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Case study:
France

Maisons Familiales : a pioneer training model



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1. Description of the organization

The Maisons familiales rurales propose an original model of education and training, to answer practical needs of farmers in the early 1900's. Children and youngsters could then remain on the farm when their manpower was needed and attend specific training over other periods. This enabled to keep young forces in rural areas and allow an adapted education to farmers' children. In short, they invented "sandwich courses".

They established the 3 principles of the "Maisons familiales", still valid nowadays:

- responsibility of parents in the education of their children.
- "sandwich" pedagogical system.
- development of local environment.

Nowadays all over the French territory we can find 430 training centres regrouped in 70 federations. From the 50's they even opened MFR in Europe, Africa, Latin America and South East Asia. They are all organized on the same model:

- Each MFR depends on an association of families, fully responsible.
- Training is alternated with periods in companies.
- Courses are delivered to small groups.

The concept: MFR were the pioneer of implies the crossing of theory with practical knowledge from experience and enhances self-training and collective thinking.

The 430 institutions provide a range of training and qualifications on 200 subjects; of course, traditionally, from farming, catering and food transformation to, nowadays, mechanics or any modern craft. Their legal status is non-profit organisation and they prepare the same diplomas, at all levels, as the state centres.

2. 2. Some figures about Maisons familiales rurales

A network of 501 associations in France:

430 training centres

71 federal, local or regional associations including 2 territorial committees in Nouvelle Calédonie and French Polynésie

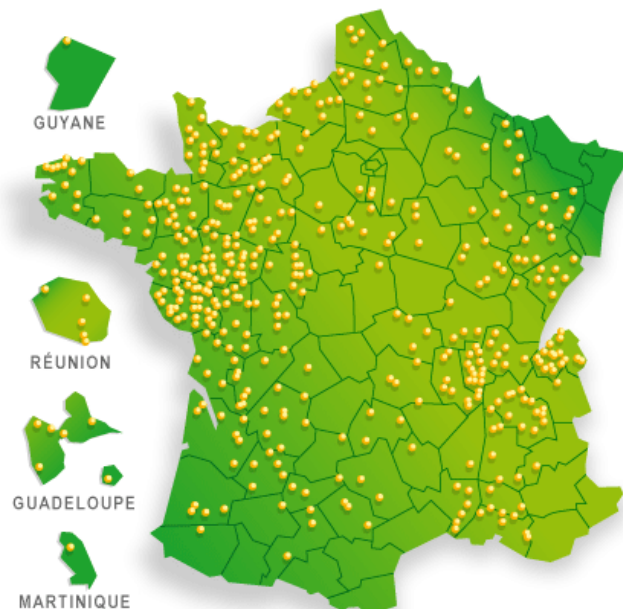
1 national pedagogical Centre and 1 national Union

70 000 youngsters and adults trained :

- 51 000 pupils with a scholar status depending on the ministry of Agriculture,
 - 12 000 apprentices in national Education or Agriculture training,
 - 2 000 trainees under « contrat de professionnalisation »,
 - 5 000 trainees in further education.
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over 130 qualifications proposed, in more than 18 professional sectors

8 000 employees



A Maison familiale welcomes an average of 150 pupils, managed by an educative team constituted of about 15 persons (a director, 8 trainers, 1 hostess, a cook, a secretary,

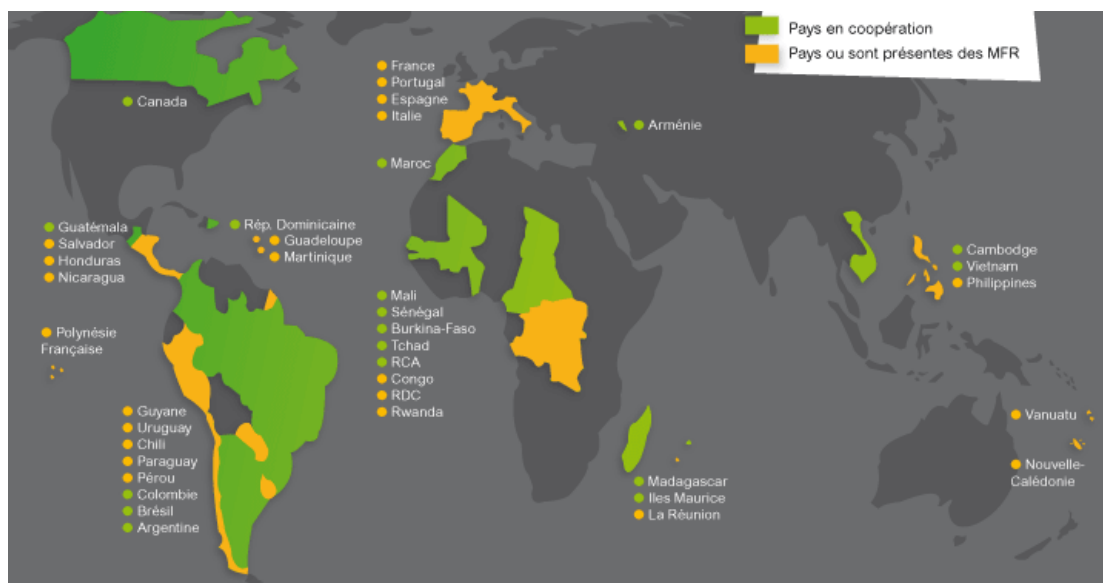
1 responsible of maintenance, a night watch). The 150 pupils are not all present at the same time, thanks to the sandwich courses.

There exist Maisons familiales rurales in about 40 countries throughout the whole world (voir rubrique [Les MFR dans le monde](#)).

3. 3. Overall Implantation of Maisons familiales rurales

Over 1 000 Maisons familiales rurales, in about 40 countries, mostly in Europe, en latin America and in Africa `

- 621 MFR in Europe (Spain, Portugal, Italy, France)
- 288 in Latin America (Brazil, Argentina, central America)
- 157 Maisons in Africa (Rwanda, Sénégal, République centrafricaine, Togo, Congo, Morocco...)
- 9 in Asia (Philippines, Vietnam...)



4. 4. The MFR in France and in the world

The first MFR was born in the south west of France in 1937. The first interested parents, supported by the parish priest who was a militant of the rural cause, were convinced that to be a successful farmer, it was necessary to acquire more knowledge theoretical and technical. In order to allow their children to get further education, they decided to buy a house naturally called family house and recruited a technician in order to do the young people's training...

Nowadays in France, the organization consists of about 460 associations together.

A MFR always starts with the determination of families who decide to change their conditions of life, to increase their autonomy and give real answers to the questions about their children's future and the environment they live in. They are set up on shared principles (individual and collective responsibility, involvement of the individuals and the communities, implementation of alternate training system and actions of development).

5. 5. Responsible families

World-widely a MFR is an association of families. The structure implies a certain number of rules. The General meeting with all the actors of the MFR (parents, training period managers...) is the most important moment in the running of the association. During this yearly meeting they analyse the results of the actions started, they decide the news actions to set up. This meeting is a great opportunity to communicate with all members (parents, youngsters, "moniteurs"- and the people responsible for the association). It's a great opportunity to create strong links which make the MFR successful. Families vote for their members in the board of directors. The boards of directors meets regularly in order to ensure a smooth running of the association. Their main preoccupations are about employing and supporting the "moniteurs", management, looking for solutions regarding education training and the development of the area.

6. 6. Sandwich training courses

The instigators of the MFR thought about a rhythm that would allow sharing training between two periods of time: a period of work on a farm (in many cases it is the

parents' farm) and a period of study at the MFR. They had invented an educational method which is well-known nowadays: the alternate training system or sandwich training course. The organization is totally successful thanks to a good articulation between the two periods of time.

7. A global approach of the education

The MFR'S ambition is not only to teach abilities and ways of being, they also aim at teaching what citizenship is and a sense of togetherness.

8. Learning the group life

In the *Maison Familiale Rurale* young people and adults find a pleasant environment especially adapted to develop their abilities. The school ensures the pupils full boarding, and organises lots of collective activities so that everyone works with one another. It also tries to open minds to cultural life thanks to activities led during the day or the evening, and prepares youngsters and adults to a successful integration into society in which they can find a place and take responsibilities.

9. A Maison Familiale Rurale : a close-knit and personalized organization

A Maison Familiale Rurale works in the area where it has been set up. The rooms are set up in such a way that everyone can feel comfortable and have relationships in a family atmosphere though there are some demanding rules regarding education in general. There is a limited number of pupils or adults at the Maison Familiale Rurale each week. So the team of "moniteurs" is limited as well.

10. "Moniteurs", technicians, and youth guide

The "Monitrices" or "Moniteurs" stay all day long at the Maison Familiale Rurale. They have various functions: they favour relationships in the group, they teach, they take an active part in the education aim while supporting each youngster's project. They are qualified to implement the alternate training system and they know very well the Maison Familiale Rurale's environment, youngsters, their families and the training managers. They get involved in the development of the area where the Maison Familiale Rurale has started its activities.

11. Families take an active part in their children's education

The *Maison Familiale Rurale* is a place where everyone can communicate with each other, which creates a sense of solidarity among families.

12. A few figures

A survey carried out in France shows that besides the 60 000 families taking an active part in some

- 450 associations, more than another 100 000 people join in young people's training and rural development.
- 10 000 members from the Board of Directors lead the Associations and manage the "Maisons Familiales"
- 5 000 "moniteurs" and "monitrices"
- 12 000 permanent training managers
- 30 000 occasional training managers
- 11 000 people in charge of agricultural, craft or service enterprises lead study tours
- 22 000 professional representatives take part in the assessments organized by the "Maisons Familiales"
- 15 000 specialist speakers, technicians, bring information and ideas resulting from their experience

13. A structured organisation

From the beginning the Maisons Familiales Rurales in France understood they needed to organize themselves in order to bring together the initiatives sprouting up all over the country and to favour communication among them. As a result associations have grouped and formed a "Union Nationale", based in Paris ; then progressively federations were created in order to give a better support to the network and to match the French administration's organization.

At the same time, the *Maisons Familiales Rurales* also set up an Education Centre called Centre National Pédagogique aimed at training new moniteurs, doing continuing training for the experienced ones and providing research on the alternate training system.

Creation of the *Maisons Familiales Rurales'* International Association (AIMFR) was decided on by the European, African and Latin America representatives gathered in Dakar in 1975. This association is the world Federation of all the *Maisons Familiales Rurales'* organizations. Its objectives are to represent the Maisons Familiales Rurales in the international bodies (such a Food and Agriculture Organization, European Union...) to maintain liaison and exchanges of experiences between the MFR, and to promote the MFR's principles and methods in the world.

14. To know more

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