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Socioeconomic challenges faced by limited-resource family-owned farms in the U.S.

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Abstract

Introduction: Limited-resource family-owned farms in the United States play a crucial role in food production, rural employment, and community development, yet they face persistent socioeconomic challenges that threaten their sustainability. Small and minority farmers are particularly affected due to historical inequities, limited collateral, and systemic exclusion from mainstream agricultural institutions. The intersection of these constraints limits productivity, reduces profitability, and increases vulnerability to economic and environmental shocks. This study explores the multidimensional challenges confronting limited-resource family farms through a comprehensive review of literature and existing policy frameworks, guided by the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF). The SLF provides a holistic lens for analyzing the interplay of human, social, financial, physical, and natural capital in shaping farm resilience and livelihood outcomes. Key findings highlight the importance of social capital and community networks in facilitating resource sharing, knowledge exchange, and adaptation strategies. Technological innovation, climate-smart practices, and digital platforms emerge as critical tools for enhancing productivity, market access, and competitiveness.

Method: This systematic review synthesizes peer-reviewed evidence (2010–2025) on socioeconomic challenges faced by new, small, limited-resource, and historically marginalized U.S. farmers. Key barriers include limited finance, market access, labor, and technology adoption, while social networks, diversification, and adaptive strategies support resilience. Research gaps highlight equity and sustainability needs.

Findings: Policy and institutional reforms are crucial for addressing systemic inequities, including expanding inclusive credit programs, enacting legal reforms to secure land tenure, simplifying access to government support, and establishing participatory decision-making structures that amplify the voices of limited-resource farmers. Additionally, training, extension services, and financial literacy programs are essential for fostering sustainable farm management and long-term resilience.

Conclusion: The study concludes that integrated approaches that combine financial support, policy reforms, access to technology, and social capital development are necessary to ensure the viability of limited-resource family-owned farms. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies, equity-focused interventions, and participatory methodologies to strengthen evidence for effective policy and programmatic solutions. By addressing these challenges, limited-resource farms can sustain rural livelihoods, foster intergenerational continuity, and contribute meaningfully to food security and economic resilience in the United States.

Keywords: Limited-Resource Farmers; Family-Owned Farms; Small Farms; Livelihoods Framework (SLF); Rural Resilience

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1. Introduction

Agriculture and food are crucial to development, with significant roles in livelihoods and economies globally (Pawlak and Kołodziejczak, 2020). Family-owned farms, particularly those with limited resources, are vital to the U.S. agricultural sector, contributing to food security, rural employment, and cultural heritage. However, these farms often face numerous challenges, including restricted access to credit, land insecurity, and declining profitability, particularly as large-scale operations dominate due to economies of scale (USDA, 2023; Baldwin et al., 2023). Limited-resource farms typically struggle with socioeconomic pressures, environmental risks, and market consolidation, pushing many families to seek off-farm income and threatening the long-term sustainability and intergenerational transfer of these farms (Borah et al., 2024; Dharmasir et al., 2025).

The operational landscape for family-owned farms has become increasingly complex due to technological changes, environmental concerns, and policy dynamics (Ikerd, 2016). Rising costs and falling prices have heightened vulnerability, compounded by social issues such as limited education and healthcare, as well as rural population declines. A comprehensive understanding of these barriers is essential to developing effective interventions (Petersen-Rockney et al., 2021). Despite the existing literature on agricultural sustainability, the socioeconomic challenges specific to limited-resource family farms remain inadequately addressed, with a focus often placed on productivity and policy frameworks rather than human and social factors (Lloyd et al., 2013; Negri et al., 2021).

A review of empirical evidence highlights that limited-resource farms face disproportionate financial stress and social isolation, further impacted by structural inequalities in lending and land tenure that affect minority and beginning farmers (Scott and Richardson, 2021; Todd et al., 2024). Regional disparities and infrastructural deficits exacerbate these issues. The study intends to synthesize existing literature on these socioeconomic challenges by analyzing data across multiple academic databases. Using frameworks such as Sustainable Livelihoods and Social Capital Theory, the goal is to explore the interplay among financial, human, and social assets that affect farm resilience. The study aims to offer actionable policy recommendations to bolster the viability of limited-resource family farms, fostering equitable rural development and ensuring long-term sustainability.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Many family-owned farms in America, vital to the food system and local economies, face socioeconomic hardships due to limitations such as low income, small landholdings, and restricted access to capital. These farms struggle with credit issues that hinder investment in technology and sustainable practices, while tenure insecurity among minority owners reduces eligibility for government support. Market access challenges further erode profitability, exacerbated by an aging population and low youth participation, leading to declining productivity and knowledge loss. Insufficient education and digital infrastructure hinder the adoption of modern practices, and federal programs often fail to support these farmers adequately. As a result, many farms shut down, contributing to land loss, rural poverty, and threats to food security and social equity. Addressing these socioeconomic barriers and developing sustainability strategies is crucial.

1.2. Research Objectives

The main aim of this study is to examine the socioeconomic challenges facing limited-resource family-owned farms in the United States and to explore strategies to enhance their economic sustainability, productivity, and long-term resilience.

Specific Objectives:

- To identify the key socioeconomic factors affecting the sustainability of limited-resource family-owned farms in the United States.
- To examine the effects of financial constraints, land tenure insecurity, and market challenges on the livelihood of limited-resource farmers.
- To assess the role of government policies, institutional support, and technological access in influencing farm performance and resilience.
- To analyze the social and demographic characteristics, such as age, education, and experience, that affect farmers' capacity to adapt to economic pressures.

- To recommend practical and policy-driven strategies for improving financial inclusion, resource access, and overall sustainability among limited-resource family farms.

1.3. Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following key research questions:

- What are the major socioeconomic challenges faced by limited-resource family-owned farms in the United States?
- How do financial, institutional, and market-related factors affect the productivity and sustainability of these farms?
- In what ways do land ownership patterns, age demographics, and education levels influence farmers' resilience and decision-making?
- How effective are current government policies and support programs in addressing the needs of limited-resource family-owned farms?
- What strategies can be implemented to enhance the economic viability and long-term sustainability of limited-resource family-owned farms?

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study addresses the critical structural and socioeconomic barriers faced by small, family-owned farms in the United States, emphasizing their essential role in national food production, rural employment, and community stability. Many of these farms experience ongoing economic hardship and social exclusion. By identifying the challenges faced by limited-resource farmers, the study offers valuable insights for policymakers and agricultural institutions, thereby promoting the formulation of targeted interventions, such as improved credit facilities, equitable land policies, and inclusive agricultural programs, to support marginalized and low-income farmers. Furthermore, it contributes to the discourse on rural development, economic equity, and sustainable agriculture, highlighting the need for policies empowering vulnerable farming populations. Strengthening limited-resource family-owned farms is essential for enhancing food security, environmental stewardship, and rural livelihoods, thereby supporting a resilient agricultural future in the United States.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) offers a comprehensive lens to understand vulnerability and resilience in limited-resource family-owned farms in the United States, highlighting five capital types: human, social, natural, physical, and financial. Human capital, including labor, education, and skills, significantly influences productivity and technological adaptation, yet limited-resource farmers often struggle with constraints such as an aging workforce and inadequate training (Mensah, 2011). Social capital facilitates access to resources and networks, enhancing resilience (Jackson, 2020). Financial and physical capital, which encompasses access to credit and infrastructure, is essential for market engagement and long-term sustainability but is often hindered by systemic inequities (Van Rijn et al., 2012). Natural capital, including soil and water resources, is vital for productivity and requires effective management.

2.2. Social Capital Theory SCT

The concept of social capital is crucial as it emphasizes the importance of social networks and relationships in accessing resources and opportunities (Saijo, 2022). It involves the networks among individuals and the value derived from these connections in economic and social endeavors. In agricultural communities, social capital appears as cooperative farming, knowledge sharing, and community organizations (Clark, 2011). Strong social capital allows communities to mobilize resources effectively, disseminate best practices, and advocate for agricultural policy needs. This collaborative approach enhances the effectiveness of agricultural development initiatives, fostering broader participation and more equitable outcomes.

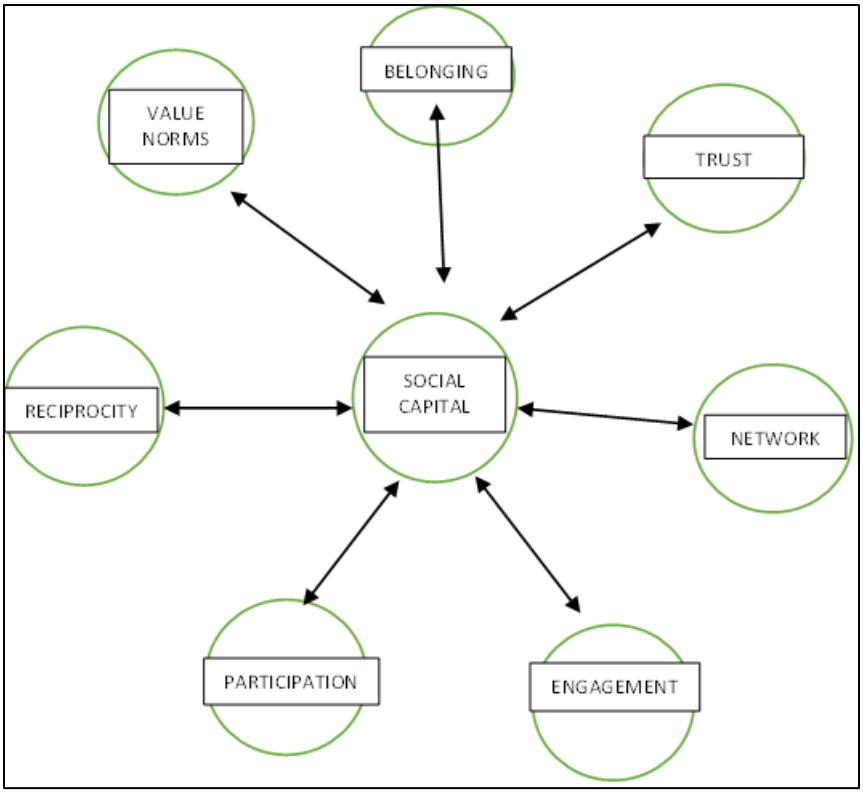


Figure 1 Social capital

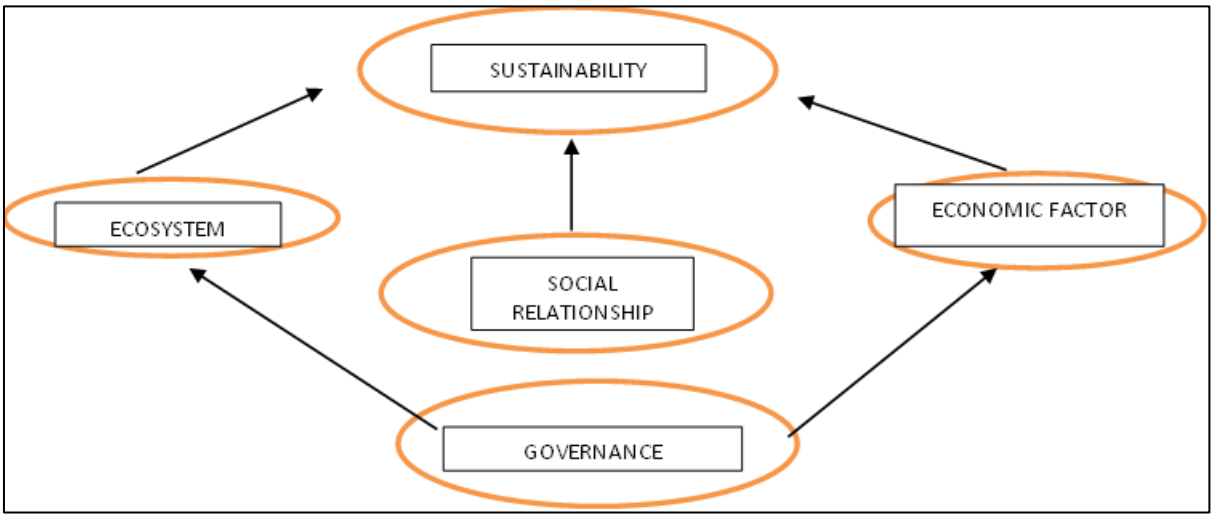
Communities with weak social capital face significant challenges in agricultural development, leaving individuals isolated and vulnerable. This isolation restricts access to essential resources such as markets, credit, and technical assistance, thus hindering economic mobility and perpetuating poverty cycles (Furness et al., 2022). Understanding the relationship between social stratification and social capital is crucial for evaluating the impact of agriculture on socioeconomic well-being. Key social determinants, including class, ethnicity, and community networks, play a vital role in shaping economic opportunities and mobility in rural settings (Koswara, 2024). Class disparities can affect access to resources and decision-making power in agriculture, particularly in the U.S., where wealth concentration limits poorer farmers' ability to invest in and diversify their operations (Becher, 2023). Ethnicity significantly impacts access to land and resources, with ethnic identity affecting power dynamics and potentially leading to unequal distribution of agricultural benefits (Yashar, 2015; Bush and Martiniello, 2017). The interplay of class, ethnicity, and community dynamics creates a complex environment in which agricultural development outcomes vary significantly across social contexts.

3. Conceptual Framework

Sustainability extends beyond environmental concerns, integrating communities, ecosystems, economies, and resilience to external shocks (Lamine, 2015). Agriculture is closely linked to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set by the Food and Agriculture Organization, particularly in areas of food security, economic growth, and employment (Nakai, 2018). Specific goals include: #2 (End hunger, secure food and improved nutrition), #8 (Decent work and economic growth), #11 (Sustainable cities and communities), #12 (Responsible consumption and production), and #14. The development of sustainability indicators must encompass environmental, economic, and social dimensions (Lane, 2010).

The concept of "carrying capacity" forms the foundation for assessing sustainable agriculture, indicating the maximum population that can be supported within ecosystems (Weitzman and Filgueira, 2020). This framework has been recommended for operationalizing sustainable development (Ruggiero et al., 2012) and has guided agricultural site selection (Lane, 2010). The concept has evolved to incorporate "social carrying capacity," defining the threshold for sustainable development without adverse social impacts (Wang et al., 2023).

Community resilience, distinct from sustainability, pertains to a community's ability to recover from shocks (Fois and Forino, 2014). Non-resilient communities cannot be considered sustainable. Resilience literature, rooted in system stability engineering from the 1950s, contrasts with sustainability's ecological focus derived from carrying capacity. Resilience research has typically focused on recovery from natural disasters, while acknowledging that economic, political, and social shocks also threaten community stability (Haynes et al., 2020).



4. Dimension of sustainability and farmers' resilience

4.1. Literature

Limited-resource family-owned farms are small-scale agricultural operations that are primarily managed and owned by families. These farms are characterized by limited financial, physical, and human resources and typically operate on smaller landholdings. As a result, they often face challenges in accessing capital, technology, and markets.

4.2. Typologies:

4.2.1. Economic Challenges

Limited-resource family-owned farms face significant economic challenges, primarily due to restricted access to capital, leading to reliance on high-interest informal credit. This financial exclusion hinders farmers' ability to acquire quality inputs and modern equipment, entrenching low productivity and economic vulnerability. Additionally, weak marketing capacity and poor market integration further reduce profitability, as farmers often sell in local, low-price markets with limited bargaining power. Income instability from reliance on volatile commodity markets compounds the issue, with dependence on off-farm employment exacerbating labor shortages and threatening sustainability.

4.2.2. Environmental Challenges

Limited access to modern agricultural technologies and sustainable practices significantly challenges resource-constrained family farms, which often lack essential tools for soil testing, irrigation management, and precision agriculture. This deficiency leads to the overuse and misapplication of resources, causing soil degradation, nutrient depletion, erosion, and waterlogging, which ultimately reduce crop yields and long-term farm productivity. The economic repercussions also threaten the ecological balance of the surrounding rural environments. Additionally, water scarcity and inefficient irrigation practices compound these issues; many small family farms depend on rain-fed agriculture, increasing vulnerability to droughts and climate variability.

4.2.3. Social Challenges

Labor shortages pose a significant challenge for limited-resource family farms, which heavily rely on family labor. This issue is exacerbated by rural depopulation and youth migration to urban areas, leading to a shrinking workforce (Johnson & Lichter, 2019). Seasonal labor, vital during planting and harvesting, has become scarce and costly, with small farmers struggling against larger agribusinesses that offer better wages. Such shortages hinder essential farm operations, diminish productivity, and inflate costs. Additionally, the aging farmer demographic, with an average age nearing 60, compounds the problem. Younger individuals are less inclined to enter farming due to high entry costs,

limited access to land, and unpredictable profitability (Carlisle et al., 2019), thereby threatening the sustainability of family farming practices and knowledge transfer.

4.3. Policy and Regulatory Challenges

Limited-resource family farms face numerous barriers in accessing government agricultural support programs, such as grants and subsidies. Factors like weak outreach, complex application processes, and stringent documentation requirements hinder their participation. Additionally, compliance with labor and safety regulations places an extra burden on these farmers, often leading to withdrawal from formal markets due to associated costs and fears of penalties. Policy inconsistencies further complicate the situation, as many existing programs overlook the needs of smallholder operations. To enhance equity, policy reforms must simplify eligibility criteria and adopt community-oriented support systems that acknowledge the unique challenges faced by limited-resource farms.

4.4. Technological Challenges

A lack of financial capacity hampers resource-poor family farms from investing in modern agricultural technologies, with essential equipment like tractors and irrigation systems being too expensive for most smallholders. Consequently, farmers resort to labor-intensive practices, leading to lower efficiency and yield. Furthermore, these small farms often lack access to the necessary training and technical support to utilize new technologies, contributing to productivity and income disparities. Limited digital access also restricts their engagement in crucial information and communication networks, isolating them from e-commerce opportunities, weather forecasts, and online extension services.

4.5. Access to Finance and Capital Constraints

Access to finance is a significant challenge for limited-resource family-owned farms in the U.S. They face barriers such as inadequate collateral, low credit ratings, and poor financial literacy, leading to lower participation in credit markets than large farms. Rural banks view lending to small farmers as high risk, enforcing stricter conditions and higher rates. Minority and beginning farmers face additional discrimination within financial systems, complicating access to loans. Although the USDA provides microloans, the complex application process hinders access.

4.6. Market Access and Value Chain Challenges

Limited-resource family-owned farms in the United States encounter significant barriers in accessing markets and integrating into agricultural value chains. These small-scale farmers often lack the necessary infrastructure, logistics, and bargaining power to sell their produce competitively, rendering them susceptible to intermediaries and price volatility (Myers et al., 2024).

Logistical challenges also hinder market access; many small farms are in rural areas with inadequate cold storage, distribution networks, or digital marketing capabilities, leading to increased post-harvest losses and diminished competitiveness (Sexton and Xia, 2018). Additionally, limited digital literacy and low e-commerce adoption restrict their participation in vital online marketplaces, essential for engaging urban and institutional buyers (Luz, 2025).

4.7. Labor, Demographic, and Succession Challenges

Limited-resource, family-owned farms in the U.S. face many challenges, especially labor shortages, demographic shifts, and farm succession issues. The average age of U.S. farmers is over 57, with fewer young people eager to join agriculture, which could lead to declines in productivity and rural stability. Labor shortages make things worse, especially for seasonal and skilled work, since many small farms rely on family members or temporary migrant workers who are increasingly difficult to find due to rising costs and regulations. Additionally, farm succession presents major hurdles, as many farmers encounter legal and financial barriers when transferring ownership. They also deal with insecure land tenure and limited access to capital. This situation increases the risk of farm closures or sales to non-family buyers, worsened by the younger generation's waning interest in farming.

4.8. Policy and Programmatic Environment

The policy and programmatic environment significantly influences the socioeconomic outcomes for limited-resource family-owned farms in the U.S. Despite support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), resources mostly benefit large-scale operations, marginalizing smaller farmers due to complex eligibility criteria and limited outreach. Consequently, limited-resource farmers often struggle to access essential programs like loans and disaster relief, and they are frequently underrepresented in policymaking.

4.9. Social Capital, Community Networks, and Resilience

Social capital and community networks significantly enhance the resilience and sustainability of limited-resource family-owned farms in the U.S. By fostering strong social ties and cooperative relationships, farmers gain access to essential resources such as knowledge, labor, and financial support (Engle and van Senten, 2022). Networks, including cooperatives and local food hubs, facilitate resource sharing and collective action, crucial for withstanding economic and environmental challenges.

4.10. Health, Well-Being, and Social Outcomes

Limited-resource family-owned farms in the United States face multifaceted challenges that significantly affect their health, well-being, and social outcomes. The physically demanding nature of farm work, coupled with exposure to hazards such as heavy machinery, pesticides, long hours, and extreme weather, contributes to heightened rates of musculoskeletal disorders, chronic illnesses, and occupational injuries. This situation is exacerbated by limited access to healthcare services in rural areas, financial constraints, and insufficient health insurance coverage, particularly affecting small or minority farmers.

Mental health concerns are prevalent, driven by factors such as economic instability, unpredictable crop yields, debt, and social isolation, which lead to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Strong social networks within farming communities are associated with better mental health outcomes, whereas isolation increases vulnerability to emotional stressors.

4.11. Adaptation, Diversification, and Innovation

Limited-resource family-owned farms in the United States encounter significant challenges from market fluctuations, climate variability, and structural inequalities. To achieve resilience and long-term sustainability, these farms must employ adaptation, diversification, and innovation strategies. Adaptation may include changing cropping patterns and using climate-resilient crops to address environmental and economic changes. Diversification, such as introducing multiple crops or livestock and exploring off-farm income, helps reduce dependence on a single revenue stream and mitigates financial risks.

5. Methodology

This study employed a systematic review following PRISMA 2020 guidelines to examine peer-reviewed empirical literature published between 2010 and 2025 on socioeconomic challenges facing new, small, limited-resource, and historically marginalized farmers in the United States. The review focused on barriers related to finance, land access, markets, labor, technology, policy, social capital, health, and adaptive strategies. Only English-language, U.S.-based empirical studies were included. Studies outside the timeframe, focused on large commercial farms, lacking empirical data, or classified as grey literature, were excluded. Searches were conducted across multiple databases using Boolean keywords, with duplicates removed and studies screened independently by two reviewers.

5.1. Identification Phase

A total of 255 records were identified (200 from databases and 55 from other sources). After removing 20 duplicates, 175 unique records remained for screening.

5.2. Screening Phase

Titles and abstracts of 175 studies were reviewed, resulting in 45 exclusions due to irrelevance, non-U.S. focus, large farm emphasis, or non-empirical design. This left 130 full-text articles for detailed assessment.

5.3. Eligibility Phase

Of the 130 full-text articles reviewed, 13 were excluded due to inappropriate design, irrelevant farm types, publication outside the timeframe, or lack of socioeconomic data. A total of 107 studies met all inclusion criteria.

5.4. Included Studies Phase

The final review included 107 peer-reviewed empirical studies. Due to methodological and outcome heterogeneity, findings were synthesized narratively rather than through quantitative meta-analysis.

6. Findings

6.1. Overview of Family-Owned and Limited-Resource Farms

Family-owned farms account for approximately 98% of U.S. farms and produce a substantial share of the nation's food. Within this group, limited-resource farms represent a vulnerable subset characterized by low income, small-scale operations, limited assets, and restricted access to credit. Many operate on marginal land, rely heavily on family labor, and often depend on off-farm employment to survive.

The review identified six majors, interconnected socioeconomic challenges affecting these farms: access to credit, land insecurity, market barriers, labor shortages, technological gaps, and policy constraints.

6.1.1. Access to Credit and Financing

Limited-resource farmers face major barriers to obtaining loans, capital, and insurance due to strict collateral and credit requirements. Many rely on personal savings or informal lending, limiting investment in productivity and reducing resilience to market or environmental shocks. Minority and women farmers are disproportionately affected due to historical discrimination. Although some federal programs exist, bureaucratic complexity and limited outreach reduce their effectiveness. The financialization of agriculture further advantages large farms, widening inequality.

6.1.2. Land Ownership and Tenure Insecurity

Secure land ownership is central to wealth building and access to federal programs, yet many small and historically marginalized farmers lack formal title. African American farmers, in particular, have experienced dramatic land loss over the past century. Insecure tenure discourages long-term investments in soil health and sustainability and limits eligibility for USDA programs. Land concentration among large agribusinesses and complications such as heirs' property further restrict access and intergenerational wealth accumulation.

6.1.3. Market Access and Price Volatility

Limited-resource farmers struggle with weak bargaining power, high transportation costs, limited storage infrastructure, and dependence on intermediaries, all of which reduce profits. Price volatility and global competition increase financial risk, while digital exclusion limits participation in e-commerce and value-added markets. However, cooperatives, food hubs, and community-supported agriculture models show promise in improving market access and income stability.

6.1.4. Labor and Demographic Challenges

The aging farmer population, with an average age of 57.5 years, and declining youth participation threaten the future of small-scale agriculture. Seasonal labor shortages and reliance on migrant labor complicate workforce stability. The lack of successors reduces knowledge transfer and innovation, while economic and risk barriers discourage new entrants. Targeted mentorship, education, and labor policy reform are needed to strengthen workforce sustainability.

6.1.5. Technological and Educational Barriers

Although agricultural technology is advancing rapidly, limited-resource farmers often lack the capital, training, and infrastructure (including reliable broadband) to adopt new tools such as precision agriculture and digital platforms. Gaps in extension services and formal education further limit participation. Without targeted support, the digital divide reinforces productivity disparities between small and large farms.

6.1.6. Policy and Institutional Constraints

Federal agricultural policies, including subsidies and crop insurance, disproportionately benefit large-scale producers. Complex eligibility requirements and bureaucratic processes limit small farmers' access to support programs. While initiatives such as USDA microloans and the 2501 Program aim to improve inclusion, participation remains limited. Structural inequities in subsidy distribution continue to disadvantage small and historically marginalized farmers.

6.1.7. Interconnected Nature of Challenges

These challenges are deeply interconnected. Lack of land ownership restricts access to credit, which limits investment and productivity, weakening market competitiveness. Labor shortages and technological gaps further constrain growth,

while institutional bias reinforces systemic disadvantage. Addressing these issues requires coordinated, multi-dimensional strategies that combine land reform, financial inclusion, education, and inclusive policymaking.

7. Discussion Summary

The literature consistently demonstrates that limited-resource, family-owned farms remain structurally marginalized within the U.S. agricultural system. Financial exclusion, land insecurity, market instability, labor shortages, technological gaps, and policy bias reinforce one another, threatening farm sustainability and rural community stability. A coordinated policy response focused on equity, financial access, land security, and improved market integration is essential to strengthen resilience and ensure long-term agricultural sustainability.

8. Conclusion

Research indicates that limited-resource, family-owned farms in the US face marginalization due to structural inequities impacting their production, profitability, and sustainability. Financial exclusion hampers their ability to invest in technology, with many relying on personal savings and informal loans. Market challenges, including low prices and reliance on middlemen, further threaten their revenue. Labour shortages, exacerbated by an aging agricultural workforce, hinder innovation and knowledge transfer. Additionally, government policies tend to favor large-scale growers, perpetuating inequality. Without addressing these issues, small farms risk disappearing, which would harm rural communities and national food security. Comprehensive policies focused on equitable finance, land rights, and market opportunities are essential for creating a more resilient agricultural sector.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Access to financing and financial assistance is vital for the sustainability of limited-resource family farms in the US, with a focus on simplifying USDA microloan programs and creating community-based credit cooperatives for low-interest loans.
- Improving land ownership and tenure security is essential, involving legal changes to resolve their property concerns and promote cooperative land ownership for marginalized farmers.
- Enhancing market access through local food hubs, farmers' markets, and digital platforms helps increase profitability and sustainability for family-owned farms by connecting producers to urban and institutional buyers.
- Investment in technology and education, including training programs and access to affordable equipment, is crucial for improving production efficiency and resilience in agriculture.
- Policy reforms are necessary to address structural inequities, promote inclusive agricultural policies, and streamline governmental processes to empower small and minority farmers.

Limitations

Limited-resource family-owned farms in the US are vital to rural life and food security, but socioeconomic factors make it difficult for them to grow and survive. Money shortages are a major issue. Small farm households often lack collateral or credit history, making it difficult to secure affordable loans for land, equipment, new technology, or climate-resilient practices. Financial fragility worsens when input costs rise, commodity prices fluctuate, and large agricultural businesses dominate the market. Job insecurity is another issue. Family farms that rely on unpaid family members or seasonal laborers can suffer from a shortage of workers, physical hardship, and fatigue for generations. Younger family members travel to cities for stable jobs, ageing the rural population, and putting farms at risk of closure.

Low-resource farms struggle with organization and information. Extension services, federal support programs, insurance plans, and digital infrastructure are often inadequate or unfair for minority and low-income farmers. These gaps make policy benefits difficult to understand and make climate change, market shocks, and regulatory limits harder to manage.

These socioeconomic constraints make it tougher for U.S. family-owned farms to be productive, robust, and long-lasting, trapping them in cycles of marginalization.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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