

# Emergence of periodic agricultural wage labour in the West region of Cameroon: from a survival need to actors' driven development logics

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**Abstract—** In a context of gradual integration of family farming into the market, agricultural labour, a formerly 'invisible' factor of production, is being commodified and externalized, thus reinforcing the growing *informalisation* of employment. The periodic agricultural wage labour commonly known in West Cameroon as *pambé*, due to the interest it arouses in agricultural entrepreneurship, is nevertheless an innovation especially in a context where development policies are advocating for a migration from the informal to the formal wage-earning system. It is therefore imperative to analyse the determining factors which account for the rise in discontinuous agricultural employment in order to highlight the logics that contribute to its perpetuation. For this article qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to collect the data from three hundred and ninety-seven agricultural labourers and sixty-three farmers who frequently employ temporary wage labour on their farms. Results obtained show that the expansion

of *pambé* derives from the agricultural history in the Bamileke territory which comes from cultural and geographical considerations as well as from land and gender dynamics with 51.13% of male workers against 48.87% of female workers. Moreover, this practice, beyond the precariousness recognised in Western literature, is underpinned by the varied logics of the actors, ranging from the desire to optimise farms for the farmers within the logics of accumulation – investment dynamics for 63.7% of the agricultural workers. Our results therefore suggest that an in-depth analysis of the contribution of part-time agricultural labour for the development of the study area be undertaken.

**Keywords—***Periodic agricultural wage labour, habitus, logic of action, Bamileke. (key words)*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The work of the second international symposium on work in agriculture held from 29 March to 1 April 2021 in Clermont-Ferrand (France)

established the fact that work in agriculture is made up of continuities and changes: continuity of the predominance of family labour, but also a large contribution of salaried work estimated at 42% (part-time or permanent) worldwide (ISWA, 2021).

For several decades, family farming in west Cameroon has been increasingly integrated into the market system. Although family labour plays a major or an essential role in family farming dynamics, it is no longer the only labour force mobilised. Instead of the traditional form of family farming characterised by organic links between the family and the production unit, including the mobilisation of family labour which exclude permanent wage labour, there is a gradual development of family farms with the characteristics of capitalist and managerial production units which entails a high concentration of a predominantly wage labour force. Several farmers combine both family and salaried labour, which may be permanent or temporal. A tangible indicator of the progression of periodic agricultural wage labour in West Cameroon is the informal creation of numerous labour recruitment sites scattered around the main agricultural basins which further emphasizes the significance of this phenomenon, a true manifestation of endogenous dynamics. Known as *mouquef* in the Maghreb (Bouzidi, El Nour & Moumen 2011, p.19 Bossenbrek & Aït Mous, 2016), some of the meeting points for agricultural workers or labourers in the western region are by way of illustration, the *Balessing* road junction, the entrance to the agro-pastoral farm and the *Femmock* market in the *Bafou* ethnic group, the widows' junction opposite the Galim mosque, and the *Pamansié* and *Ngouoghhouo road junction* in the Foubot administrative unit. Every morning, many people are seen congregating in these areas to wait for a possible farmer to come and hire them for a temporal job. In effect a real agricultural labour market is being created in the countryside of western Cameroon, with alternating periods of high and low activity intensity. Yet in the dynamics of second-generation agriculture advocated in the country, the

issue of decent agricultural employment as set out in the various development policies with the objective of moving from informal to formal employment remains central. The Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Territorial Development (MINEPAT, 2020, pp.2-3) in this regard states that *'With the employment strategy contained in the SDEG (strategic document for Economic growth), the Government intended to reduce the portion of the informal sector in the national economic activity and generate tens of thousands of jobs per year in the formal sector. But the deployment of all these efforts has not given rise to an overall improvement in the employment situation.* The growth of informal agriculture, especially salaried agricultural labour, is particularly important and makes the availability of stable formal jobs problematic. A bipolar segmentation of the labour market dominated by the informal sector is emerging. This structuring of the labour market can be explained by the share of informal agricultural employment, which alone accounts for 55.2% of total employment, while informal non-agricultural employment represents 35.2% (Tsafack Nanfosso, 2011, p.38).

Dupré (2006) notes three key periods in the evolution of agricultural wage employment in Europe since 1960. From the 2000s onwards, the author notes a demographic crisis in agriculture, the reorganisation and recomposition of the profession and of professional identities. Wage labour has become a concern in its own right, both in research and by professional organisations, which are actively promoting it. However, this description applies exclusively to salaried work in formal agricultural enterprises, thus ignoring the fraction of informal or temporary workers, which is becoming increasingly important. In this vein Hall, Wisborg, Shirinda and Zamchiya (2013) show that in South Africa the casual nature of agricultural employment has been caused by several factors including the economic policy of agricultural deregulation, trade liberalization, the effects of land restitution and the conversion of farms into playgrounds and tourism enterprises. In the

Cameroonian context, Ebela (2017), in analysing the contribution of commercial food production to improving the living conditions of rural households in Mvila division in southern Cameroon, notes a restructuring of the means of production: she thus considers agricultural wage labour as a solution to the limitations of family labour. However, she raises the difficulty of establishing the beginning of the monetisation of agricultural labour in the villages of her study area, while noting a growth in salaried workers. Kelodjoué (2012) identifies the factors that compelled women in the *Batcham ethnic* group to engage in agricultural labour migration. These include the preservation of food self-sufficiency in the family compromised by demographic pressure, the exhaustion and infertility of the group's soils, the monopolisation of cash income from coffee cultivation by men, coffee abandonment, and the low or non-existent income for women. Looking at the conditions under which the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) agro-industrial complex was established in the *Bafou* group, Nodem (2003) reveals that the expropriation of coffee farmers prepared a considerable workforce for the *Djuttitsa* tea project. This workforce is made up of impoverished peasants who are forced to remain in the project to survive. For the categories of farmers who were expelled from their activities (resident owners, semi-resident owners and non-owner farmers), the desire to become a labourer was not provoked by the poor performance of their farming activities, but rather by the total disappearance of these activities. Kaffo (2005) attributes the development of contractualised forms of agricultural labour to the expansion of widespread market gardening, which in some localities such as *Bafou* has given rise to a veritable agricultural labour exchange. According to this author, salaried labour can account for 12% of agricultural investment costs.

It is clear from this inventory that, with the exception of a few authors such as Kaffo (2005) and Kelodjoué (2012) who have dwelt on the issue of occasional wage labour, *Pambé*, a major component

of the changes and an undeniable agricultural production factor in West Cameroon, remains less explored from the perspective of its genesis. Although the extension of commercial food production and the desire of women to contribute to household expenses contributed to its emergence according to the above-mentioned authors, its diachronic re-reading, the analysis of socio-cultural considerations as well as the logics of the two main actors involved (farmer-employers and labourers), constitute the strong point of this article.

Given the persistence of informal agricultural employment, the aim of this paper is to analyse the determining factors as well as the logics of the actors at work in the practice of periodic agricultural wage labour in western Cameroon. Moreover, we are questioning whether the elements underlying the existence and functioning of this practice do not have an impact on the socio-economic development of the study area. This article is therefore organised around two aspects. Firstly, it examines the factors that led to the choice of agricultural wage labour as the usual form of labour, and secondly, it analyses the logics of the actors involved in its sustainability.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Study area

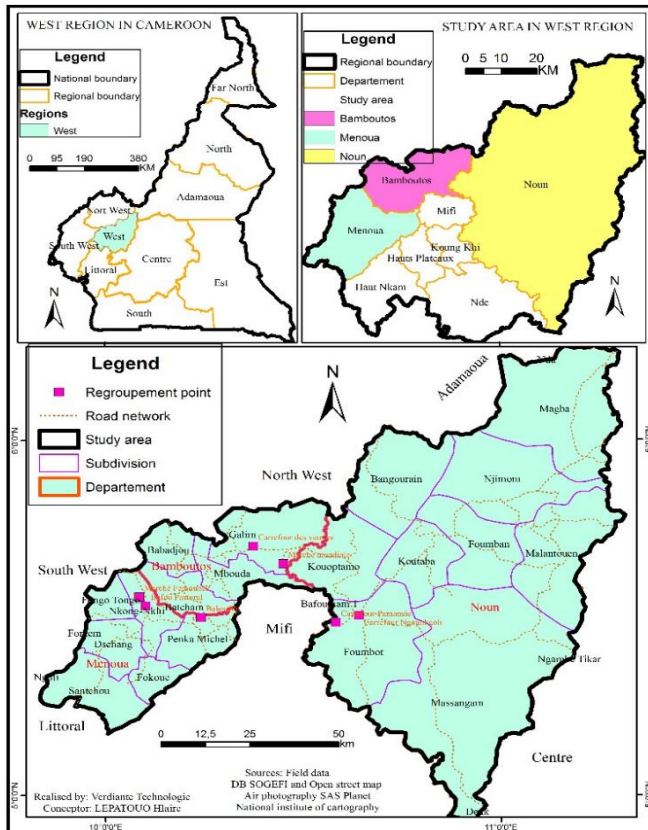


Figure 1: Localization of the study area in the west region

Located between 5°30' latitude (ON) and 10°40' longitude (OE), the Western Region is the cradle of the Bamiléké and Bamoun ethnic groups and covers eight administrative set-ups, with a surface area of 13,892 km<sup>2</sup> and an estimated population of 1,921,590 inhabitants in 2018 (Graeme, 2020). The climate is tropical Sudanian with temperatures ranging from 18°C to 30°C. The landscape is also mountainous with many highlands and plains.

The economy of this region is based on agro-pastoral production and several varieties of foodstuffs which are produced in significant quantities. According to reports from the National Institute of Statistics (NIS, 2017) between 2013 and 2015, it maintained the first national rank for the production of several crops with a peak of production during 2015 (369,640 tonnes of maize, 131,953 tonnes of beans, 243,233 tonnes of potatoes, 33,160 tonnes of watermelon, 670,574

tonnes of tomato and 21,368 tonnes of chilli). This situation therefore makes the region an area conducive to informal farming due to the predominance of family farms and the scarcity of formal agricultural enterprises. It is therefore likely to encounter periodic increase of agricultural workers and employers whose agrarian practices are the focus of this study.

### B. Data collection and analysis

This article is based on a mixed approach: semi-structured individual interviews with a sample of one hundred and seventy-five periodic workers and sixty-three farmers who regularly employ hired labour, as well as a questionnaire survey of three hundred and ninety-seven periodic farm workers from the village groups of *Bafou* and *Balessing* in Menoua division, *Babadjou* and *Bagam* in the Bamiboutos division, and *Mangoum* in the Noun division. Most of these localities have historically been home to European colonial plantations which made extensive use of agricultural labourers, with scientific literature highlighting a long-standing practice of commercial food farming. Non-probability sampling techniques proved to be adequate for this research as we did not have statistics and a nominal list of periodic farm workers, and so the study sample was obtained using the so-called casual random method and the reasoned snowball approach. This approach seemed to be the most appropriate because, as Bertaux, Delcroix and Pfefferkorn (2014) believe, the use of qualitative survey methods (ethnographic fieldwork, crossed life stories, etc.) seems unavoidable because it is through them that one grasp from the inside the actors' logic of action and the forms of subjectivation that are linked to it. In order to select the participants of the survey, we firstly carried on, at the same time, individual interviews and the administration of questionnaires. We went to the various labour recruitment sites where encountered ninety-one part time agricultural workers and seven employers. We were after directed to some farms by the resource

persons where we met twenty-eight workers and fifty-six employers. At end through the snowball approach, we discussed with fifty-six agricultural labourers. After the saturation of qualitative data, we stopped to conduct individual interviews but the filling of questionnaires continued. Then we registered two hundred and twenty two new workers who had accepted to fill the questionnaire. The sample of the study was finally obtained by addition of the persons surveyed. It was made up of three hundred and ninety-seven agricultural labourers and sixty-three farmers who frequently employ temporary wage labour on their farms. The topics discussed were focused on the history of temporary agricultural labour, recruitment process, reasons for engaging in temporary farm labour, farm characteristics and farm worker income management.

The data obtained by interview guides were transcribed, codified, grouped by centre of interest and then interpreted. The data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed by comparing frequencies and using the flat sorting technique for multiple-choice questions.

Finally, the analytical framework is based on the concept of *habitus* developed by Bourdieu (1980, p.3) in his theory of structuralist constructivism. The *habitus* relates to patterns of perception (ways of perceiving the world), appreciation (ways of judging it) and action (ways of behaving in it) inherited and then implemented by individuals. This concept makes it possible to consider temporary agricultural work as being based on predispositions, tastes and aptitudes acquired by the workers during the socialisation process. This system of preference generating practices represents a form of expression of the cultural capital at work in this study.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Factors in the Emergence of periodic Agricultural Wage Employment

##### 1) Socio-historical factors

From a historical perspective, five main phases have marked the evolution of agricultural labour in the West Cameroon region as follows:

Before colonisation, the agricultural labour force was mainly family-based, and mutual aid between individuals was a visible manifestation of African solidarity. At that time, there was a fairly strict sexual division of labour. The social relations between the sexes required that men and women take on very distinct responsibilities within the family and the community. In this respect, Guétat (2011) reports that among the bamiléké, before colonisation, women did almost all the agricultural work, from sowing to harvesting. The man was responsible for the construction of hedges and fences to protect the crops from livestock and shrubbery for sale. This organisation of work allowed for the perpetuation of a subsistence agriculture described by Dongmo (1981) as *bocage bamiléké*. Women were, by excellence, dedicated to unpaid work, while men were expected, by honour, to throw themselves into the quest for exchange resources to meet the needs of the whole family. It was thus inconceivable for a woman to engage in non-domestic income-generating activities. Submission to the norm thus established formed the basis of a naturally hierarchical society in terms of agricultural work.

Between 1884 and 1916, Cameroon was under the German protectorate and the bamiléké country was dedicated to the role of labour reservoir for the benefit of the large plantations and major works in the coastal zones. Dongmo (1981) describes the brutality of the forced recruitment regime but also its inefficiency. The labourer was subject to slave labour, hence the origin of the pejorative term *Djock massi* used locally to describe the forced labour for which the workers are forced to perform. With the arrival of Westerners in Bamiléké country between 1903 and 1909, agricultural work underwent a profound evolution and successively moved from disguised slavery to monetisation. The foundations of the legendary solidarity collapsed at the mercy of the



capitalist interests of the colonist who used political and economic power to subjugate and dominate the agricultural labour force in farms whose objectives and production remained alien to the worker.

From 1918 to independence, there was a coexistence of family labour and liberalised salaried labour respectively in the farms of indigenous notables and European coffee farms. The beginning of the 1920s marked the introduction of coffee cultivation by the Western colonial powers (Dongmo, 1981), particularly France, which inherited this part of Cameroon following the agreements at the end of the First World War. The large plantations that were created were then run exclusively by Westerners and a few notables and traditional chiefs who owned the land. The latter, indigenous planters, in order to build up a substantial family workforce, increased the number of wives and children. In practice, there was discrimination based on labour in the sense that only people with this labour force could be allowed to become large-scale farmers. Coffee growing requires an abundant workforce to maintain the nurseries and plantations through work such as pruning, pollarding, reseeding, spreading fertilisers and pesticides, picking cherries and that is why from 1935 onwards, indigenous coffee growers were pressured by the colonial authorities to increase the monitoring and exclusivity of coffee on their farms. As a result, a décret of 9 September 1935 made the maintenance of coffee trees compulsory: henceforth, planters whose plantations were found invaded by weeds or bearing food crops would be whipped, fined or even imprisoned (Dongmo, 1981; Vouffo, 2018). The concern to comply with this requirement of close monitoring by the indigenous bamileké planter class then contributed to the scarcity of hired labour and hence introducing the concept of *pambé*.

It is in this perspective therefore that large European plantations, on the other hand, absolutely needed a large workforce which was recruited from the neighbouring populations through alliances with certain traditional chiefs, with training being done on

the job through torture, caning and other physical abuses. From 1935 to 1940, there was a decline in the number of indigenous workers on the European plantations in West Cameroon, and even a shortage (Tanga Onana, 2003). During the period 1930-1958, about 15% of the population left the region, often to escape forced labour. In reality, there was no wage policy in favour of the indigenous workers and each plantation applied the wage scales it wanted, and in most cases at the expense of the workers (Kaffo, 2005). Working conditions drove indigenous people away from the plantations and gradually new regulations on plantation work were adopted. It enshrined the liberalisation of labour, the creation of labour offices and the revaluation of wages. All these measures, although written down, were not applied with certainty (Tanga Onana, 2003). After the Second World War, the frustrated population, after many demands, associated the profession of agricultural worker with that of clandestine producer, and the quality of the coffee produced took a hit. From a sociological point of view, a dominant class of coffee growers and a class of peasant labourers, who were forced to work, developed. Moreover, as Tchinda Kenfo (2016, p.129) reports, the *Shi* (mutual aid) is giving way to agricultural wage labour, following the introduction of coffee growing with solidarity growing cold.

Immediately after independence, there were three phases in the evolution of the agricultural workforce, correlated with the changes in agricultural cycles. From 1968 to 1980, there was state control of the agricultural workforce during an agricultural phase of coffee extension, installation of "pioneers" and introduction of market gardening (Fongang, 2008). During this period, the State positioned itself as an important employer of agricultural labour through the organization of the workforce within formal groups in the countryside. However, from 1981 to 2000 there was a rise of periodic agricultural wage labour following the decline of coffee growing and the adoption of market food production by the population.

It should be noted also that during the period of economic crises in the 1980s with the accompanying devaluation, the agricultural elite did not have sufficient family labour to achieve quantitative production objectives on volcanic land, the fertility of which also fuels the ambitions of agricultural entrepreneurs. The limited availability of these new farmers forced them to actively seek out and use hired labour on the farms they were progressively creating in almost the entire region. Kelodjoué (2012) reports that urban farmers (civil servants or large traders) bought farms on the left and right banks of the Noun River, and in this locality *pambé* was born in the region and then spread to other agricultural basins. The increase in the number of agricultural elites seeking labour thus led to the rise of independent agricultural wage labour.

From the beginning of the decade to the present day, there has been an intensification and externalisation of periodic agricultural labour. The expansion of commercial food crops (maize, beans) and market gardening practised by small and medium-sized farmers (less than one hectare of farms combined for this study) is leading to changes. The high demand is leading to the creation of cluster sites for farm workers in several agricultural basins across the region. An interview with Olivier, a farmer based in *Bagam*, reveals some significant cyclical elements: '*Pambé* as currently practised has not existed for long. It started around 2005. This is the period when young people became really interested in the field. At the beginning of the 21st century, the rise in unemployment in the large urban centres encouraged young neo-rural people to return to the countryside and settle as farmers or farm workers especially as return migrants. This massive return of young people to the villages, attracted by the work of the land, contributes to the numerical increase of the job seekers in the countryside. The extension of commercial food production is also gaining ground following the dismantling of large coffee plantations that have been subdivided into plots of land that are

further exploited by former workers. The influx of seasonal agricultural workers from neighbouring regions (North-West and South-West) has increased or made this phenomenon more considered.

## *2) Family education and socialization: a precocity of responsibilities*

Gabin, a resource person, characterises the situation in the study area in the following terms: "*We are in a context that is sociologically characterised by the fact that children are called upon to fight, to be able to find money to supplement what their parents give them. They regularly offer themselves as service providers to farmers in order to have the means to live*". These words attest to the fact that in the Bamileke ethnic group in Cameroon, work is one of the pillars of family education and socialization. It is a question of instilling in children the genesis of a real economy of resourcefulness which leads them to undertake income-generating activities in various fields at an early age. From childhood onwards, they are introduced to a litany of activities that are easily combined with schooling. Adolescents learn to handle agricultural tools from their parents and gradually, in order to satisfy their youthful desires, they begin to work as agricultural workers, first with their elders and then on their own. The workers declare that they engage in this activity more by choice than by constraint, as this is part of the socialisation process which locally relies on work as the main source of wealth and success depending solely on personal effort. For 85.9% of the agricultural workers interviewed, the decision to engage in *pambé* came from the family sphere. The parents thus instilled in their offspring the ability to adapt to all the disconcerting situations of the labour market that might arise. Donald, a traditional authority, notes the entrepreneurial spirit that exists in Bafou in these terms: "*At 15, each young person already has his or her own project, which is measured in terms of the number of bunches of leeks or cabbages to be sold or the number of crates of tomatoes to be produced. At*

*the age of 15, the young person no longer works only for his father or mother, he also works for himself".* This shows the existence of mental and psychological devices that can be generalised to the whole region. Marguerat (1983, p.496), in analysing the cultural practices of the Bamiléké ethnic group, refers to a family upbringing as based on productive activity from an early age: *'from a very young age, boys and girls have their own piece of land, their own smallholding, whose products they sell and manage themselves'*. It is even common to see women, a few weeks after giving birth, giving themselves over to the practice of *pambé*, sometimes accompanied by their youngest children, who a few years later will already be able to return from the field with a piece of wood on their head. This socialisation reflects a value that Dongmo (1981) describes as Bamileke dynamism.

### 3) Geographical factors: *The relief made of alternating slopes and lowlands*

The propensity for periodic agricultural labour is linked to the relief variable. Farmers are unanimous on the fact that topography is an element to be considered in the analysis. When asked whether they use agricultural machinery on their farms, Jacques and Etienne gave almost identical answers: *"The use of agricultural tractors is not easy. Because of the terrain, tractors do not have access everywhere. The machine is not practical on sloping land. The machine is good on flat land"*. Curiously, these employers do not mention the cost and availability of agricultural tractors, which seem to be the limiting factors in the use of these machines. The terrain in west Cameroon is essentially made up of highlands surrounding valleys that are regularly flooded with water during the long rainy season, which makes it difficult for agricultural tractors to be mobile. This makes it difficult for tractors to move around. These motorised machines cannot be deployed on steep slopes or in muddy valleys, and manual work is thus reinforced with a significant contribution from the phenomenon of *pambé*.

### 4) Gender dynamics: *Increasing involvement of men alongside pioneer women*

Gender in its sociological sense, which refers to all the psychological and social aspects related to sexual identity, is a very interesting analytical tool in the diffusion of informal agricultural wage labour in West Cameroon. The aim is to highlight the roles, behaviours, activities and attributes, determined or constructed, as appropriate for men and women in relation to agricultural work. The feminisation of the agricultural workforce was initially a reaction by women to a social construction that wanted to relegate them to unpaid work. During colonisation, when coffee growing was in full swing, only men were recruited to work on European agricultural plantations. As for women, they were forced into excessive fertility in response to the demands of coffee growing and into unlisted or domestic work on their husbands' plantations. It was the insufficient recognition of women's work in agriculture during the colonial period, and the application of public policies to structure the coffee sector exclusively for men after independence, that favoured the development of salaried agricultural work. Excluded from the institutional framework, women developed a resilient attitude which led them to oppose the expansion of coffee growing by refusing to serve as unpaid labour on their husbands' coffee plantations (the latter being unable to support the household). This moral and political emancipation of rural Bamileke women forced planters who owned large farms to resort to hired labour (Ndami, 2018). With the migration to the banks of the Noun, where many plantations were created, women were the first to practice informal agricultural wage labour (Kelodjoué, 2012) in a social context where the activity was considered essentially female. In contrast, Table 1 below shows the reverse presentation of these of these trends.



Table 1: Percentage of agricultural workers in village groups by gender

	Bafou	Babadjou	Balessing	Bagam	Mangoum	Total (%)
<b>Male</b>	13.10	13.60	6.30	5.29	12.84	51.13
<b>Female</b>	14.86	0.76	11.59	2.77	18.89	48.87
<b>Total (%)</b>	27.96	14.36	17.89	8.06	31.73	100

This cross-tabulation shows that in the whole of the study area, the proportions of men and women tend to be balanced, with a slight increase in masculinity in this sector of activity: 51.13% of male workers against 48.87% of female workers. This result can be explained by the fact that the more labour-intensive market food crop requires a greater expenditure of energy. This cultivation practice means that men are more involved in most cultivation operations. Their availability compared to women, who do most of the domestic work, contributes to their being the most involved. Consequently, it can be postulated that due to socio-historical factors and the economic situation, there is a change in the division of labour according to gender in periodic agricultural labour. This result is close to the FAO statistics which indicate that more than 43% of the agricultural workforce in the world is female (Bouzidi, 2020). The agricultural workforce is gradually becoming more masculine and the proportions of men and women are tending to balance out. This change is supported by logics that need to be elucidated as follows:

#### B. Actors' Action logics

Two types of actors with particular motivations drive the informal agricultural labour market in the West Cameroon region: farmer-employers and workers. For each of these categories, the considerations that give meaning to their presence in this space of exchange of services constitute the motivating factor of this section.

##### 1) Logics of choice of farmer-employers

Farmers play the role of labour demanders and their relationship to the farm, to their family and to the workers, make it possible to identify four logics of

action that contribute to the choice of periodic agricultural labour.

##### a) Logic of survival: Pluri-activity (of necessity) of farmers and the birth of new classes of farmers

A significant number (nearly 70%) of the farmers we met during our field visits live in urban areas that are more or less close to the agricultural basins in which their farms are located. Urban dwellers are thus involved in rural areas and the relationship between urban and rural areas is strengthened. Public resources are invested in the farms and the products of the rural areas supply the urban centres of the world thanks to the *pambé* phenomenon. This sociological issue, based on horizontal and complementary communication between urban and rural areas, is established and consolidated thanks to the availability of agricultural workers to carry out their work in a way that is satisfactory to their employers. Kaffo (2005), in describing the motives for engaging in agriculture in Bamileke country at the end of the twentieth century, considers that impoverished civil servants want to make ends meet because of the economic crisis.

Entrepreneurial logic: the multiplicity of farms

Most farmers in the region each have a multitude of farms. The sizes of these farms depend on the financial capital held. Gérôme describes his farms in the following terms:

*'I have 04 plots. This one is located in Kempah, its surface area is 3ha, it is rented and only salaried agricultural workers work there. Next to it, is a farm of about 7ha. A chef who lives abroad gave me this to develop. I am working by planting avocado trees for him. When the avocados are ready, he will come and harvest. In the pastoral area just after the Dutch farm, I bought 04ha. Finally, in the EPA area, I have rented 03 ha to grow apples. It is still fallow. The joint operation of several farms inexorably forces the use of a large number of hired labourers'.*

The speaker says that he needed seventy workers that day but could only find about thirty. Over the years, there has been an increase in the size of the farms. This quest for physical capital is part of an entrepreneurial spirit that leads the farmer to regularly experiment with innovative projects by trying out several speculations. The agricultural logic, which is the way of perceiving, calculating, planning and ordering the production process is that of the entrepreneurial farmer or *imprenditori* described in the work of Van der ploeg (2014, pp. 86-87). In entrepreneurial farming practices indeed, it is entrepreneurship that becomes the central capacity: there is dependence on markets and scale is the main lever for the development of the farm. However, the employment of a high number of workers contributes to an increase in the redistribution of social wealth, in contrast to the forms of artificialisation of the modes of production known in the Western model of entrepreneurial agriculture. Our results thus confirm the conclusions of Nzoffou, Fongang Fouepe and Kuéte (2019) for whom the new modes of access to land (renting and buying) give room for the establishment of large farms that need salaried labour for their operation.

*b) Logic of efficiency: depletion of family labour*

Farmers opt for hired labour for reasons of efficiency and availability. Jules from Balessing and Frédérick from Bafou indicate their preference for this form of labour in similar terms: *'I do not use the family. Family is not important in my project. If you rely on your cousin to create a farm, after a few days he will start to show you that he doesn't have time, and that's not reassuring'*. This alone shows that hired labour is becoming essential. Farm entrepreneurs start the activity, sometimes very young: they are sometimes still single or newly married and the size of the nuclear family is small. In addition, farmers' sons are increasingly leaving the family home to pursue their studies in urban centres. It should also be noted that the size of farming families is shrinking compared to the coffee period when polygamy was the rule. Ebela

(2017, p.118) analyses the family farm work of students in southern Cameroon as follows: *"when it comes to school children, the time of participation in the various agricultural activities may be limited to weekends (for children attending school in the village) or school holiday periods (for children attending school in urban centres)." In the Western context on this subject, the National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and the Environment INRAE (2020) reveals that in France, the use of hired labour, especially permanent non-family employees, has increased significantly in agriculture over the past forty years. The main reasons for this development are profound structural transformations, such as the enlargement of farms and the decrease in family labour.*

*c) The logic of optimising operations*

The words of Harold, a resource person, are very evocative in this case:

*"The specificity of the agricultural workforce in western Cameroon comes from the specificity of agricultural entrepreneurship in this part of the country. We are in a context where there is a multiplicity of small agricultural enterprises. Farmers are looking for the type of employee who can do the work cheaply and without constraints. You know the formal and permanent employees are a bit expensive because sometimes you don't even have a job to do but it is there. Whereas the temporal employee you look for when you need them. The day you feel he is not useful you don't call him".*

The majority of farms in West Cameroon in terms of legal status are informal sole proprietorships. Entrepreneurs use a managerial style of personnel management based on profit maximisation and minimisation of state constraints. As the agricultural cycles alternate periods of peak activity and breaks, they hire workers only when they need them for specific cultivation operations. The day-to-day monitoring is done by a small team. They thus prefer to hire occasional or seasonal temporal labour with oral work contracts that are sometimes renewable by

tacit agreement for farmers with large farms. According to perceptions, this strategy saves on subscriptions to formal social security schemes and makes the farm more profitable by reducing variable operating costs.

#### 2) Logics of engagement of periodic workers

Workers attribute their involvement in informal agricultural wage labour to the reasons summarised in the table below.

Table 2: Reasons for Engaging in Temporary Farm Labour

Reason	Number	% Column response (Base: Count)
<b>Money</b>	366	92.4
<b>Unemployment</b>	152	38.4
<b>Cultural heritage</b>	246	62.1
<b>Funds to be reinvested</b>	254	64.1
<b>Lack of land</b>	239	60.4
<b>Following friends</b>	58	14.6

This presentation of the data shows that each farm worker has an average of 3.32 reasons for engaging in periodic agricultural wage employment. This multitude of individual motivations is underpinned by logics that need to be highlighted in the light of the emergence factors mentioned above.

#### a) Logic of continuity

Julienne and Irène, who were in the middle of ploughing, gave the following reasons for their commitment to salaried agricultural employment: *"We have been doing it since we were born, since we were 10 years old, we started working in the farm"*. Their motivation for salaried agricultural employment is rooted in or based on their identity as workers on the land. They perceive this activity as a way of both reliving their past and maintaining themselves in what they know best. The practice of the activity can be interpreted as a continuation or a logical continuation of a trajectory that begins at an early age. Educational cultural practices thus shape the habitus and affect relationships with the land. For example, Romain, 63, his wife and five children have all been farming for several years.

#### b) Logic of opportunity

The workers, despite their diverse profiles, find in the activity a quick opportunity to earn money. Those who are in school do so at weekends and during school holidays without it interfering with their studies. The income thus earned provides pocket money for the week and in some cases helps to provide tuition and the purchase of school equipment. For those who do not attend school, it is enough to invest one's physical strength, which is an easily mobilised resource. Moreover, remuneration and the method of payment is an attractive asset for the activity, as shown by this statement by Bertin: *'in March when labour is expensive and is paid at 3500 to 4000 FCFA per day, I engage in the pambé activity to get some work done'*. The fixed and immediate salary at the end of the day encourages potential workers to prefer informal work to working for formal agricultural enterprises. In the latter structures (Cameroon Tea Estates, proleg, etc.), performance-based salaries are paid weekly or monthly with deductions that are not convenient to casual workers. Whereas working with private individuals, unlike the state workers, *'when I go out in the morning, I am reassured that I will have money to solve my problem in the evening'*.

Moreover, in the situation of unemployment and underemployment that plagues African youth in general and Cameroonian youth in particular, the people living in the region's large agricultural basins find in this activity, although temporal, an opportunity for a healthy occupation. For example, Aline, a mother of three young children, has been trained as a hairdresser but lacks the resources to run a hairdressing workshop. She is only asked to do hair dressing during the major national festivities, so to avoid being unemployed, she works as an agricultural worker in the *Mangoum* area of Foubot in this west region of Cameroon.

Finally, the lack of available land for cultivation by young people and women forces them to seize the opportunity offered by salaried agricultural

work to build up financial resources. This situation is the one described by Hall, Wisborg, Shirinda and Zamchiya (2013, p.66) in South Africa where farm workers live on private land, often lacking opportunities for independent use of the land to support their precarious lives. In the same vein, Andriamanohy, Bélières, Rakotondravelo, Razafimahatratra and Emilson (2016, p.13) show that the main motivation for Malagasy households to sell their labour force is related to the lack of land (35% of households) or insufficient land (4% of households).

*c) The logic of investing income in the agricultural sector*

Field data shows that 63.7% of agricultural workers reinvest the earnings from their jobs in their own fields. The *pambé* thus becomes a means of finding agricultural inputs (chemical fertilisers, seeds, etc.), which are increasingly expensive on the local market. It has even been observed that some women workers accept payment in kind with agricultural inputs. In the same vein, 14.1% of workers in turn use part of their income to pay for temporal labour. They have as role models farmer employers whom they want to be like in the future. Almost all of the seasonal workers interviewed manifested their intention to become farmers. This result is comparable to the conclusion of Minkoff-Zern (2017) who care about the first generation Latino immigrant farmworkers who have transitioned to farm ownership in United States of America. Her contribution provides evidence that Latino immigrants's ascendancy to farm ownership is instead a result of their struggle to redefine their relationship to land and labor in a country where their citizenship status have relegated them to the working poor.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This article, aims at analysing all the elements that contribute to the rise of temporal wage labour in farms located in the west part of Cameroon. Results obtained show that the phenomenon is a corollary of the mistreatment of workers during coffee growing and a form of resilience of the populations who invest

their subjectivity according to internalized representations in the face of the dictatorship of the existential set-up. Moreover, the activity is gradually reinforced by gender dynamics and entrepreneurial education within the workers' families. In addition, there are logics of actors at work which contribute to maintaining and ensuring the sustainability of the activity. If the employing farmers are driven by an entrepreneurial spirit that encourages them to gradually increase the size and number of their farms, the workers find an employment opportunity in a context of land scarcity. This leads us to postulate that these different issues allow periodic agricultural wage labour to gradually drive the rural development engine in its own way, in the sense that there is an improvement in the investment possibilities of the farmers and workers involved, who sometimes migrate from a need for survival to a real desire for fulfilment through agricultural work. The initial hypothesis that the expansion of periodic agricultural wage labour is part of a logic of cyclical adaptation by the actors during the evolution of the region's agricultural history is thus confirmed. However, the question that can be asked is that of the possibilities of intervention and supervision by the public authorities, with the corollary of developing a legal framework governing the employment link in the context of informal salaried agricultural work.

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