

# The democratic governance of agricultural multinationals is essential for environmental sustainability

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The European project Diverfarming, founded by the European Commission within its Horizon 2020 programme, not only seeks environmental sustainability among crop diversification and low input management practices, but also seeks to implement sustainable

innovations into the agri-food supply chain making it more sustainable too. In this way, value chain actors will also obtain benefits such as economic stability.

On the way to getting these agri-[food supply chain](#) improvements, researchers from Diverfarming investigate two different approaches: the design and analysis of the value chains, and the framework for relevant policies.

The latest advance in this field has been the release of a study on how partnering can promote sustainability in agri-food supply chains focusing on the case of Barilla Sustainable Farming in the Po Valley (Italy).

Climate change, eating habits, pesticide pollution, decreases in the amount of arable land available and intensive exploitation of the natural resources like the soil (in continuous decline in fertility) are issues that threaten the sustainability and stability of the agri-food market. Hence, it is necessary to address these issues from different perspectives.

Considering that multinationals are in charge of the food production system, they should stimulate democratic multi-level governance to make food production more sustainable. Some researchers have proposed the so-called multi-stakeholder partnerships (MSP), which means different groups sharing a common problem or objective while having different interests.

Within this approach, Diverfarming researchers Barbara Pancino and Emmanuele Blasi from University of Tuscia; Stefano Pascucci from University of Exeter; and Cesare Ronchi from Barilla G&R Fratelli SPA have studied the case of Barilla Sustainable Farming (BSF), an initiative currently designing a multi-stakeholder partnership and implementing some type of agreements between the different stakeholders.

This initiative is carried out by the Barilla group which, in 2013, introduced sustainable agriculture practices by establishing horizontal agreements between Co.Pro.B, Cereal Docks, and Casalasco Tomato Consortium, its main input suppliers. Through this agreement the three companies integrated their supply chains by means of a crop rotation system that combines wheat crops, sugar beet, rapeseed, and sunflower. Although the agreements are now bilateral, they are working on changing it to a multilateral one.

After the study, a two-level approach to implement the crop rotation system is suggested in the scientific article. The first level is a contract to involve farmers around the benefits of crop diversification, while the second one refers to the collaboration between the stakeholders in the partnership seeking to integrate the supply chains, the collaboration between partners and the development of a set of contracts that can be offered to the farmers. With this type of partnership and multi-stakeholder partnerships, the implementation of crop diversification and other sustainable management practices could be effective and useful for achieving a more sustainable agricultural system throughout Europe.

**More information:** Barbara Pancino et al, Partnering for sustainability in agri-food supply chains: the case of Barilla Sustainable Farming in the Po Valley, *Agricultural and Food Economics* (2019). [DOI: 10.1186/s40100-019-0133-9](https://doi.org/10.1186/s40100-019-0133-9)

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