

# An Overview of the French Landscape Characteristics and Dynamics on a National Scale Level

## Authors:

Renee AOUN

Alexandra KRUSE

Yves MICHELIN

Laurent RIEUTORT

# Introduction

We will **summarize** the **history** of the **agricultural landscape in France** and **highlight** the **critical points** that marked this **evolution**.

The presentation is divided into three parts.

1. An overview of the **historical passage of time**.
2. **The present agricultural landscapes** on a national scale level.
3. **Illustration of** regional landscapes of "**Puys chain**".

And finally, how the **current policies will** affect the future agricultural landscapes in France.

# 1. a. Archeological Basis



# 1. a. Archeological Basis



➤ Agriculture was introduced where **vegetation was already burned**.

➤ First signs of **domestication** of plants and animals.

➤ The **plowing techniques** are improved by the Celts (after their invasion in 1500 BC) along with the creation of green fertilizer.

➤ Creation of **first cities** with agriculture taking place around them.

**Geometric forms** are adapted for agricultural lands by the Romans.

➤ In 500 AD: the **end of the Roman empire** → decline of cultivated lands.

➤ At the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century → **deforestation** increases to the benefit of agricultural lands.

➤ The kings and lords take **conservative measures** to stop the decline of forest.

➤ 1200-1300: Constitution of the **first open fields** in the Parisian Basin.

# 1.b. The Making of the French Landscape



# 1.b. The Making of the French Landscape

## Late Middle Ages(1300-1500):

The Hundred Years War and the Black Plague → demographic crisis.

## Early Modern

### 1500- 1600 (Renaissance):

- The **population increases** → **extension of agriculture** into new areas using **terracing techniques** on land slopes , **drainage of wet lands** and **irrigation of areas affected by drought**.
- Beginning of **land concentration** and **consolidation of open fields** plots in the Parisian Basin.

### 1600-1700

- Introduction of **new plants**: tomatoes (from USA), potatoes (from Peru), and corn (from Colombia).
- 1669: a **new rule** is introduced allowing the **intensive and rational exploitation of forests**.

### 1700-1800

- In August 1789: **Abolition of the feudal taxes**.

# 1.c. French Identity under Construction

**LA TERRE FRANÇAISE**  
DOIT ÊTRE MISE EN VALEUR PAR UN  
**TRACTEUR FRANÇAIS**



LE NOUVEAU TRACTEUR  
RENAULT, CONSTRUIT  
EN GRANDE SÉRIE EST D'UN  
PRIX D'ACHAT RÉDUIT ET D'UN  
ENTRETIEN ÉCONOMIQUE -  
STOCK DE PIÈCES DE  
RECHANGE CHEZ TOUS  
LES AGENTS RENAULT

VENTE A CRÉDIT  
PAR LA D.I.A.C.  
44 rue de Lisbonne  
- PARIS -

**RENAULT**

BILLANCOURT (SEINE)

DRAEGER IMP

# 1.c. French Identity under Construction

## 1800-1900

- From 1876: beginning of the **reforestation movement**.
- A **serious economic crisis**, due to **importation** of less costly **wheat** from Africa and **beef** from America → as a reaction the French government **closes the border, blocking the modernization of culture**.
- **Erosion** in the mountains caused **by overgrazing** → **creation of a new law** for the reforestation of lands.

## 1900-1950

- More than **6 million ha of the UAA is lost** in one century (from 1880).
- After 1945 the agricultural population continues its migration.
- **Farmers expand, restructure and modernize** their agricultural plots.



# 1.d. The Influence of the CAP

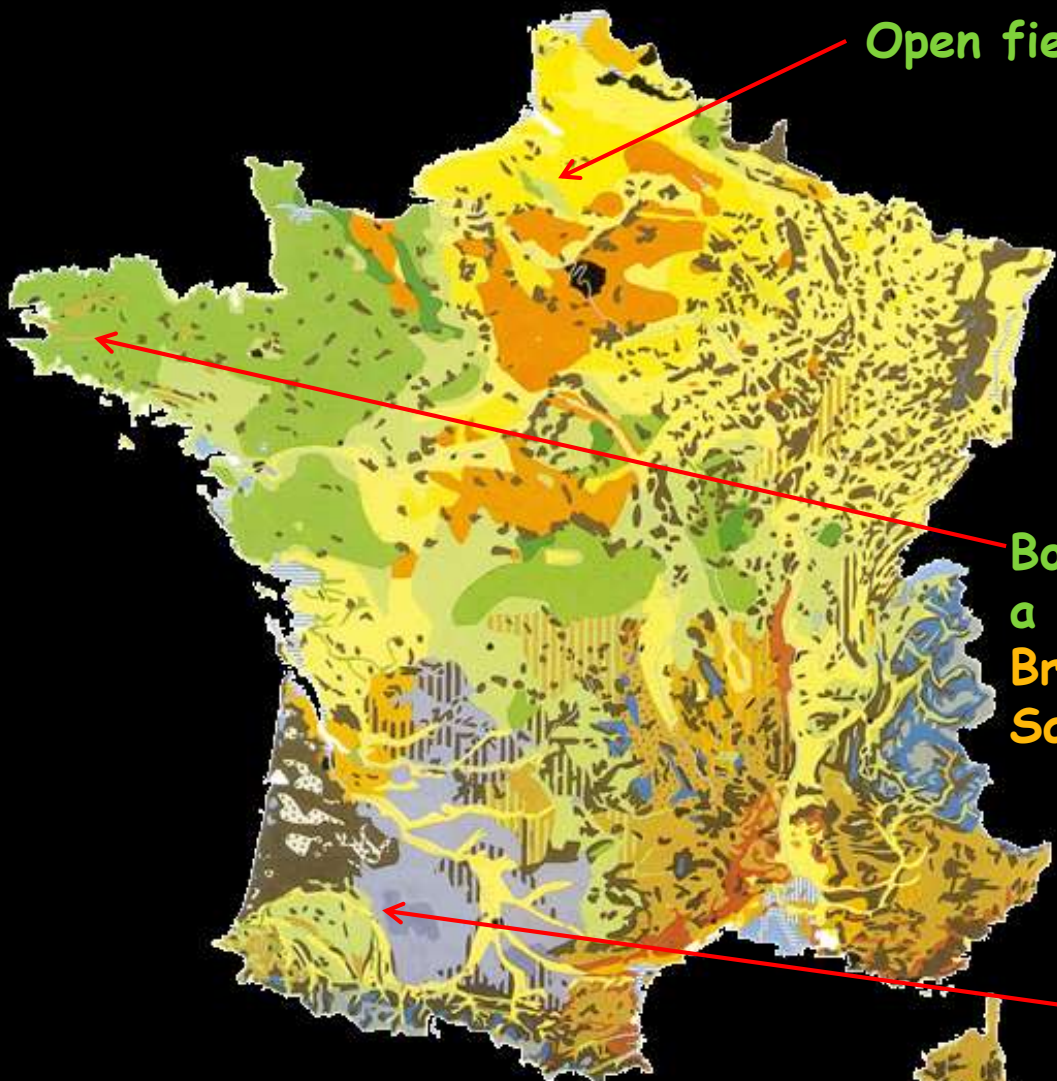


# 1.d. The Influence of the CAP

## 1950-2000

- 1962-1966: **CAP** → **intensification of production** favoring significant landscape changes.
- **Revolution** in agriculture and husbandry during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the century.  
→ **all these mutations have consequences on the environment.**
- **Cessation of cultivation in disadvantaged zones.**
- The **forest** in the last century **gains twice its surface.**
  
- During 1980: **Support of oilseed culture by the European Communities help their expansion.**
- The premiums for the uprooting of vineyards gradually reduce the share of vines.
  
- 1992: **Second PAC**, took into consideration **agro-environmental measures** → conservation of ecological places and landscapes.
- Development of agriculture over grasslands due to **greater financial support for agriculture than for husbandry.**

# 2. The Present Agricultural Landscapes



Open fields in north and the east



Bocage form a band from Bretagne to Saone plain



Aquitain type in Southwest



1. Agriculture traditionnelle	11. Forage
2. Agriculture traditionnelle avec jachères	12. Forage avec jachères
3. Agriculture traditionnelle avec bocage	13. Agriculture traditionnelle avec jachères
4. Agriculture traditionnelle avec bocage et forage	14. Agriculture traditionnelle avec jachères et forage
5. Agriculture traditionnelle avec bocage et forage et jachères	15. Agriculture traditionnelle avec jachères et forage et jachères
6. Agriculture traditionnelle avec bocage et forage et jachères et jachères	16. Agriculture traditionnelle avec jachères et forage et jachères et jachères
7. Agriculture traditionnelle avec bocage et forage et jachères et jachères et jachères	17. Agriculture traditionnelle avec jachères et forage et jachères et jachères et jachères
8. Agriculture traditionnelle avec bocage et forage et jachères et jachères et jachères et jachères	18. Agriculture traditionnelle avec jachères et forage et jachères et jachères et jachères et jachères
9. Agriculture traditionnelle avec bocage et forage et jachères et jachères et jachères et jachères et jachères	19. Agriculture traditionnelle avec jachères et forage et jachères et jachères et jachères et jachères et jachères
10. Agriculture traditionnelle avec bocage et forage et jachères et jachères et jachères et jachères et jachères et jachères	20. Agriculture traditionnelle avec jachères et forage et jachères et jachères et jachères et jachères et jachères et jachères

0 50 100

## 2. The Present Agricultural Landscapes

The **Mediterranean part**: the marks of abandoned lands.

The **absence of agriculture** in the Mediterranean region was for the **benefit of the heather** that covers now all the old terraces of the region.

Agriculture of **olive trees** and **vines** find sometimes **new entries** in the region.

But **the south** of the Mediterranean region also has **vegetables** and **fruit trees**.



# A Large Diversity Related to Different Legacies of the Past

## ➤ **Natural heritages**

Climate passed and present, soils, landforms.

## ➤ **Cultural heritage**

Farming practices, local breeds, specific knowledge.

## ➤ **Economical histories**

Local and regional trades(wine from Auvergne combined with Algerian).

## ➤ **Social heritage**

Common laws, property transmission law.

## ➤ **Politic influences**

Napoleon Code, taxes system from the Ancient Regime.