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Short communication

The 7th Census of Italian agriculture: characteristics, structures and dynamics of generational renewal

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Abstract

The 7th General Census of Italian Agriculture offers an opportunity to assess the current state and key trends within Italian agriculture. One pressing issue that it highlights is the aging workforce in this sector. Encouraging youth entrepreneurship is a primary goal endorsed by both national and European policies. It aims to ensure a seamless generational transition while promoting a more innovative and dynamic agricultural sector. Agriculture faces a set of critical challenges in the years ahead, including efficiency enhancement, resilience building, digitalization, and sustainability practices. These necessitate the integration of fresh, well-qualified entrepreneurial talent, making generational turnover not only highly desirable but also essential.

This article employs data from the latest Census to delve into the age distribution of farm managers, placing a particular emphasis on the younger demographic and the farms they oversee.

The study aims to scrutinize the primary shifts in the demographic makeup of agricultural holdings, with a specific focus on contrasting young and elderly farmers. The outcomes of this analysis bring to the forefront an intriguing generational shift marked by well-educated agricultural entrepreneurs who exhibit a proclivity for innovation and the adoption of digital technologies. This cohort of farmers is actively diversifying their agricultural pursuits, with a strong commitment to environmental sustainability and the market. Nonetheless, despite these commendable efforts, they continue to grapple with establishing a firm position in the sector.

Keywords: agricultural Census data, generational renewal, young farmers, ageing farmers, farm structures, Common Agricultural Policy

JEL codes: Q10, Q12

Highlights:

- Data from the 7th Agricultural Census 2020 confirm a lack of dynamism in terms of generational turnover in Italian agriculture.
- Young farmers lead larger farms on average and are oriented towards multifunctional agriculture that is more sustainable and respectful of the environment.
- Innovation is one of the elements that qualifies farms with young managers.

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1. Introduction

Italy is among the countries of the European Union (EU) that records the highest rates of aging in agricultural entrepreneurship (Eurostat, 2018; Dwyer *et al.*, 2021) and associates this phenomenon with the abandonment of agricultural activities, particularly in more marginal areas (Zanetti *et al.*, 2019).

As emphasized by the European Commission through its initiative “Long-term vision for rural areas: for stronger, connected, resilient, prosperous EU rural areas” (European Commission, 2021), fostering the relocation or retention of young individuals in rural areas is essential for sustaining the vitality of both the sector and the territories. This is due to their greater inclination towards innovation and entrepreneurial growth, whether in agriculture or other economic activities (de Guzman *et al.*, 2020; Dax, Copus, 2022).

Murtagh *et al.* (2023) argue that rejuvenating the farming profession involves addressing the age imbalance within the sector and making farms more appealing and sustainable as a livelihood.

As indicated by various studies (Ascione *et al.*, 2014; Zagata, Sutherland, 2015; Suess-Reyes, Fuetsch, 2016; Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2017; Coopmans *et al.*, 2021; Korthals Altes, 2023), the entry and continuity of young individuals in the management of agricultural businesses tend to be impeded by a combination of factors related to the structural and organizational characteristics of the sector (e.g., limited access to land, credit constraints, etc.), which are further influenced by social, economic, environmental and institutional factors. It appears that despite efforts made by rural development policies to promote generational turnover, the desired effects have not been realized (Zagata, Sutherland, 2015; Licciardo *et al.*, 2022; Sutherland, 2023).

There is not a single universally accepted definition of young farmers (Cersosimo, Ferrara, 2013). Precisely defining the age range is crucial to establish the scope of our current analysis. Both national and EU regulations generally categorize farm managers as young up to the age of 35 or 40, especially concerning the establishment of new agricultural holdings and accessing subsidies and support systems. For instance, within the framework of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), individuals who have not yet reached the age of 40 are considered young farmers as an eligibility requirement for the Young Farmer Payment.

In this article, we have chosen to adopt the age range defined by the CAP, with the threshold of 40 years distinguishing young from older agricultural entrepreneurs¹. The data utilized in this analysis originate from an extensive study conducted by ISTAT on the 2020 Census, focusing specifically on this age group. These data shed light on the entrepreneurial behaviour of young farmers compared to the entire population, revealing their innovative tendencies².

The analysis presented here does not aim to offer a comprehensive overview of the role played by young farmers in the Italian primary sector. This limitation arises from both the absence of available structural data at the time of writing this article and the impossibility of conducting historical comparisons. Nonetheless, the inclusion of information on young farmers in the 2020 Census provides valuable insights for examining various aspects of young farmers and their businesses. This data can help better orient support policies by implementing appropriate actions and tools to encourage and sustain their activities over time.

The subsequent analysis serves as an initial step toward characterizing the profile of a young farmer, which is essential for comprehending the pressing issue, widely debated at European level, regarding generational turnover in agriculture and the likely trajectories of the sector's evolution. In this regard, our study focuses on two key aspects. Firstly, it delves into the primary changes occurring within the demographic structure of farm managers by comparing young and older farmers. Secondly, it explores the novel insights provided by the census survey. Furthermore, we examine the presence of young individuals in the agricultural sector and contrast it with the over-40 demographic, particularly at a regional level.

2. A general overview

The 7th edition of the Agricultural Census, which is the final one before the commencement of the permanent and sample Census, offers data on Italian agriculture up to the year 2020. These data provide an extensive statistical overview of the agricultural sector at the national, regional, and local levels. Simultaneously, they contribute to enhancing the existing information resources on various structural aspects (e.g., standard production, utilized agricultural area, livestock, tenant profiles, etc.), while also capturing emerging trends related to farm management, such as innovation and digitalization.

In contrast to the 2010 Agricultural Census, where data regarding age groups pertained to only a few aspects of farmers and farms, the current edition allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of the new generation of farmers. This is achieved by

¹ Article 4(6) Regulation (EU) 2115/2021.

² The related document is available at <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/274950>

comparing data from their farms with those managed by older farmers. For instance, it enables us to assess their inclination towards innovation, sustainable production systems, participation in associations, and adoption of digital technologies. However, it is important to note that ISTAT has yet to release data concerning the structural issues (e.g., economic size of holdings, farming types, etc.) of businesses operated by young farmers. Therefore, this analysis does not provide information on these aspects.

Without delving extensively into certain nationwide trends that have already been addressed by other authors – such as a notable decrease in the number of farms, a slight reduction in land area, and an increase in the average farm size (Cardillo *et al.* 2022; Giacomini, 2022; Henke, Sardone, 2022; Manzi *et al.*, 2022) – the authors wish to draw attention to the generational imbalance within the agricultural workforce. As highlighted by VV. AA. (2022), the age composition of farm managers primarily consists of individuals aged 60 and over (57.6%), with a notably limited presence of those in the younger age group (from 30 to 44 years: 11.2%) and a minimal representation of very young individuals (under 29: 2.2%)³.

The ongoing aging of national agricultural entrepreneurship is certainly not a recent development (Corsi *et al.*, 2005; Tarangioli, Trisorio, 2010; Cersosimo, 2012; Cersosimo, Ferrara, 2013; Carbone, Corsi, 2014; Ascione *et al.*, 2014). Nevertheless, the expanded information fields in the latest Census allow for a broader exploration of young farmers compared to their older counterparts. This enables us to create a more comprehensive profile of their structural characteristics and delve deeper into the evolutionary paths of their farms. Additionally, we can consider potential regional variations in this phenomenon.

2.1. The outcomes of Census data collection on Italian agricultural entrepreneurship

The analysis of data regarding the method of entering the agricultural business reveals that 64.6% of young farmer inherit family-run operations, reaffirming the predominantly familial nature of national agricultural holdings: only 27.9% of young farmer initiate and manage entirely new ventures. As of 2020, there are a total of 104,886 young farmers (aged ≤40), constituting 9.3% of the overall figure. This represents a decrease of 2% compared to a decade ago when the proportion of young individuals stood at 11.3%.

The highest percentage of young farmers reside in the northern regions of the country. At regional level, Valle d’Aosta (15.7%), Sardinia (15.1%), and the two Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano (14.1% and 13.9%, respectively) have the highest proportions of young individuals within the total farming population (see Table 1). From a comparative standpoint, this situation mirrors that observed in the 2010 Census, particularly concerning the “younger” regions (refer to Figure 1).

Table 1. Number of farms and Utilized Agricultural Area (UAA) categorised per farmer age (young and not-young)

Young farm manager (≤40)		Not-young farm manager (>40)		Total	
Farms	UAA	Farms	UAA	Farms	UAA

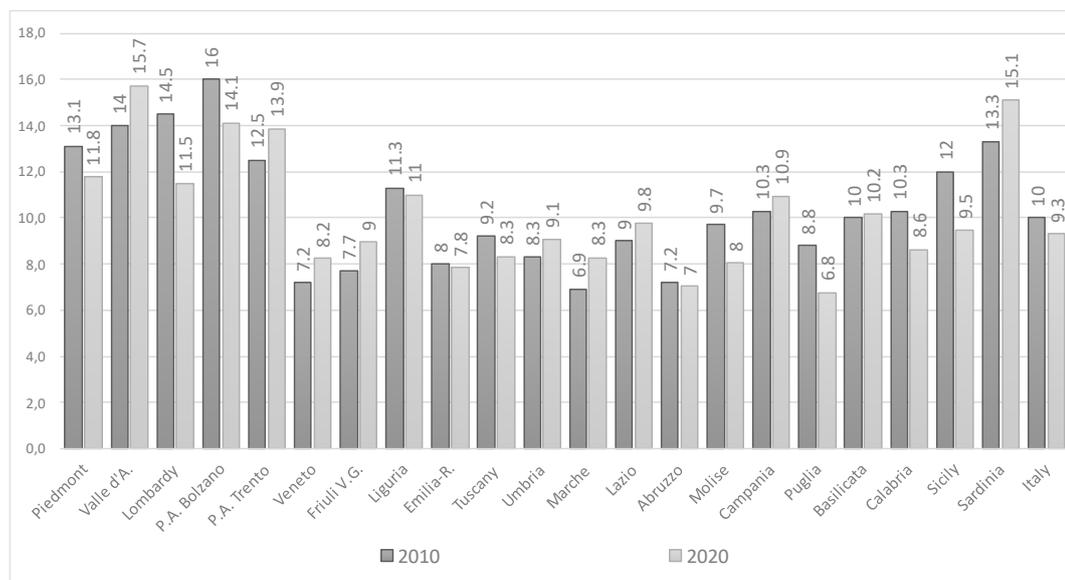
³ The study on the age of the farmers was conducted using the age groups and data released by ISTAT in August 2022 (<https://www.istat.it/archivio/273753>).

	No.	% of the regional total	hectares	average	No.	% of the regional total	hectares	average	No.	hectares	average
North	30,452	10.1	586,459	19	269,654	89.9	3,713,599	14	300,106	4,300,059	14
Central	16,041	9.0	288,078	18	162,931	91.0	1,716,085	11	178,972	2,004,162	11
South	58,393	9.0	512,678	18	593,057	91.0	4,704,470	8	651,450	5,748,819	9
ITALY	104,886	9.3	1,918,886	18	1,025,642	90.7	10,134,154	10	1,130,528	12,053,040	11

Note: Common land agricultural units are excluded.

Source: our elaborations on ISTAT Census data.

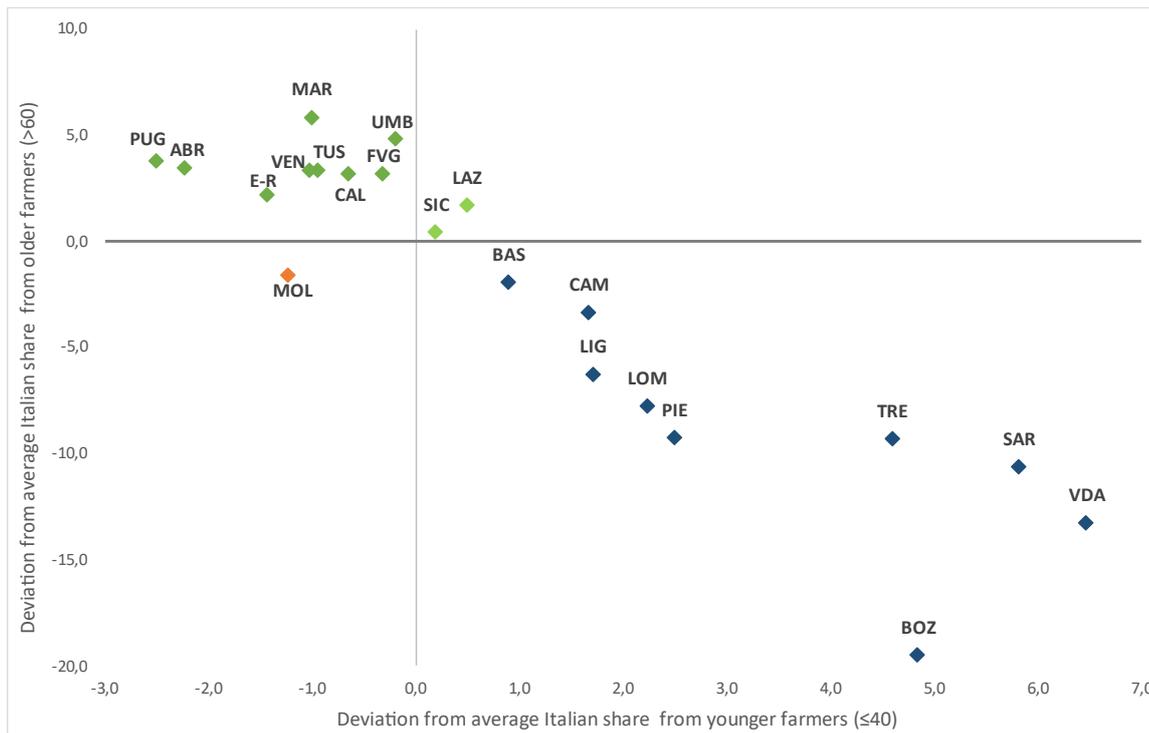
Figure 1. Incidence of farmers ≤ 40 in the last two Censuses (% values)



Source: our elaborations on ISTAT Census data.

The distinct presence of two demographic groups, the young and the elderly, in the 2020 Census, offers the opportunity to assess the extent to which farms managed by young individuals (aged ≤ 40) are poised to replace the elderly component (aged ≥ 60). In Figure 2, we provide a regional map of Italy that categorizes regions into four groups, ranging from those facing the most significant challenges in terms of generational renewal to those unaffected by this phenomenon. This analysis adopts the same approach previously outlined by Matthews (2018) in a study focusing on the topic of young agricultural holders within the EU.

Figure 2. Distribution of regions based on the level of generational renewal (% values)



Notes: (1) The regions have been categorized into four groups based on how they compare to the Italian average in terms of the proportion of younger (X-axis) and older farmers (X-axis) and the share of older farmers (Y-axis). (2) PIE (Piedmont); VDA (Valle d’Aosta); LOM (Lombardy); BOZ (P.A. Bolzano); TRE (P.A. Trento); VEN (Veneto); FVG (Friuli V.G.); LIG (Liguria); E-R (Emilia-R.); TUS (Tuscany); UMB (Umbria); MAR (Marche); LAZ (Lazio); ABR (Abruzzo); MOL (Molise); CAM (Campania); PUG (Puglia); BAL (Basilicata); CAL (Calabria); SIC (Sicily); SAR (Sardinia).

Source: our elaborations on ISTAT Census data.

Despite variations in results and substantial differences among regions within the same group, territorial analysis offers valuable insights for a deeper understanding of the generational renewal phenomenon in Italy. One initial finding highlights the presence of more critical situations, where the issue of generational renewal significantly surpasses national averages. These situations are represented by nine regions positioned in the upper-left quadrant of the graph. Notably, some economically significant regions such as Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia fall within this category. These regions boast a strong agricultural and agri-food sector but simultaneously, they exhibit a higher percentage of elderly farmers compared to the national average and a lower percentage of young farmers. For some of these areas, obstacles preventing young farmers from entering agricultural activities may be linked to limited land access and the existence of a more integrated and competitive agriculture where older operators lack incentives to relinquish their farm management roles.

On the other hand, regions where a concerning gap between the new and old generation of farmers is observed are Puglia and Abruzzo, where the majority of farmers are over 60 years old. In these circumstances, it is likely that young individuals may not engage in agriculture due to economic reasons, but they may also not be trapped in it due to a lack of alternative employment opportunities (Carbone, Corsi, 2004). Consequently, it is primarily the older farmers who perform the role of preserving the territory, based on a more extensive and less profitable form of agriculture.

On the contrary, the bottom-right quadrant highlights a group of regions with a demographic structure that is much more favourable to generational turnover in the primary sector. These geographic areas exhibit a balanced demographic ratio above the national average, consequently showing a greater inclination toward generational renewal. The regions falling within this quadrant encompass territories spanning both extremes of the Italian Peninsula. On one side, Basilicata, Sardegna, Campania, regions where agriculture may also represent a "necessary" choice due to the limited availability of alternative employment opportunities. On the other side, Piemonte, Liguria, Lombardy, Valle d'Aosta, and the two Autonomous Provinces⁴, regions distinguished by a more competitive and integrated agricultural sector within the local economic framework, rendering it increasingly appealing to younger individuals. In these regions, a lower percentage of elderly farmers compared to the national average is accompanied by a higher percentage of young farmers. Sicily, Lazio and Molise stand out as extreme cases. While, for the first two regions located in the upper-right quadrant, the presence of young farmers, though limited in an aging context, hints at the possibility of generational renewal, this prospect appears remote in Molise. Indeed, Molise is characterized by a lower percentage of young farmers but also by a lower percentage of elderly farmers compared to the Italian average.

Furthermore, a significant contrast, as highlighted by Figure 2, emerges between Sardinia, Valle d'Aosta and the Autonomous Province of Bolzano on one side, and Abruzzo and Puglia on the other. This disparity may result from various factors influencing generational turnover.

Examining the data from the latest Agricultural Census allows us to highlight the changes that have occurred in the past decade, particularly regarding access to agricultural activities. In farms with young farmers, there is a higher incidence of start-ups compared to not-young farms (27.9% vs. 17.6%), which, conversely, have a higher percentage of takeovers.

In the farms located in Central Italy, the percentage of young farmers initiating new businesses exceeds the national average by more than 10 percentage points. In farms managed by individuals over 40 years old, respondents reported inheriting the farm from a family member in 75% of cases. In contrast, for young farmers, family successions decreased to 64.6% (see Table 2). Again, the regions in Central Italy deviate from this pattern, where the opportunities for succession reduce even further to 55.3%.

Table 2. Type of access to the management of the farm (% values)

	Young farm manager				Not-young farm manager			
	From family members	From third parties	From none (start-up)	Total	From family members	From third parties	From none (start-up)	Total
North	60.0	5.2	34.8	100	74.7	5.3	20.0	100
Central	55.3	4.7	40.0	100	71.9	4.5	23.6	100
South	63.6	5.6	30.8	100	76.3	5.8	17.9	100
ITALY	64.6	7.5	27.9	100	75.0	7.3	17.6	100

⁴ In the case of Alto Adige, it is essential to consider the importance of the "Maso Chiuso" institution (Geschlossen Höf), which imposes limitations on property subdivision, both in cases of inheritance and through sales. This institution plays a crucial role in preventing land fragmentation and facilitating the preservation of agricultural activities in mountainous regions.

Notes: (1) This classification only includes the following types of legal entities: individual farmers, family-run farms, and farming partnerships.

(2) ISTAT categorizes the source from which the farm is acquired as follows: from a family member, from a relative, from third parties, from nobody (i.e., a new farm). In the table, the first two items are combined.

Source: our elaborations on ISTAT Census data.

It is worth noting that in recent years, in addition to the conventional practice of family succession (Cassidy, McGrath, 2014; Sroka *et al.*, 2019; Bertoni *et al.*, 2023), there has been a gradual emergence of a modest generational turnover effect, supported by European and national policies (Ascione *et al.*, 2014; Licciardo *et al.*, 2022). Young farmers collectively manage 1,919 million hectares of UAA, which account for roughly 16% of the entire national UAA. The average farm size for businesses operated by a holder under the age of 40 is 18.3 hectares, significantly exceeding the overall average of 10.7 hectares for all farms. Consequently, young farmers are overseeing notably larger farms in comparison to the surveyed population as a whole, as indicated by a study conducted by Licciardo *et al.* in 2023. Notably, in the regions of Valle d'Aosta and Sardinia, young farmers are managing farms that surpass both the regional and national averages, with sizes of 44 and 42 hectares, respectively⁵. These data should be interpreted while considering two significant aspects. Firstly, despite a national average decline of 2.5%, Valle d'Aosta stands out as one of the eight regions where the UAA is actually increasing. Apart a few specific geographical exceptions, notably the two Autonomous Provinces and Lombardy, the number of farms has, on average, decreased by 22.6%. The most significant declines have been observed in the southern regions (-33%) and the islands (-32.4%). The reduction in the number of farms has facilitated the concentration of the UAA, and in this context, the data demonstrate that younger farmers, as in the case of Sardinia, have particularly benefited from this trend.

Another noteworthy finding drawn from the Census data is that in farms managed by young individuals, approximately 61% of the UAA is rented, a percentage that declines to 38% for those over 40 years of age. Conversely, in young-run farms, ownership stakes decrease to 27.4%, while they rise to 52.4% in farms operated by individuals no longer young. These data would confirm a problem to land access (as highlighted by Brun *et al.*, 2014; Mausch *et al.*, 2021), especially for start-up farms, primarily due to the exorbitant costs associated with land purchase (as discussed by Rossier, 2010; Keiko Yamaguchi *et al.*, 2020), coupled with the reluctance of older farmers to retire.

2.2. The new generation of agricultural entrepreneurs

Young farmers exhibit a notably higher level of education compared to the average for farmers, both at the national and regional levels. Approximately 50% have successfully attained a high school diploma, in stark contrast to the 22.1% among individuals over the age of 40. Furthermore, 19.3% hold a university degree, a percentage that drops significantly to 8.7% for farm managers who are not classified as young. Among the top five regions boasting the highest percentage of young farm managers with university degrees, only one is situated in the south of the country: Umbria (26.5%), Tuscany (25.9%), Marche (22.6%), Lombardy (22.2%) and Basilicata (21.8%).

⁵ In Valle d'Aosta, the 392 farms led by young managers make up 15.7% of the regional total (or 28.8% in terms of UAA). Meanwhile, in Sardinia, there are 7,073 young farms, accounting for 15.1% of the regional total (or 2.5% in terms of UAA).

The increased professionalization of young farmers, as assessed by their level of education, has a positive impact on various aspects of farm activities. Over the three years leading up to the Census survey, 24.4% of young farmers introduced innovations, compared to just 9.7% among entrepreneurs over the age of 40. Moreover, when it comes to digitalization, farmers under 40 exhibit a level that is more than double that of their older counterparts, with figures standing at 33.6% versus 14%.

A significant 71.4% of farms managed by young individuals prioritize the marketing of their products. This inclination appears to be bolstered by their interest in associationism, a collaborative tool that attracts young farmers. Indeed, 46.8% of farmers under 40 are members of associations, compared to 40.1% of older individuals. Additionally, 21.5% are part of a producer organization, and 2.2% (in contrast to 0.7% among those aged 40 and above) are affiliated with a business network⁶.

Based on the analysis of Census data, it becomes evident that young farmers play a significant role in embracing the multifunctional agriculture model, which encompasses activities like agritourism, processing and direct sales, rural preschools. This model is progressively reshaping the Italian primary sector, as indicated by studies such as Henke (2004) and Henke, Povellato (2012). Furthermore, young farmers are enthusiastic advocates of the agroecological approach. They exhibit a heightened commitment to environmental concerns, exemplified by their adoption of organic production systems. Indeed, the percentage of young farmers (14.6%) engaged in organic farming surpasses that of older farmers (5.9%), more than doubling the participation rate⁷. Furthermore, there is a higher prevalence of productive diversification, involving the inclusion of at least one additional income-generating activity alongside agriculture. In this regard, 11.6% of farms managed by young individuals engage in diversification by incorporating at least one profitable activity related to agriculture. This percentage declines to 5.2% when considering farms operated by individuals who are not categorized as young, as highlighted by Korthals Altes (2023) «*Greener production methods involve more than a few updates, which can be performed as a simple fix by a farmer who is a few years before retirement but needs a different practice of farming. Therefore, the issue of rejuvenating farming is more than just a change of generations; it is also a change of practices*».

Farmers who engage in production diversification are most prevalent in both the north and south of the country, accounting for shares of 50% and 27%, respectively. In the central region, the percentage of young farmers involved in diversification stands at 23% (see Table 3). Across all three geographical areas, both young and older farmers exhibit a balanced inclination toward diversification.

However, the territorial disparities become even more pronounced when examining regional data. In 12 regions, the percentage of farmers engaged in other income-generating activities exceeds the national average, with the highest value recorded in the Autonomous Province of Bolzano (30.3%). Conversely, in certain regions of the south, including Calabria, Sicily and Puglia, this

⁶ When examining specific categories of associations (producer organizations, business networks and other entities), it consistently emerges that farmers under the age of 40 exhibit higher participation rates. At regional level, the most notable percentages of youth engagement in associations are observed in the northeast regions (64%), followed by the northwest (54%) and central regions (51%).

⁷ In the context of livestock farms engaged in organic breeding practices, the participation rate stands at 2.3%, in contrast to the 0.7% figure seen among farms managed by individuals who are not considered young.

figure does not even reach 5%. A closer look at the specifics of the primary connected activities (refer to Figure 3) reveals that young farmers almost always outnumber those older by more than double. The main type of connected activity is agritourism, with a 4% share of farms run by young managers (2% in the case of not-young ones).

This is followed by subcontracting activities present on 1.8% of young farms, such as the production of renewable energy, the transformation of animal and vegetable products.

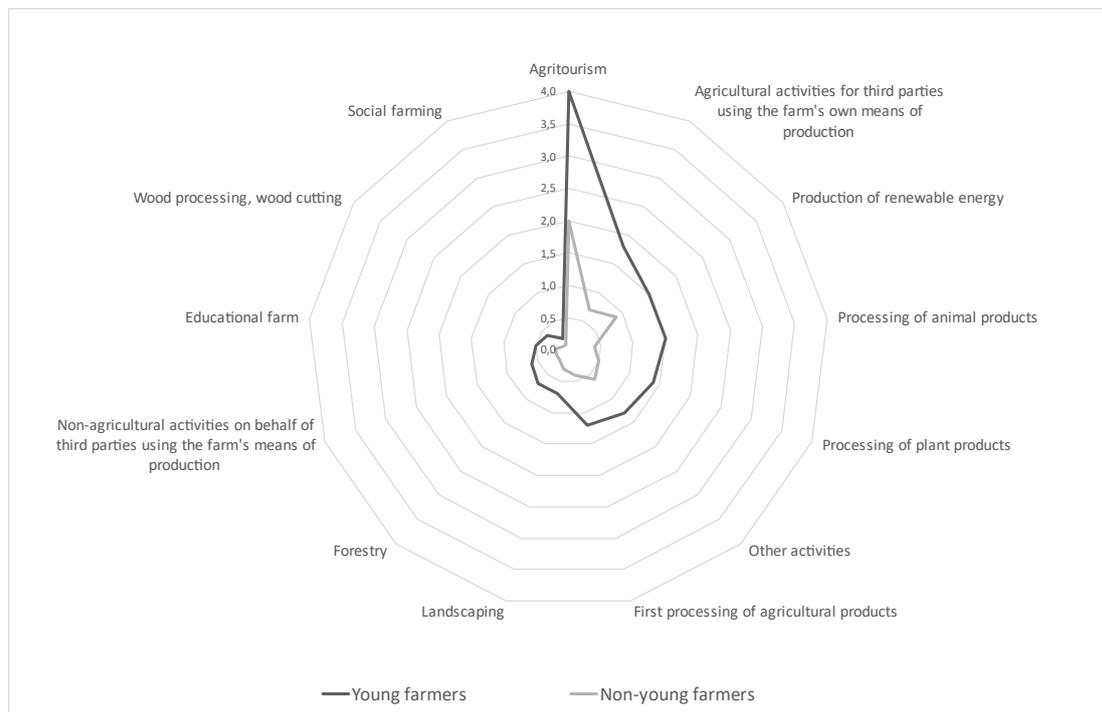
Table 3. Number of farms engaged in supplementary activities, categorized by young and non-young farm managers

	Young farm manager		Not young farm manager	
	No.	% Distribution	No.	% Distribution
North	6,140	50.0	29,926	50.9
Central	2,758	23.0	12,508	23.6
South	3,307	27.0	13,487	25.5
ITALY	12,205	100.0	52,921	100.0

Note: Common land agricultural units are excluded.

Source: our elaborations on ISTAT Census data.

Figure 3. Prevailing type of associated activities among farms managed by both young and older managers (% values).



Note: The Census encompasses a total of 21 business categories, with the most substantial shares displayed in the graph.

Source: our elaborations on ISTAT Census data.

3. Final remarks

The statistical survey highlights the presence of specific entrepreneurial requirements that need to be investigated. The objective is to facilitate the development of suitable interventions for supporting new start-ups and to establish effective methods for providing this support. The data collected in the 7th Census of 2020 enable us to define an updated picture of youth entrepreneurship as the new CAP is launched. Within the CAP, one of the nine strategic objectives involves facilitating generational turnover, and the Census data help inform this effort.

Despite public policy efforts to promote and support young individuals in entering farm management, data analysis reveals a limited presence of young farmers and the continued predominance of older ones. Once again, these circumstances can be attributed to sociocultural factors and the persistence of entry barriers linked to the structural and organizational aspects of the sector, which have been extensively studied by numerous authors. However, there are regional exceptions that, while not contradicting the overall trend, show a higher concentration of young farmers, surpassing the national average. This suggests the potential existence of facilitating factors for their establishment.

To fully comprehend these enabling factors, further analysis will be necessary in the future, using data from the new permanent Census of Agriculture and incorporating information gathered through qualitative surveys such as sample surveys and technical tables.

The available data at the moment do not provide an in-depth analysis of the structural attributes of businesses managed by young individuals. Instead, they primarily focus on the entrepreneurial choices made by these individuals in terms of innovation and their market approach. In our perspective, what stands out most within the young farming demographic is their heightened commitment to green and digital transitions. This inclination is facilitated by the adoption of innovations within the farming sector and their continuous professional development. Young farmers, indeed, demonstrate a stronger inclination toward sustainability, organic farming and animal welfare. It is important to highlight that fostering innovation and entrepreneurship can also play a pivotal role in fostering more virtuous development cycles in rural areas. On the contrary, a scarcity of young individuals may impede the modernization and balanced development of these regions.

In our opinion, the analysis at the territorial level offers valuable insights for a deeper understanding of both internal and external factors that can either facilitate or impede the entry of young individuals into the agricultural sector. Despite the complexities inherent in demographic analysis, notable disparities are evident, as exemplified by the stark differences between regions like Sardinia, Valle d'Aosta and the Autonomous Province of Bolzano compared to Abruzzo and Puglia. These disparities shed light on specific determinants influencing generational turnover. One such determinant is the variation in the size distribution of agricultural holdings. For instance, the prevalence of medium-small-sized farms may be associated with a higher percentage of older farmers, particularly in areas where agriculture is less productive. Consequently, the presence of young individuals in these regions remains limited.

Furthermore, it is essential to recognize that in certain regions of the country, social and cultural attitudes regarding access to the job market play a significant role. In regions with limited employment prospects young individuals may be inclined to pursue opportunities in the agricultural sector. In these cases, the presence of youth in agriculture is more a consequence of a lack of

alternative professional avenues rather than a deliberate choice driven by personal interest or economic convenience. Conversely, in regions where other economic sectors are highly competitive, young individuals may be less inclined to embark on careers in agriculture. This is particularly evident in some central Italian regions and along the Adriatic coast, where the strong competition in sectors like tourism and manufacturing diminishes the appeal of agriculture for young individuals. A similar scenario exists in various parts of northern Italy, although in specific regions characterized by more integrated and competitive agriculture, this trend may not hold true, and the presence of young farmers can be substantial.

However, it is believed that while the Census data can outline the profile of a young farmer and their business, they contribute only partially to understanding the territorial distribution of entrepreneurship and its evolution between censuses. They fall short of providing a comprehensive understanding of demographic dynamics associated with settlement and abandonment. For a more comprehensive picture, additional information from the Farm Accountancy Data Network (FADN), which collects technical and economic data (income, income support, etc.) from a sample of holdings, is essential. This data supplements the young agricultural holder's profile by including economic and income-related information derived from various variables.

On the other hand, analysing the structure and dynamics of young farms and comparing them with businesses in other sectors can be achieved by using structural statistics from businesses registered in the Business Register of the Chambers of Commerce (Infocamere-Movimprese). This administrative source records the registrations and cancellations of business activities, making it the primary resource for such analyses.

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