly not exhaustive, but is rather a step towards understanding the experiences of and circumstances facing this relatively overlooked group¹.

In the following chapter, I will turn to the case study of Nova Scotia by first contextualising agriculture in the province within an historical account of Canada's rural social development and access to land. This case study provides an illuminating discussion as to why this small coastal province provides both a unique environment for young farmers in comparison with the rest of the country, while also facing economic and rural development issues akin to most countries around the world.

¹ This discussion builds on previous research in which I conducted a comparative conceptual analysis of YPFs' access to land and resources in Canada, both to explore whether they can be framed within a unique class of their own, as well as whether there is an issue of elite domination in Canadian agriculture that is excluding them from the sector (Mills, 2013b).

Chapter 3

The Compelling Nature of Nova Scotian Agriculture

3.1) The Historical Context of Canadian Social Structure

The rural class structures that are part of commercialised agricultural systems are described by Stinchcombe as having two main components which determine who belongs to what class and why. First, upper and lower classes are differentiated by the legal privileges and lifestyles they are afforded, and second, cultural, political and organisational life differs within and between classes. He further explains these two components by dividing the characteristics of rural class structures into four variations:

- 1) What type of legal privileges classes have access to (e.g. landlords have more privilege than tenants, and other relationships in which the subordinate group is deprived of power).
- 2) How different classes live (e.g. what they consume, their leisure activities, how “comfortable” they are day-to-day).
- 3) The way technical agricultural knowledge is distributed (e.g. wage workers or tenants may have more practical knowledge than their employers or landlords, or vice versa).
- 4) Their engagement with political activity (e.g. their knowledge of political issues, their level of education, and the degree of organisation and communication within their class) (Stinchcombe, 1961, 166-167).

As Canada is still quite a young nation, the research that has been done on its historical development and rural social structure is still relatively recent in comparison to similar research carried out in other parts of the world, such as Europe. More than half of those who immigrated to Canada before 1901 settled in the countryside due to promises from the government that they would be given a piece of farmland – a programme created to entice more foreigners to populate the new nation. During that time, people emigrated mainly from Europe, as the policies offering land ownership were not extended to those coming from Asia who mainly worked as labourers on the construction of the Canadian Pacific railway. With the vast majority of domestically born Canadians living in more urban areas, political and social integration between them and the rural immigrant population developed quite slowly, and even then was very limited (Sylvester, 2001, 34-38).

Sociological research conducted on the country's 19th Century social fabric suggests that economic inequality was not prevalent in farm life, as the majority of the population had a piece of land of their own to live and work on. Interestingly, census documents from the late 1800s note that access to land was age-specific, with the highest proportion of land ownership being among middle-aged farmers, while far fewer young and old individuals held land deeds. Although public lands in many provinces had mainly been dispersed by the 1860s, the farming population nation-wide continued to grow, and by 1871 around 30 per cent of farmers were under the age of 30 (Sylvester, 2001, 43-45). However, by 1901 this number

dropped significantly in most regions as growing urbanisation increased the cost of land, decreased the size of farming properties, and drew many young people into cities in search of jobs in the more “modern” sectors that emerged during industrialisation. In the census data of farmland ownership from 1901 (shown in Table 1) it is important to note that in all regions, around 25 per cent of farmers were between the ages of 20 and 29, yet the average acreage owned by these farmers was significantly less than their middle-aged counterparts (Sylvester, 2001, 45-46). This is likely due to a combination of factors – these farmers were still in the early stages of building up their farms, the land was becoming too expensive for younger people who did not have much accumulated wealth, and many were forced to rent land from older farmers. However, this presents interesting data pertaining to the high level of young farmer interest in agricultural occupations before and during the early stages of industrialisation in the country. As farming methods have become increasingly mechanised during the past century, the numbers of young farmers has dropped rapidly, with just 9 per cent of the current population of Canadian farmers under the age of 35 (Pouliot, 2011, 1).

The extensive colonisation projects that were carried out in Quebec and the Western provinces during the late 1800s attracted a much larger proportion of young people to these regions, as there were more public lands available and more access given to young farmers. There was also a lower level of land ownership inequality in these provinces (as demonstrated via the ‘Gini Index’ in Table 1), with greater access to farmland increasing the occurrence of inheritance-related acquisitions in mid-life, which encouraged the transfer of farms to young farmers sooner. Due to land distribution programmes only being available to immigrants, their native-born children had a much lower success rate when trying to start their own farms and therefore most often migrated to newly developed urban areas or worked on their fathers’ farms with little hope of becoming economically independent (Sylvester, 2001, 49-50).

Table 1: Proportion of Owners and Average Acres Owned Among Adult Male Farmers in 1901 by Region and Age						
Region	Age	Number	Percentage	Landowner Proportion	Average Acreage	Gini Index
Maritimes	20-29	1,059	23.4	0.214	23.3	0.879
	30-39	883	19.5	0.724	91.1	0.566
	40-49	862	19.1	0.897	116.3	0.476
	50-59	708	15.6	0.939	131.5	0.450
	60-69	665	14.7	0.950	133.0	0.454
	70-79	347	7.7	0.850	110.8	0.516
	All	4,524	100.0	0.714	94.0	0.586
Quebec	20-29	1,819	25.7	0.364	40.7	0.766
	30-39	1,572	22.2	0.786	92.3	0.475
	40-49	1,414	19.9	0.891	121.4	0.413
	50-59	1,144	16.1	0.906	135.8	0.424

	60-69	773	10.9	0.860	121.2	0.481
	70-79	369	5.2	0.737	87.1	0.604
	All	7,091	100.0	0.724	94.8	0.543
Ontario	20-29	2,574	23.1	0.214	24.6	0.859
	30-39	2,651	23.8	0.641	71.3	0.566
	40-49	2,235	20.0	0.796	95.5	0.479
	50-59	1,671	15.0	0.850	114.5	0.456
	60-69	1,306	11.7	0.838	102.8	0.490
	70-79	713	6.4	0.785	94.2	0.548
	All	11,150	100.0	0.637	77.0	0.593
West	20-29	830	26.4	0.495	102.4	0.617
	30-39	939	29.8	0.802	213.8	0.480
	40-49	652	20.7	0.851	238.7	0.436
	50-59	437	13.9	0.840	319.6	0.543
	60-69	218	6.9	0.885	238.8	0.471
	70-79	70	2.2	0.729	165.0	0.491
	All	3,146	100.0	0.741	204.9	0.532

Source: Canadian Families Project national sample, 1901.

In his discussion on Canadian class structure, Veltmeyer notes that when looking at the distribution of the country's experienced labour force in 1981 as a percentage of the total population, the working class made up 78.9 per cent, the middle class 18.5 per cent, and the capitalist class just 2.5 per cent. When he divided this between males and females, the males notably composed approximately twice as much of the two upper classes as females, while females composed approximately 10 per cent more of the working class than males. Veltmeyer also stresses the importance of not confusing class categories with occupational categories, as there are certain social characteristics – for example, gender and ethnicity – that have an impact on one's class category that may not be present within all occupational categories, and thus may not affect relations within an occupational category (Veltmeyer, 1986, 13-19). He states that "social composition [in some cases may be] a matter of specific historical conditions that do not affect the structure of class relations (although it certainly affects the life chances and experience of individuals). In other cases however, particularly that of gender, social composition is an important element of the structure itself" (Veltmeyer, 1986, 18).

Veltmeyer's research offers an insightful overview of class dynamics pertaining to the relationship between individuals and the means of production in Canadian society up until the mid-1980s. Within this analysis, he divides the country's labour force by occupation and then organises these occupational groups into two categories: middle class/capitalist class and working class. Interestingly, farmers are placed in the first group and are further categorised as *lower* middle class, yet he lists another category called "rural" as the *lower* working class. It can be assumed that "farmers" (which are further explained as "independent producers") refers to individuals who own or rent their own farms, while rural workers are employed for wages on other people's farms. Interestingly, farmers and fishermen

are listed simultaneously in the same category, so we cannot be sure how much of their combined 2.6 per cent (of the overall national labour force) is made up of farmers alone (Veltmeyer, 1986, 20).

In further discussion on the middle class, farmers in this category are specified as “independent commodity producers” with four defining characteristics: they manage or own the means of production (e.g. land or farming businesses), they have significant control over the conditions they work in, they are not powerful enough to control the overall functioning of the economy, and they are not considered to be exploited because the wealth they earn is of equal or greater value to the labour they produce (Veltmeyer, 1986, 46-47). The young farmers that I am focusing on in this research fit into this category particularly because they own or rent land and are running their farms independently – meaning there is no overseeing farming corporation controlling the operation of their farms. Additionally, these young farmers are completely responsible for the success of their farms (in terms of how hard they work and how knowledgeable they are about the impact of the market).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, it would be unfeasible to adequately discuss young farmers composing all three of the main class categories within the scope of this research, thus I established that in the Nova Scotian context those who fit into the “middle class of young farmers” are of the most interest because they have had to acquire access to land by their own volition and start farms independently (unlike those of the capitalist class) and are working on their own or rented land (unlike those of the working class). Young working class farmers face many obstacles when simply trying to acquire agricultural employment, let alone land, and would have to be further sub-categorised to take into account their complete lack of control over their working conditions and increased vulnerability to sectorial downturns. The following discussion will illuminate the unique context of farming in Nova Scotia in comparison to other Canadian provinces, and how this environment may be fostering the emergence of vibrant young farmer communities.

3.2) Why Farming in Contemporary Nova Scotia Deserves Attention

Through an examination of national statistics on farm operators and farm size across Canada, I discovered that there are more clear divisions in the agricultural provinces of Western Canada where there are a high number of immense industrial farms that are owned by a few wealthy agricultural families or corporations. These large-scale farms are easily passed down to a younger member of the family or sold, due to the well-established and profitable status of the operation. There are relatively few young small-scale farmers emerging in this region because of its highly competitive agricultural market and the domination of large corporations (Statistics Canada, 2012a; 2012b). However, Nova Scotia presents an interesting and unique case because of its relatively high percentage of both small-scale farms and young farmers emerging in the sector. While other Canadian regions have seen the majority of farmland taken over by large-scale industrial farms, particularly in the prairies of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia was the only province that increased its number of farms, area of farmland

and number of farm operators between 2006 and 2011 (Mascovitch, 2012). It was also one of the only provinces to decrease its average farm size (along with Newfoundland and British Columbia), and the only province to report an increase in total farm area, up 2.2 per cent from 2006 to 1 million acres (see Table 2 below) (Statistics Canada, 2012a; 2012b). While the number of farms is rapidly *decreasing* in most highly industrialised countries, the fact that Nova Scotia saw an *increase* in its overall number in just five years is certainly notable, especially considering the province's small size. In 2011, Nova Scotia's farm census reported 3,905 farms – an increase of 2.9 per cent since 2006 when 3,795 were counted – which is of particular interest considering it had experienced a *decrease* of 3.3 per cent between 2001 and 2006 (Mascovitch, 2012; Statistics Canada, 2009).

Table 2: Number of Farms, Farm Area, and Average Farm Size by Province

Province	Number of Farms		Area (acres)		Average Farm Size (acres)	
	2011	Percent change, 2006 to 2011	2011	Percent change, 2006 to 2011	2011	Percent change, 2006 to 2011
Newfoundland and Labrador	510	-8.6	77,349	-13.5	152	-5.0
Prince Edward Island	1,495	-12.1	594,324	-4.1	398	9.0
Nova Scotia	3,905	2.9	1,018,075	2.2	261	-0.4
New Brunswick	2,611	-5.9	937,829	-4.0	359	2.0
Quebec	29,437	-4.0	8,256,614	-3.5	280	0.4
Ontario	51,950	-9.2	12,668,236	-4.8	244	4.7
Manitoba	15,877	-16.7	18,023,472	-5.5	1,135	13.4
Saskatchewan	36,952	-16.6	61,628,148	-4.1	1,668	15.1
Alberta	43,234	-12.5	50,498,834	-3.1	1,168	10.7
British Columbia	19,759	-0.4	6,452,867	-7.9	327	-7.4
Canada	205,730	-10.3	160,155,748	-4.1	778	6.9

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, 2006 and 2011 (note: similar data from previous years was not published)

Nova Scotia also experienced a 2.5 per cent increase in its number of farm operators to 5,225 (from 2006 to 2011), almost 26 per cent of which were women. Despite the relatively high number of young Nova Scotian farmers reported to be entering the sector, the average age of farm operators has still been steadily increasing in every region of Canada, with a national average of 54 years (increasing from 49.9 years in 2001). Nova Scotia followed this trend with an increase from 51 to 55.4 years between 2001 and 2011 (see Table 3 below) (Statistics Canada, 2012b), reflecting the global tendency for farmers to continue to farm much later in life due to financial difficulties or the lack of a successor to take over their farm. However, in 2010, 27.4 per cent of Nova Scotian farm operators under the age of 35 were working at off-farm jobs an average of 40 hours per week because they were unable to find an adequate amount of on-farm employment. Thus, the paradox here is that there are simultaneously too few successors and not enough agricultural work – illustrative of the emergence of Van der Ploeg’s degrees of “peasantness” and Shanin’s “agriculture beyond the farm” (Statistics Canada, 2012a). The real impact of this may be better understood through exemplifying start-up experiences of beginning farmers. In the following section I will discuss research collected on eight young Nova Scotian farmers who forged their own paths to establish farm businesses, despite the difficulties they encountered along the way.

Table 3: Average age of Canadian Farm Operators by Province			
Province	Average operator age		
	2011	2006	2001
Newfoundland and Labrador	55.0	52.3	50.5
Prince Edward Island	54.2	51.4	49.3
Nova Scotia	55.4	53.2	51.0
New Brunswick	55.5	52.8	51.0
Quebec	51.4	49.3	47.0
Ontario	54.5	52.6	50.7
Manitoba	53.1	51.2	49.0
Saskatchewan	54.2	52.6	50.5
Alberta	54.5	52.2	49.9
British Columbia	55.7	53.6	51.4
Canada	54.0	52.0	49.9

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, 2001 to 2011

3.3) Young Farmers' Start-up Experiences

In research conducted by Sarah Haalboom from 2012 to 2013 at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, eight young farmers were interviewed in the province in order to understand their motivations in pursuing careers in Nova Scotia's agricultural sector, the challenges they face, and what they hope to gain from being a farmer (2013, 6). The qualitative data collected through this research offers information useful in my analysis because it illustrates the experiences of young small-scale farmers coming from non-farming backgrounds, and highlights the minimal support they receive from the Canadian government. It also draws attention to the compelling nature of Nova Scotia in regard to its affordable land and the supportive atmosphere of its farming communities, making it a region relatively conducive to the entrance of young farmers. Haalboom focuses particularly on qualitative, ethnographic discussions of individual experiences, while through the political economy lens used in my research, her data is more illuminative of the emergent structural inequalities and inadequacies that exist within the Canadian agricultural sector.

The farmers who participated in Haalboom's research come from many different backgrounds and produce various crops and products. However, they all share a common belief that alternative methods of agriculture – that is, those on a smaller, less industrialised scale – can be successful. She also notes that through focus group research carried out for the Northeast New Farmer Network in the United States in 2001, it became clear to the researchers that young farmers coming from farming families transition much more quickly from beginning to fully-established farmers much more quickly than those from non-farming families – particularly if their parents have successful large-scale farms (Haalboom, 2013, 17-18). Haalboom's research offers a brief background of each of the farmers interviewed, including dynamic quotes on why they decided to go into farming and the experiences they had during their first few years. All of the young farmers were between the ages of 25 and 40 and they all come from non-farming families, growing up in both rural and urban environments in various Canadian provinces. Despite having no parental influence in their decision to become farmers, all of the interviewees became interested in the sector at a young age, generally in their teenage years (Haalboom, 2013, 24-33).

In Haalboom's analysis of the information collected in the interviews, she divides her findings into emergent themes. In the section entitled "Initial Motivations and Ongoing Inspirations" she draws attention to the fact that all of the young farmers share a common goal to establish viable businesses that will provide them with a full-time, stable income. The other major factor driving their pursuit of farming, which overrides ever-present financial insecurity, is their desire for a fulfilling life and a sense of emotional wellbeing achieved from working outside and feeling connected to the world around them. This feeling of wellbeing was also effected by the self-reliant aspect of farming, by having a piece of land (whether rented or purchased) to call one's own, as well as the pride that comes from being able to provide food for others through a method not dependent on mechanisation (Haalboom, 2013, 34-35). Interestingly, similar sentiments emerged in my interviews with Blain Snipstal and Morgan Ody, young farmers from the United

States and France respectively, highlighting the commonalities existing between young farmers globally.

Land ownership was a critical aspect of the interviewees' "farm dream" and due to the low cost of property in Nova Scotia, buying a farm there is much more feasible for entrant farmers (Mascovitch, 2012). Furthermore, Nova Scotia also has a proportionately larger rural population than most other provinces and existing farming communities have been well established for many generations. One of the interviewees noted that "[Nova Scotia] seems to have a very forward-thinking population that is supportive of small farms and eating local. [Nova Scotian] culture is very strong even in its rural communities," while another called making a living on a small farm a "really Nova Scotian thing to do" (Haalboom, 2013, 35-36).

All of the interviewees stated that they were involved in styles of marketing that directly connected them to the people that eat their food, which they believe is a form of activism or social justice seeking to provide more ethical, wholesome food to their communities while also protecting the environment (also echoed by Snipstal and Ody). Additionally, most were originally attracted to farming as a means of achieving an independent lifestyle in which they had the freedom to determine their own schedules and career goals (Haalboom, 2013, 30-35). This is a luxury rarely afforded to young people who are just beginning their careers, particularly in sectors such as agriculture that require a lot of start-up funding and labour.

Another emergent theme is the high financial investment required during start-up, which is described by Snipstal: "There are several major barriers that young people face when transitioning into the agrarian sector: access to land, access to capital, access to markets, access to infrastructure, and access to knowledge" (quote from interview). All of Haalboom's interviewees noted they had to either generate savings for a few years prior to start-up, or work part-time elsewhere while establishing their farms. They were also forced to give up other necessities in order to generate revenue right away – with one interviewee noting he lived in a small yurt on his property because he could not afford to pay the mortgage on a house. These young farmers have all accepted that it will take many years before they are making a reasonable, stable living off of their farms. They also acknowledge that in a national context, they represent a minority, as most young farmers come from wealthy farming families and experience a much smoother transition (Haalboom, 2013, 36-38).

All of the interviewees stressed the importance of continued agricultural training and education, which they acquire by attending conferences and workshops organised by the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, ThinkFARM, and the Dalhousie Agricultural Campus. These events allow young farmers to meet each other, share knowledge and information and create professional networks, which are particularly crucial for small-scale farmers (Haalboom, 2013, 38-39). The following chapter will elaborate further on these programmes and how the federal and provincial governments are addressing the obstacles facing young farmers, examining whether such efforts are extensive enough to sufficiently increase YPF's access to agricultural livelihoods.

Chapter 4

Government Response to the Obstacles Facing Young Farmers

4.1) Canadian Policies and the Implication of the Private Sector

The Canadian agricultural sector is a multifaceted and highly valued aspect of the national economy partly because of the vast amount of productive land that is used for both crops and livestock. Due in part to the sheer size of the country, there are varying types of farming that take place from province to province. For example, Nova Scotia's moderate coastal climate and rocky, hilly land mean that it is more suitable for livestock and dairy production, while the vast flatlands of Saskatchewan are used mainly for wheat and corn. Thus, the Canadian government recognises the importance of having strong provincial agricultural departments that are in charge of implementing policies and programmes suited to their regional farming industries' needs, such as those related to marketing, extension and education (PFPP, 2013; Statistics Canada, 2012b).

During the first half of the 20th Century, governments at the federal and provincial levels set in motion a major agricultural modernisation process intended to promote rural economic development and ensure the future prosperity of the sector. The federal government actively promoted professional education for farmers and developed agreements with private agencies and banks to disperse generous loans to farmers to help them acquire more modern machinery and fertilisers. It quickly became apparent to small-scale farmers, who had a difficult time acquiring financial support, that the government favoured large-scale farms that were considered more productive, forcing many small farmers to sell their farms and find work elsewhere (Brent, 2002, 61-63).

Industrial favouritism is still very evident in today's national agricultural policies. There are a few policies intended to directly support YPFs during the difficult capital-intensive start-up phase, but applying for installation aid has very specific requirements that exclude large groups of young farmers – particularly those from poorer backgrounds and non-farming families. For example, in the 'Growing Forward' (I and II) programmes, YPFs must possess a certain level of education and work experience in order to qualify for loans and grants (Statistics Canada, 2002). This means those who have not grown up on farms and acquired hands-on practical education, or those who come from low-income families and cannot afford to attend agricultural college are excluded from receiving this aid. Additionally, mentorship programmes have been designed to pair YPFs with wealthy large-scale farmers who have a vested interest in promoting the benefits of industrial agriculture, and thus teach their mentees business management skills related specifically to this model (Statistics Canada, 2002).

Through these programmes, it appears that the government has a particular agenda in regard to what type of agriculture it seeks to facilitate for the future of Canada's food production industry, and the young farmers who do not meet the criteria required to achieve these goals are given few opportunities to fully participate in the sector. The majority of these programmes target individuals who

are interested in pursuing large-scale industrialised methods of agriculture, while those with more alternative small-scale visions are often neglected. Furthermore, the federal government's attention has thus far not been focused enough to benefit young farmers from all backgrounds and experience levels (evident via the vague statements of the 'Growing Forward' programmes) (Haalboom, 2013, 17; PFPP, 2013; AGRI, 2010).

However, at a provincial level there are some policies and programmes being implemented that appear to be more inclusive. Nova Scotia has historically been supportive of young farmers, and in the late 1800s – at a time when universities seemed designed to convince young people that farming was not a viable career – several organisations, including the Nova Scotia Farmers Association (NSFA), lobbied for the creation of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC), which opened in 1905 (Brent, 2002, 195). Today this college, known as the Dalhousie University Agricultural Campus, hosts many workshops and conferences intended to encourage the maintenance of strong rural communities by fostering agricultural networking among young farmers. The Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture (NSDA) supports the promotion of both formal educational opportunities, as well as forging connections between farmers that facilitate the sharing of informal knowledge (Haalboom, 2013, 38-39; interview with Rebecca Sooksom). Furthermore, Farm Credit Canada (FCC), which was established under the federal government's Farm Credit Act in 1959, offers loans of up to \$500,000 CAD to entrant farmers under the age of 40, regardless of whether they have minimal credit history, provided they present a solid business plan. These loans offer low interest rates, no loan processing fee, flexible repayment plans and allow young farmers to begin building credit history (FCC, 2013).

The NSDA is making great strides in policy implementation through its ten-year strategy 'Homegrown Success', which promotes local food production and consumption and intends to increase the number of local farms by 5 per cent over the next seven years. This strategy recognises that the demographic of young farmers in the province is unique and requires a wider range of projects and programmes. For example, beginning in 2009, the ThinkFARM Working Group Initiative (an extension of 'Growing Forward II') released the second edition of its 'Guide for Beginning Farmers in Nova Scotia' in 2012, which discusses everything from making business plans and locating available resources, to finding the right piece of land. There is also information on the FarmNEXT programme, which offers funding of up to \$30,000 CAD through the Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board for new farmers (both for start-up and succession costs), as well as tips for finding a mentor and the types of mentorship offered (NSDA, 2012; interview with Rebecca Sooksom). While there is no data to directly connect the establishment of programmes like ThinkFARM to an increase in the number of farms and operators in Nova Scotia over the past five years, certainly it is possible that the province's increasing attention to the support of young farmers has made an important impact on the accessibility of the sector.

Nova Scotia certainly appears to be living up to its reputation of being a welcoming place for young and small-scale farmers, both economically and due to its supportive community atmosphere. This spring the province even introduced a

new licence plate containing the phrase “Buy Local”, as a strategy for promoting the purchase of locally grown produce (CBC, 2013). However, the underlying employment situation in the province must not be overlooked, as this is certainly a major factor in lowering the value of land, and some may argue that due to fewer opportunities in other sectors young people are forced into agricultural work out of necessity. However, as of yet there is no research to support such arguments, and while most of the young farmers (interviewed by Haalboom and myself) stated that they are seeking alternatives to the current global food system, none cited job scarcity as a reason for pursuing an agricultural career (Haalboom, 2013). Why then do the rest of the Canadian provinces seem to lack the “youthfulness” of Nova Scotian farming? This is likely due to a combination of factors, including a much greater focus on large-scale industrial agriculture in the Prairie Provinces (where it is more geographically feasible), and a lack of cohesion between agricultural policies at a federal level, as provincial governments have jurisdiction over programme implementation.

It is difficult to establish a concrete answer to this question; however examining the Canadian case alongside another country of a similar political and economic context can be beneficial in establishing where the inadequacies lie. Western Europe is a relevant region to consider, as it tends to pursue strategies for agricultural development similar to those of Canada. France emerges as a particularly relevant comparison because like Canada it has an extensive agricultural sector, and it is similar to Nova Scotia in that it has a notable number of young people becoming farmers. Bringing in this case also further illustrates that young farmers’ access to agricultural careers is of international concern, as it is affecting countries in every corner of the globe, regardless of political or economic stability.

4.2) A Comparative Glance at EU Policies (The French Context)

Current policies targeting young French farmers emerged out of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which was established in 1962 as a framework for farming, environmental and rural development strategies intended to control the European Union’s agricultural markets. Since its inception, the CAP has gone through several major reforms in order to adapt to new challenges. In the reforms that produced Agenda 2000, a second pillar for rural development was introduced and support for young farmers was directly addressed for the first time. This agenda declared recognition of young farmers as a valuable investment due to their generally higher level of training in modern agricultural techniques (as compared to elderly farmers), which would strengthen the sector and increase its competitiveness. It proposed an optional measure that would provide business start-up aid for new entrants into the sector, investments in farm improvements and in physical assets like machinery, knowledge exchange, education services, and farm management training (European Parliament, 2001, 2; RGC, 2000, 4-5).

Following the 2003 CAP reforms, a measure dubbed the ‘Setting Up of Young Farmers Scheme’ (Measure 112) was put forward and an extensive application process was established to ensure that any highly motivated farmers would be

eligible to receive funds (Rousevell, et al., 2002, 8-9). In 2005, the Agriculture and Fisheries Council laid out the rules for the Rural Development Policy 2007-2013 (Pillar 2 of the CAP) within which Measure 112 evolved into the 'Young Farmers' Installation Scheme' (YFIS), as it is still referred to today. Within this new policy framework, the projected expenditure for Measure 112 during the 2007-2013 period was €5 billion, of which France was expected to have the highest public expenditure at €1.6 billion (Gregory, 2011, 4).

As one of the original members of the EU, France has been actively involved in the implementation of the CAP since its conception, has made the largest monetary investment to Measure 112, and aided the highest number of young farmers (Desjeux, 2007, 2-3). The French government also enacted the 'National Charter for the Installation of Young People in Farming' in 1995, becoming one of the first EU countries to focus on this issue. Under this charter, France demonstrated that it had a strong commitment to generational renewal in the agricultural sector; however the government's ability to enact the programme effectively had some financial limitations. Thus, its focus on young farmers expanded significantly with the reforms that produced the YFIS (RGC, 2000, 73-75). Through this scheme, young farmers between the ages of 21 and 39 can apply for both installation aid and investment grants for existing farms as long as they have at least six months of professional work experience outside of the family farm (ENRD, 2012, 1-3).

Between 2000 and 2006 almost €2.5 billion was invested in programmes in France (a combination of funds from the EU and the French government) and between 2007 and 2010 a further €4 billion was invested, which benefited approximately 24,000 young French farmers (in other EU countries the average was around 1,000 per year) (RGC, 2000, 73). This made France the largest investor in young farmers by a significant margin, with Italy as the second largest and a total expenditure of just €388 million during the same time period (ENRD, 2012, 2; Desjeux, et al., 2007, 31).

In order to be considered for loans or grants, young French farmers must follow the 'installation route' in which they demonstrate that they possess adequate occupational skills and are either setting up for the first time as the head of an agricultural holding or are a newly established farmer in need of investment to expand production (European Commission, 2005, 263; European Commission, 2003, 75-76). However, following this installation route can be quite complicated and has some exclusionary limitations, as noted by Morgan Ody:

Compared with other European countries it is possible to receive a lot of financial support to start a farm. But in order to get the subsidies, one needs to fit into the demands of the administration, in terms of age (below 40), education (first degree or equivalent in agriculture is compulsory) and expected revenue (on the 5th year of settlement, one must reach the level of the minimum wage that employed people have). Almost half of the people who become farmers are excluded from this support, particularly people not having an agricultural background. I think that these policies could be improved if it was not taken for granted that if you start a farm, it means that you're a farmer's son (quote from interview).

Between 2007 and 2010, nearly 70,000 young farmers across the EU received support under Measure 112; however the overall number of young farmers working in the sector has continued to fall during the past decade (ENRD, 2012, 1). Those pushing for further CAP reforms, such as the European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA), argue that despite the relatively large number of young farmers who have received financial aid, there has not been significant growth in the number of new farmers entering the sector (CEJA, 2011, 8-9). In fact, the percentage of the EU's farming population under 35 years old has dropped from 9 to 6 per cent since 1990 and there is no sign that this trend will not continue (European Commission, 2012, 3)². Ody highlights a connection between limitations facing young farmers and the industrial model:

In France, organic and industrial agriculture are two very separate worlds. Up to now, I know very few industrial farmers. Yet I'm included in vivid organic/peasant networks, which help a lot when settling. What makes it complicated to settle as a young farmer is that the process to support young farmers has been thought about according to the needs of farmers' children taking up the family farm. Yet in France, a third of the people starting in agriculture are urban people with no family link to agriculture. This is particularly true when it comes to land issues. It is far more complicated for someone not having an agricultural background to access land than for any person whose parents already own a farm (quote from interview).

While there is quite a substantial level of government support for farming in France, the obvious issue remains that many young people are still being neglected by existing policies. However, the overall numbers of young French farmers receiving aid and entering the sector is comparatively higher than in Canada. This could be due to a number of issues, including the lack of political will within the Canadian government to pursue a significant restructuring of the agricultural sector, considering the economic and infrastructural capabilities certainly do exist. It could also be due to the amount of pressure young French farmers' organisations are putting on their government to make changes, while their Canadian counterparts have not yet achieved the same level of influence in the political sphere. However, Nova Scotia's strong rural community networks may have influenced the increasing prominence of young farmers' organisations in the province. But are Nova Scotia's YPFs motivated and organised enough to take responsibility for the future of the agricultural sector, and if so will they be able to gain access to the resources required? I will delve further into this question in the following chapter where I discuss the emergence of Canadian young farmers' organisations and how this type of mobilisation demonstrates the existence of a common struggle that is unifying young farmers despite their experiential and familial differences.

² A more in-depth version of this discussion can be found in my previous research in which I examined the effectiveness of agricultural policies for young farmers in Europe via a case study of France (Mills, 2013a).

Chapter 5

Young Farmers' Mobilisation and its Impact on Agricultural Policies

5.1) The Emergence of Young Farmers' Organisations in Canada

For decades, farmers' unions and organisations have been an important part of the rural fabric of Canada and have played a dynamic role in the development of the agricultural regions of the country. In the past, young farmers would have simply been members of these organisations, however as the specificity of issues facing them became an increasing concern, beginning farmers began to form organisations of their own. The Nova Scotia Young Farmers (NSYF), established in 2001, is one such organisation that has been quickly gaining prominence in decision-making processes in the province. In my interview with Brad McCallum, a member of the NSYF, he described the organisation's functions:

In general, we provide networking, educational and developmental opportunities as well as a voice of young farmers, between 18 and 40, in Nova Scotia. We have a formal connection to the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, which allows us to participate in policy discussions at the provincial level, as well as across commodities. We are also very active in agricultural awareness: helping to educate the general public about food, the people who grow it and how it is grown.

Further information on the organisation's goals and activities is found via their online publications. Here, their mission and purpose statement reads: "To promote the exchange of ideas and to foster collaboration between the young and future farmers of Nova Scotia [and] to provide a multi-faceted educational and development opportunity for young and beginning farmers from across Nova Scotia" (NSYF, 2013). In carrying out their purpose, the NSYF aims to identify the obstacles that young people face when trying to become established farmers and to exchange solutions to these barriers than can be applied both in Canada and abroad. They also seek to foster knowledge exchange regarding training and capacity building, enable young people across the province to become more knowledgeable about how the agricultural industry operates, prepare young farmers to be more actively involved in both provincial and federal organisations, and to gather the opinions of young farmers on agricultural and rural issues in order to present them to the public (NSYF, 2013).

The innovation of the NSYF extends into many important areas, focusing their efforts on both education and extension training, supporting succession and the transfer of farms from younger to older farmers, giving young farmers a voice in policymaking processes so they have more direct contact with their local and federal governments, promoting agricultural awareness that stresses the long-term viability and success of the province's food producers, and aids in stabilising the

sector in order to protect the livelihoods of farmers (NSYF, 2013). The NSYF is a strong example of how young farmers are increasingly acquiring public spaces through which to voice their concerns and to participate in policymaking. As the young farmers in Haalboom's research stressed, the cohesion of Nova Scotia's farming communities is certainly noteworthy and the support beginning farmers receive from other farmers is an important factor in their success (Haalboom, 2013).

On a national level, the Canadian Young Farmers' Forum (CYFF), established in 1997, also has a crucial role in supporting organisations at the provincial level (including the NSYF), both financially and by facilitating various conferences and workshops. The CYFF's mission is to empower Canadian farmers in order to stimulate a profitable and attractive agricultural industry, by educating and energising a powerful network of young farmer leaders. The organisation aims to provide multi-faceted developmental opportunities for YPFs because, despite the many challenges they face, "they continue to enter the sector with an energetic entrepreneurial spirit, respect for the environment, innovative ideas and new ways of doing business" (CYFF, 2013). The CYFF recognises the importance of knowledge and information exchange and facilitates young farmers' networks by holding annual networking conferences and "Best Management Practice" workshops. They also host meetings with members of other national agricultural organisations, such as the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (CYFF, 2013).

The CYFF drew attention to the fact that, despite Canada's main agricultural policy being called 'Growing Forward' (introduced in 2007), young farmers were not specifically addressed anywhere in the document. With the support of the federal government, the CYFF participated in the development of the 'Growing Forward II' policy, which was introduced in 2013 and more formally acknowledges the importance of innovative young farmers for the future of agriculture (Haalboom, 2013, 17; AGRI, 2010, 1-19). The updated policy proposes a "renewal strategy" that refocuses funding and responds to the different needs of beginning farmers, as well as addressing market forces that push up the price of farmland (PFPP, 2013, 1-2). Young farmers' organisations communicate officially with the federal government via the National Future Farmers' Network (NFFN), which met for the first time in 2010, bringing together 45 participants from various segments of the agricultural sector across Canada. The NFFN focuses specifically on assisting *young* farmers, rather than on all beginning farmers, and was created in order to address the lack of governmental resources being allocated specifically to YPFs by providing a space for them to speak directly to the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food about their concerns (Pouliot, 2011, 1-8). Opening this space has been an important step for young farmers, and their ability to operate cohesively within this network can be analysed in different ways within an agrarian political economy framework. In the following section I will discuss how the actions of young farmers' organisations can be understood theoretically and how their activities may have a lasting impact on broader structural conditions.

5.2) Mobilisation as Class-Consciousness and Everyday Politics

The emergence of the organisations discussed above highlights the agency of groups of young farmers as they challenge the structure of the agricultural system. An important element of social theory is to effectively address the constant interaction between structure and agency, as the significance of this in social transformation is undeniable. Agency refers to purposeful and intentional human action that occurs within the constantly evolving context of society. This action, which can appear in many different forms, is never something that occurs “freely”, meaning that it emerges as a response to the constraints of social structures (Sanderson, 1999, 12-13). In response to the obstacles confronting them, YPFs have established organisations in countries around the world. While those involved in these organisations come from many different familial, educational, experiential, and ethnic backgrounds, the cohesive factor is that they all have encountered barriers and constraints when trying to access land and employment (RGC, 2000, 37-41). As a member of La Vía Campesina, Blain Snipstal highlights the significance of the global unity of small-scale farmers:

It's an historical moment that we're in, particularly for us in the Global North, but really everywhere, as the capitalist model of agriculture expands and we're seeing different reverberations facing youth in particular... there's an international aspect where we need to recognise that from the Global South a lot of this inspiration has been developed by our comrades and partners there. However, we need to also recognise and cherish that here in the U.S. we also have a historical legacy of resistance and building a foundation of revolutionary pedagogy and thought (Food First video, 2013).

An important aspect of class politics is the concept of ‘class-consciousness’, defined by Wright as “the understanding of people within a class of their class interests” (2000, 2-3). By viewing young farmers’ organisations within an agrarian political economy framework, their formation can be understood as the emergence of class-consciousness among excluded young farmers. For example, the Canadian Young Farmers’ Forum, the National Future Farmers’ Network, the National Farmers’ Union, and Nova Scotia Young Farmers are all putting pressure on the government to direct more support toward YPFs, which will not only ease their entrance into agriculture, but will also acknowledge that there is a problem with generational renewal in the sector that could pose a serious threat to the future of food production in Canada (PFPP, 2012, 1-7). This pressure has led to an expansion of the national ‘Growing Forward’ programmes to include more mentorship and agricultural education opportunities to increase young farmers marketable skills (AAFC, 2013; Pouliot, 2011, 1-8). Thus, these organisations illustrate how young farmers are finding common goals among themselves that help to locate them within a shared social category. This highlights the importance of class-consciousness as a pivotal factor in uniting groups of individuals who face similar inequalities and obstacles in accessing resources, and who also hold the same position in relation to the means of production (Wright, 2002, 11-13).

In combination, another perspective also draws attention to forms of social action that can be understood as everyday politics. This type of action is generally considered to be an unstructured, unorganised, covert, and in some cases can also be radical and anti-capitalist in nature. Everyday politics is defined by Kerkvliet as: “People embracing, complying with, adjusting to, and contesting norms and rules regarding authority over, production of, or allocation of resources and doing so in quiet, mundane, and subtle expressions and acts that are rarely organised or direct” (209, 231-232). It is problematic to view the emergence and daily operations of NSYF, CYFF and other formal organisations from this perspective, due to the fact that their methods of political action are quite structured, organised and overt. This is evidenced in their seemingly intentional trajectories and their clearly stated missions and goals, which they publish publically alongside information on projects they are engaging in (see CYFF, 2013 and NSYF, 2013).

However, a binary can be formed between class-consciousness, the existence of which is illustrated by the emergence young farmers’ organisations, and the personal actions of the individuals involved in these organisations, which are demonstrative of forms of everyday politics. Young farmers throughout Nova Scotia, and across Canada, are constantly engaging in activities that do not immediately appear to be politically inclined. For example, the fact that so many young farmers are advocating small-scale, organic, alternative modes of agriculture highlights their desire to transform the ideology behind the sector, which can be considered very unconventional next to the predominance of large-scale capitalist agriculture that is traversing the globe. Cooperatives of young farmers are also on the rise, where groups of individuals gather funds or create business plans to apply for grants collectively. In countries around the world, countless radical young farmers’ groups are involved in less obvious forms of everyday politics. For example, at an international level La Vía Campesina Youth are engaging in many different forms of political action related to the coordination of peasant organisations, small producers, agricultural workers, rural women and indigenous communities, which includes a variety of goals and campaigns in Asia, Africa, the Americas and Europe. While their activities are usually publically acknowledged, there are many day-to-day actions transpiring that often go unnoticed (see La Vía Campesina, 2013). At an international youth meeting in Spain in 2009, those in attendance presented their declaration:

We, La Vía Campesina Youth present here, are facing discriminations, inequalities, injustice and miseries that are undergoing all over the world due to the feudalism, neoliberal capitalism and neo-colonialism. This discriminatory system is imposing the corporatization of agriculture and the commodification of food for mongering profit and making the life of the peasants miserable and compelling them to abandoning farming. Resulting then in the rise of the expulsion of young peasants to the city or to other countries in order to survive... Long Live: Agricultural Revolution. Long Live: La Vía Campesina. Long Live: Youth Peasants' Unity. Globalize the Struggle. Globalize the Hope.

Both formal young farmers' organisations and more informal, disorganised action can be conceptualised as overlapping forms of the expression of agency, which is best analysed by combining theories that encapsulate the heterogeneity of activities occurring in Canada and around the world. In Nova Scotia, young farmers have different goals in regard to political action and how they engage with the government varies based on their individual interests. However, despite the diversity of their backgrounds and issues they face in operating their own farms, they have managed to become an organised and cohesive unit. This provides hope that although the numbers of farmers worldwide are currently dwindling, we may be witnessing the beginning of a resurgence of young people in the sector who intend to take the future of agriculture into their own hands.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: An Optimistic Future for Agriculture?

Will young men and women still have the option, and the necessary support, to engage in environmentally sound, small scale, mixed farming, providing food and other needs for themselves, their own society and others in distant places? Or will they face only the choice to become poorly-paid wage workers or contract farmers, in an endless landscape of monocrop food or fuel feedstock plantations, on land which used to belong to their parents, or to move to an uncertain existence in the informal sector of already crowded cities?

– Ben White (2012, 17)

6.1) Global Agricultural Implications and Areas for Further Research

This research has sought to answer how structural factors impact prospective farmers' ability to gain access to land, which political and economic institutions facilitate or hinder this access, and how the mobilisation efforts of young farmers' organisations have induced structural change. Agrarian political economy has served as an illuminative framework through which to examine these questions due to its ability to offer structured and critical perspectives when analysing the correlation between theory and empirical data. Both the theory and data presented here demonstrate that the current industrial agricultural model has exclusionary characteristics that provide unequal opportunities to different groups in society, of which the declining number of young farmers acts as a vivid illustration. This points to the structural inequalities that plague both the agricultural economy, as well as the global capitalist system that it is a part of.

Institutionally, governments play the most prominent role in addressing the obstacles facing young farmers, however they have yet to fully embrace this responsibility in a manner that addresses individuals from all backgrounds and ideologies. Most young people are abandoning the countryside to pursue employment in the cities due to the unattractiveness and instability of rural livelihoods. This trend will be perpetuated if there continues to be a lack of investment in this sector from both public and private sources. Rural unemployment levels are high and inexperienced young farmers from middle-to-low class families are the most vulnerable to job insecurity, generally due to fewer opportunities to access education and learn new skills. Increasing the interest of young people in farming must be at the core of rural development plans in countries around the world, and it is crucial for policymakers to prioritise young farmers' assistance programmes if their domestic agricultural sectors are to survive.

Voices of young farmers from around the world are calling for a radical transformation in the structure of the agricultural system, one that allows small-scale farms and farmers to thrive, through the production of natural foods and a more direct connection to markets and consumers. As long as young farmers continue to demonstrate their agency, structural changes are possible, as the tension between the two allows for a perpetual cycle of social transition. Opening

doors for YPFs to take over or start their own farms is pivotal, and this includes the provisioning of more loans and grants to support the purchase or rental of land. Certainly, access to land is the most important factor for young people to be able to farm, yet it is also the biggest obstacle they face and this is a critical issue to be addressed. In order for effective changes to be made, the structural issues that are creating such unequal land ownership opportunities must be understood, and this understanding will not emerge unless academics and policymakers alike begin to direct more attention toward this situation.

While I recognise the limitations of this analysis, my hope is that this research serves as a platform which draws attention to the fact that there *are* young people who still want to farm and that they are visibly committed, not only to making a living in agriculture, but also to demonstrating their political engagement. These young farmers are mobilised, organised, and involved in their communities and are creating networks both at home and abroad. Provincial organisations are making connections across Canada and international organisations are making connections around the world. My hope is that future research will delve deeper into the structure of these organisations and may even use class analysis to examine relations between the individual young farmers within them. Additionally, gender and ethnicity should ideally be addressed in research devoted specifically to these issues, as the intersectionality of these factors and class, as well as the role they play in the lives of young farmers, should certainly be examined further and through many different lenses.

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