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# The Maraîchine breed: a cattle breed at the confluence of ecological and economic issues in the Atlantic coastal marshes

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Bénédicte Roche

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# Quizz! Whose breed am I?



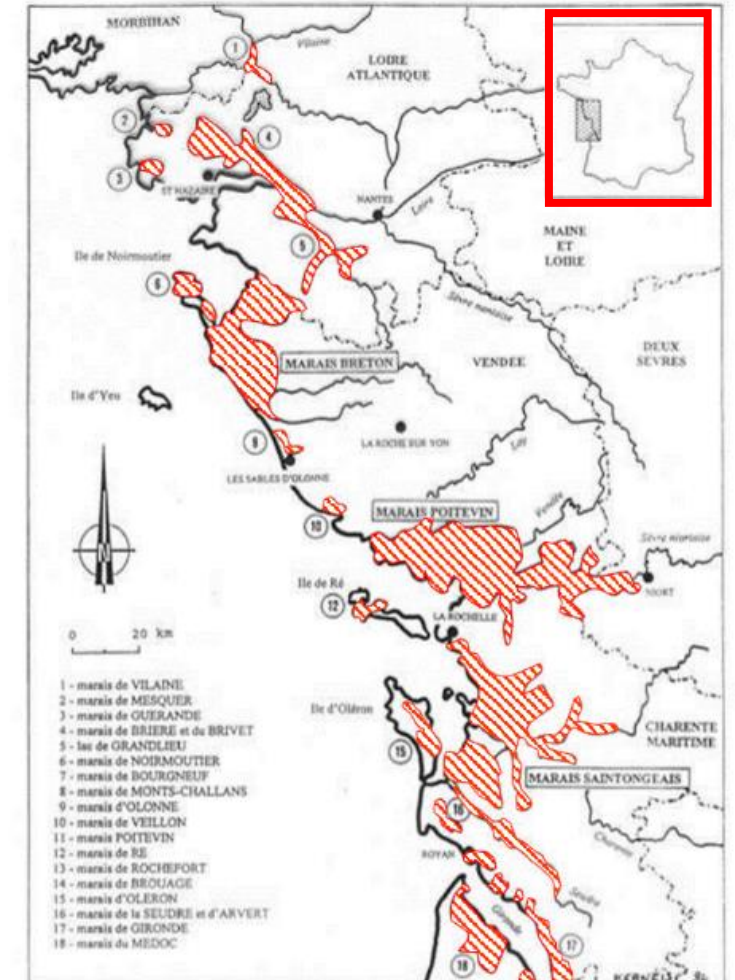
Size : quite tall

Long and curved horns

Light to dark brown hairs

Black mucosa, eyes and muzzle circled by white hairs

Historically, breed for work, meat, and milk



## Workshop n°2

# The Maraîchine breed : a cattle breed at the confluence of ecological and economic issues in the Atlantic coastal marshes

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# Local context



Important ecological issues

A constraining environment



a very specific environment

An endangered breed

1988



Farmers

Marshes management by livestock

Preservation of a breed in danger of extinction

**1980** : early selection of Maraîchine cattle in Parthenaise herds

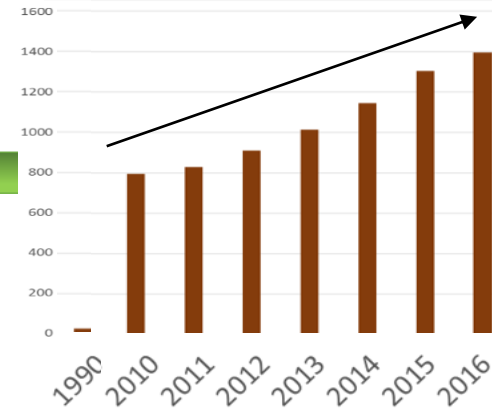
**1987** : 2 farms with a Maraîchine livestock

**2005** : first survey (B. Roche, 2005)

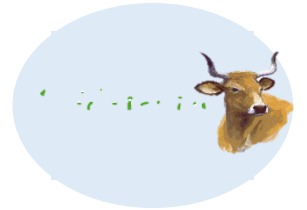
**2017** : 1400 females over 2 years old (IDELE)



# Research context



Emergence of questions about the valuation of meat



Fondation de France

2018-2021

Research project  
« Grooming and thinking the nature »



- ✓ To know the livestock farming practices
- ✓ To analyze the cattle farmers' expectations, the way they think how Maraîchine cattle should be grown, the perception they have of the marshes and of their job

1 – Investigation about the actors' perceptions and practices: **cattle farmers** and other varied actors of the supply chain

2 - Quantification and references production and sharing on quality of meat and on biodiversity

3 - Designing a collective way to value the meat

# Research question: What are the links between the perceptions of the Maraîchine cattle breeders and their farming practices?

## Zootechnical and sociological surveys during winter 2018

Livestock farmers in the marshes (38) : Finally 25 farmers met  
– 10 refusals (no availability, no more cows)

Farm practices (Vialle, 2010)



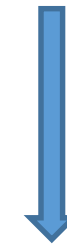
*Statistical  
analysis methods*

Typology of the farms



Conceptions (Darré, 2004)

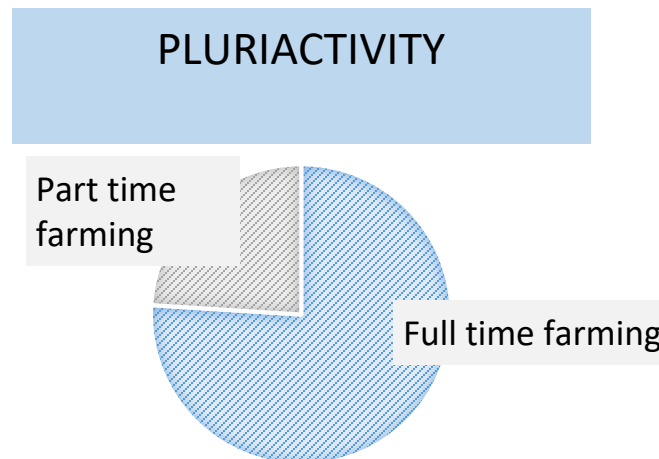
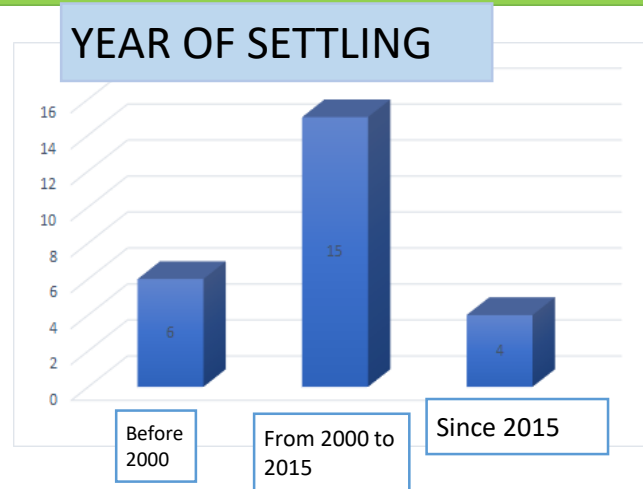
*Analysis of  
the  
speeches*



Livestock farmers  
profiles

# Results : who are the Maraîchine cattle breeders ?

- ✓ Average age : 45 (from 21 to 64 years old)
- ✓ Level of diploma: from Professional Training Certificate to Ph. D, 6 farmers don't have any agricultural training
- ✓ Settling: 14 farmers with no agricultural family background, vs 11 farmers coming from an agricultural family
- ✓ Legal status of the farms: a majority of individual farms (17) vs collective farms (8)
- ✓ ¼ of the sample has other jobs than farming
- ✓ ¾ of the farmers have responsibilities in agricultural organizations



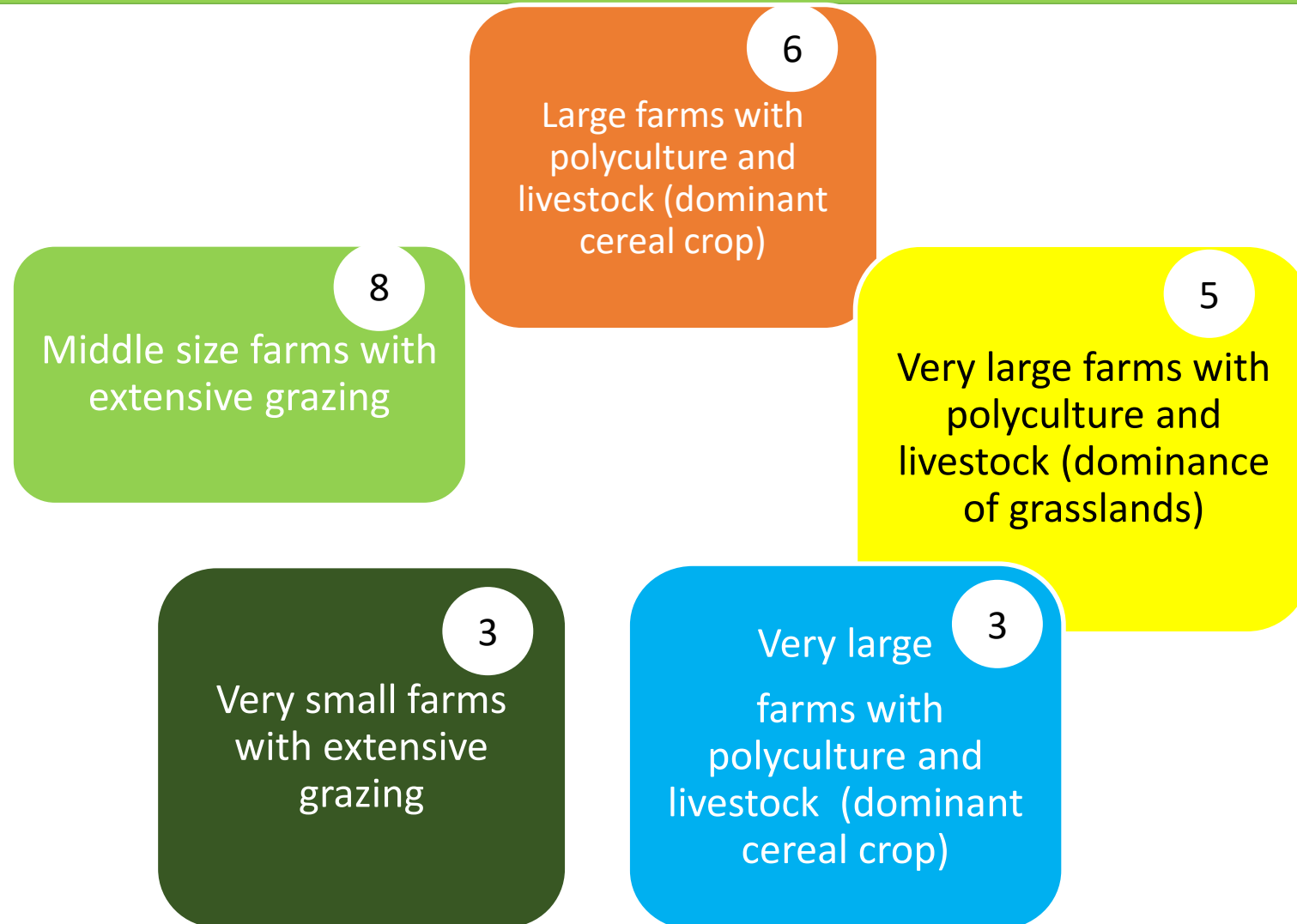
10 farmers from  
Marais Breton



14 farmers from  
Marais Poitevin

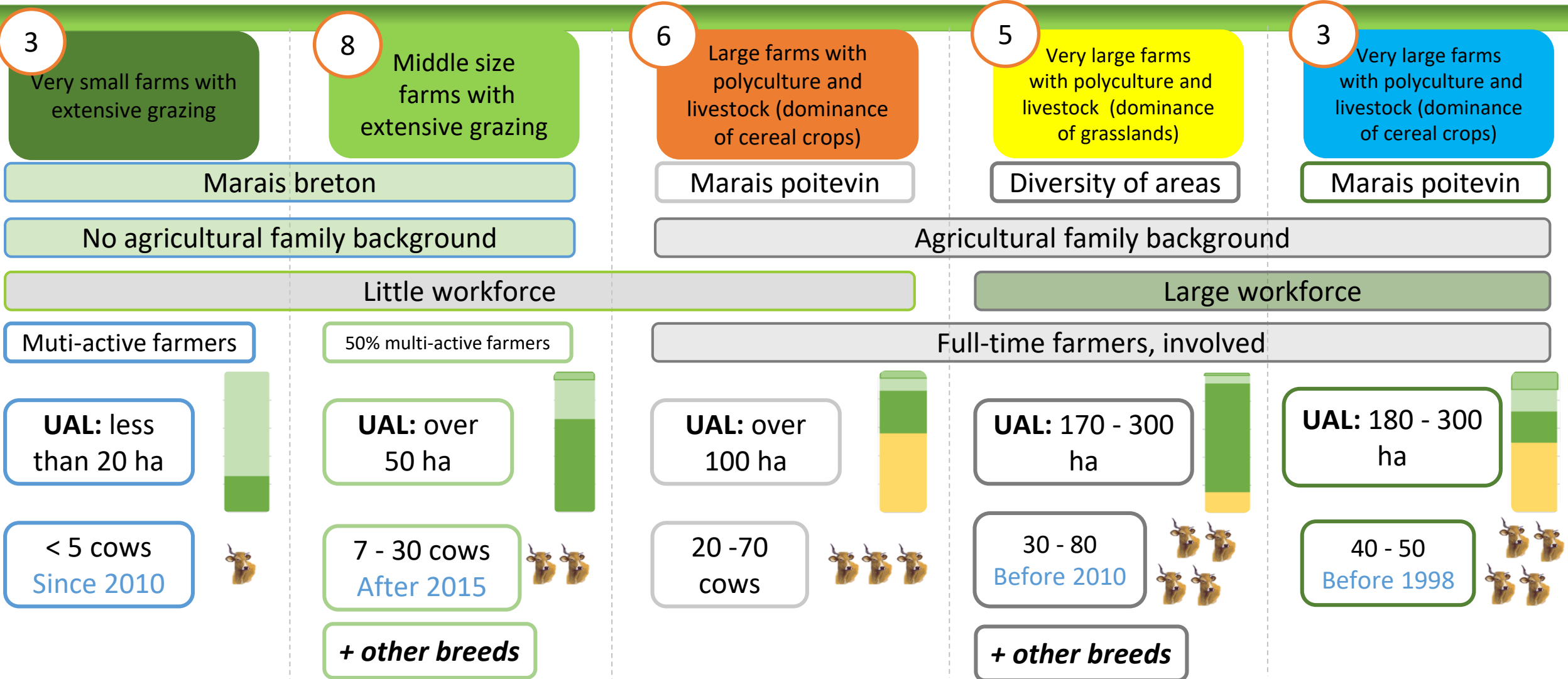
1 farmer from  
Marais of Brouage

# Results: what are the different types of farm structures?



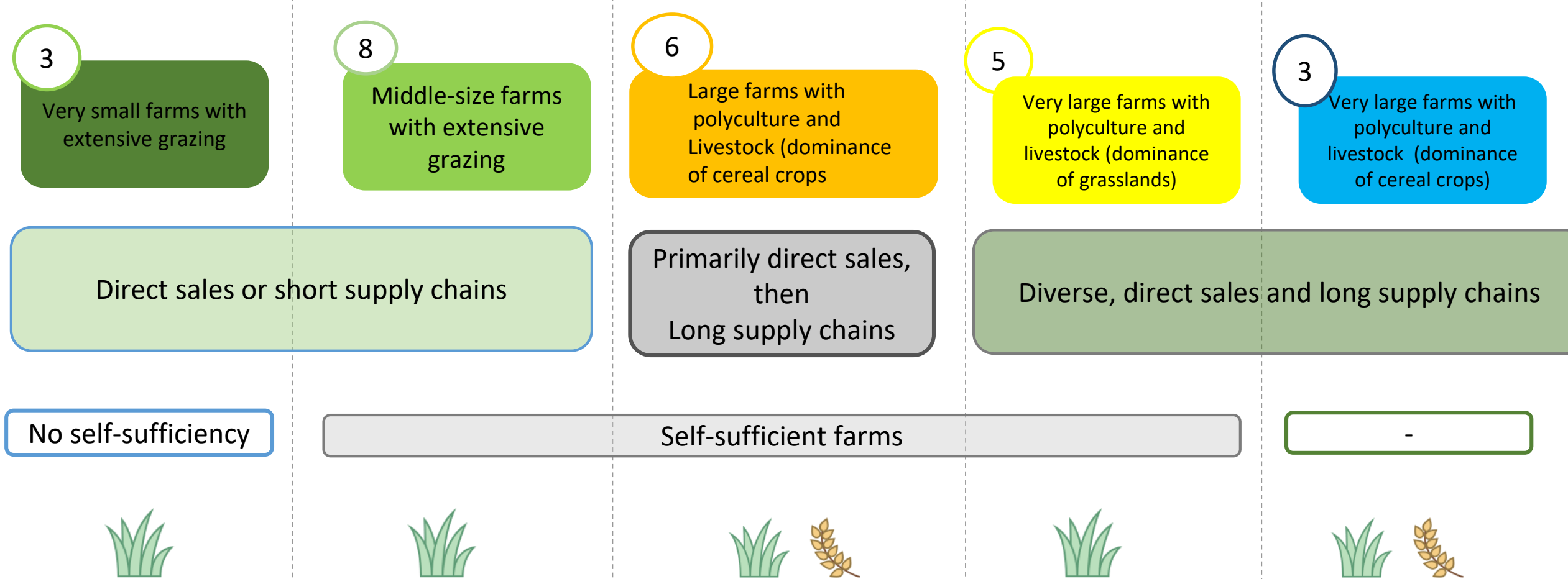


# Results: 5 types of farms structures

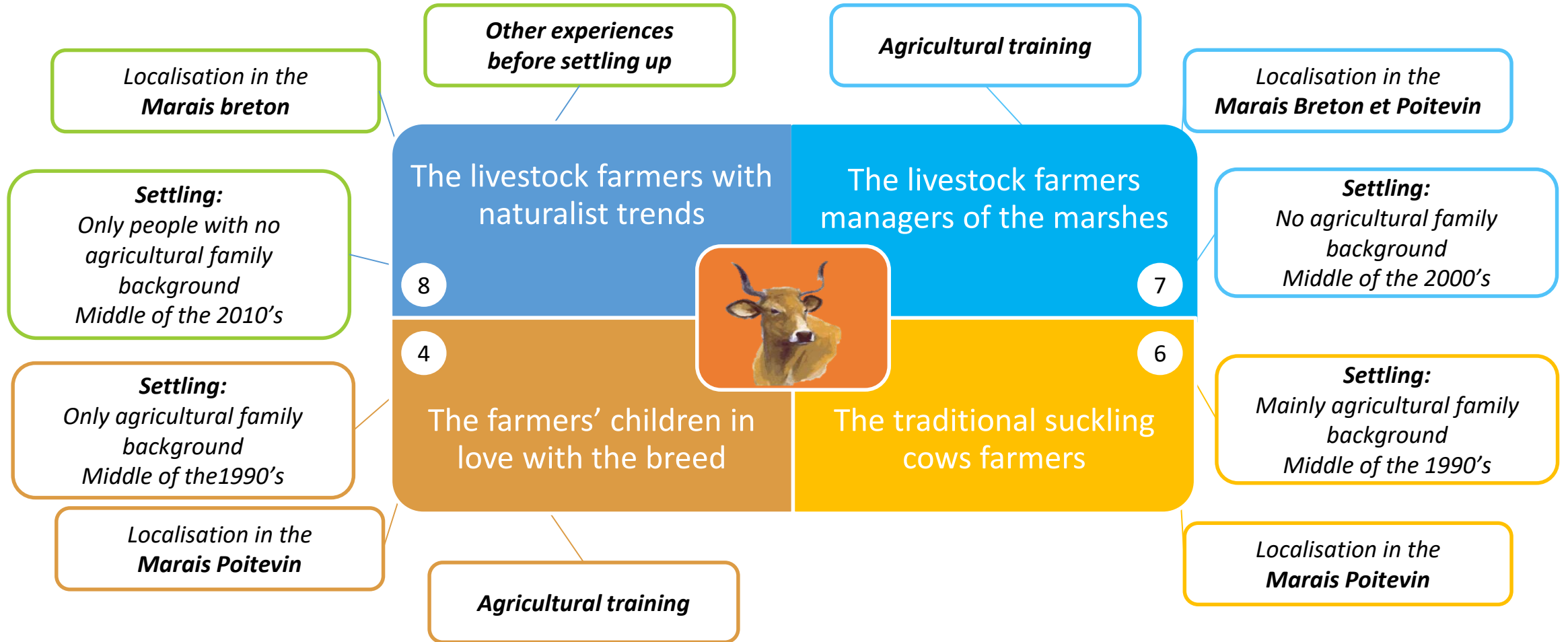


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Agroecology: multiple transitions of territories*





















# Results: valuation of the products



# 4 types of livestock farmers profiles



# Results: 4 types of livestock farmers

Motivations	Conservation of the marshes 	Resumption of the family farm 	
	To work with animals 	To work with animals 	
Territory	Privileged area for biodiversity and landscape 	Numerous conflicts about water management 	
	Favorable for agricultural establishment	Abandonment of the livestock activity  Importance of the financial supports	
Maraîchine breed	A hardy cow breed, good at rising the calves		
	Tool for the nature conservation 	A slight lack of body condition score 	
Grasslands	Great floristic richness, beneficial for the animals' growth 	Interesting but limited potential for the animals' growth 	
	important ecological resource 		
Livestock mode	Extensive livestock mode 	The Maraîchine breed must be economically bred OR There is no specific livestock mode for this breed 	Cereal complementation is necessary 
	The grass feed influences the meat quality 		Importance of the final complementation 
Valuation	Communication on the livestock breeding mode is necessary 		Low rentability of long supply chains, wish for a local supply chain 
	The direct sales are the unique mean to obtain correct prices 		

The livestock farmers with naturalist trends

The livestock farmers managers of the marshes

The livestock farmers' children in love with the breed

The traditional suckling cows farmers

# Conclusion for the research project

## A large farmers diversity (training, professional experience, multi-activity, responsibilities...)

(training, professional experience, multi-activity, responsibilities...)

5 types of  
farms

Diversity of  
practices

4 types of  
profiles

Feed grass + hay  
Natural service

Complementation  
Winter feed  
Market opportunities

Farmers with naturalist trends +  
Managers of the marshes  
Extensive grazing farms

*Marais Breton*

No agricultural family background  
(± 2010)

Maraîchine = tool to preserve grasslands  
Grasslands : + ecological , specific richness

Traditional + Livestock farmers' children  
Polyculture and livestock farms

*Marais Poitevin*

Agricultural family background (± 1995)

Maraîchine = Hardy, but...a lack of  
body condition score

Grasslands = Limited potential to feed the animals

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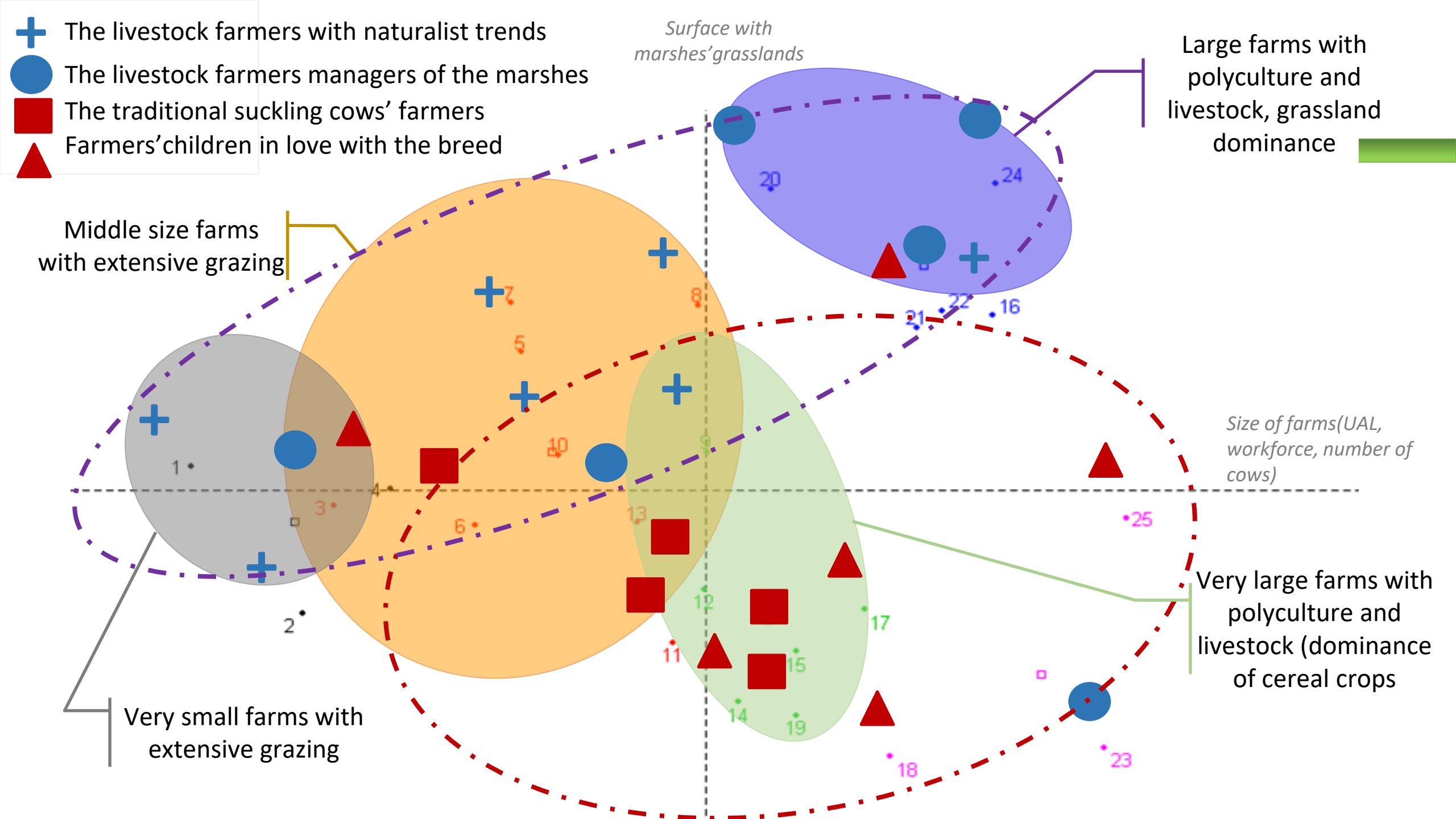


Origin  
Diversity  
Territories



**Thanks for your  
attention!  
Any question?**

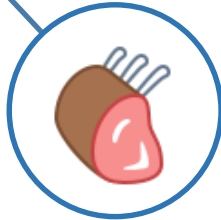
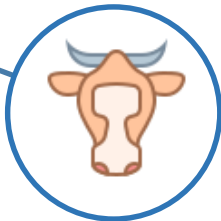
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**Localisation :**  
*Marais breton*

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**The livestock farmers with naturalist trends**



- ✓ Preserving the marshes and the work with animals are the main motivations for the settling of the livestock farmers
- ✓ The marshes are considered as a favorable territory to agricultural settling
- ✓ The marshes are a privileged area for biodiversity and landscape
- ✓ The Maraîchine breed is a hardy breed, good at rising her calves and seen as a tool to conserve the environment
- ✓ The grasslands are considered as a large ecologic tool, very benefic for the animals and perfect for an extensive livestock mode based on grazing
- ✓ Grass feeding is considered as a positive factor for the meat quality. This livestock mode must be a commercial argument.
- ✓ Only direct sales enable to get a good value of the breed's meat.

- **Other professional experience before setting**
- **Setting :**
  - *Only people with no agricultural family background*
  - *Middle of the 2010s*

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**Localisation :**  
*Marais Breton et Poitevin*

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The livestock  
farmers  
managers of the  
marshes



- ✓ Managing and maintaining the marshes grasslands is one of the main motivations for these farmers to establish themselves
- ✓ The marshes are considered as a territory where there is an abandonment of the livestock activity
- ✓ The marshes are seen as a privileged area for biodiversity
- ✓ Marshes' grasslands are positively seen with an ecological potential, and with a large floristic richness
- ✓ The Maraîchine breed is a hardy breed, good at rising her calves
- ✓ They consider that a long commercial sector brings no rentability
- ✓ The valuation of the Maraîchine meat is only possible with short commercial chains, based on the communication of the breed livestock modes

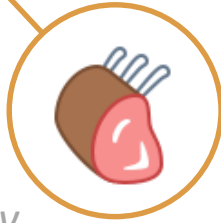
- **Agricultural training**
- **Setting :**
  - *No agricultural family background*
  - *Middle of the 2000s*

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**Localisation :**  
*Marais Poitevin*

4

The livestock farmers' children in love with the breed



- ✓ The resumption of the family farm is the main motivation for these farmers to settle.
- ✓ The marshes are considered as a territory where there is an abandonment of the livestock activity
- ✓ The livestock farmers are face to numerous conflicts about water levels
- ✓ The Maraîchine breed is a hardy breed, good at rising the calves, but who suffers from a slight lack of template
- ✓ The livestock farmers consider that the breed must be bred with an economical livestock mode.
- ✓ The grasslands have an interesting but limited potential for the animals' growth.
- ✓ They consider that a better valuation of the Maraîchine meat needs communication on the breed livestock modes.

- **Agricultural training**

- **Setting :**

- *Only agricultural family background*
- *Middle of the 1990s*

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**Localisation :**  
*Marais Poitevin*

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**The traditional  
suckling cows  
farmers**

• **Setting :**

- *Mainly with an agricultural family background*
- *Middle of the 1990s*
- **Multi-breed herd**



- ✓ The resumption of the family farm and the work with animals are the main motivations of these farmers to settle
- ✓ The marshes are considered as a difficult environment, notably speaking of the water management.
- ✓ The livestock farmers underline the importance of the financial aids linked to grasslands for their income
- ✓ The Maraîchine breed is a hardy breed, good at rising the calves, but who suffers from a slight lack of template
- ✓ Marshes grasslands don't allow the cover the animals needs
- ✓ A complementation with cereals is necessary to achieve the animals' performances and the meat quality
- ✓ The valuation in a classic long commercial chain isn't possible, the farmers wish to develop a local supply chain
- ✓ They have a rather negative opinion about the association

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