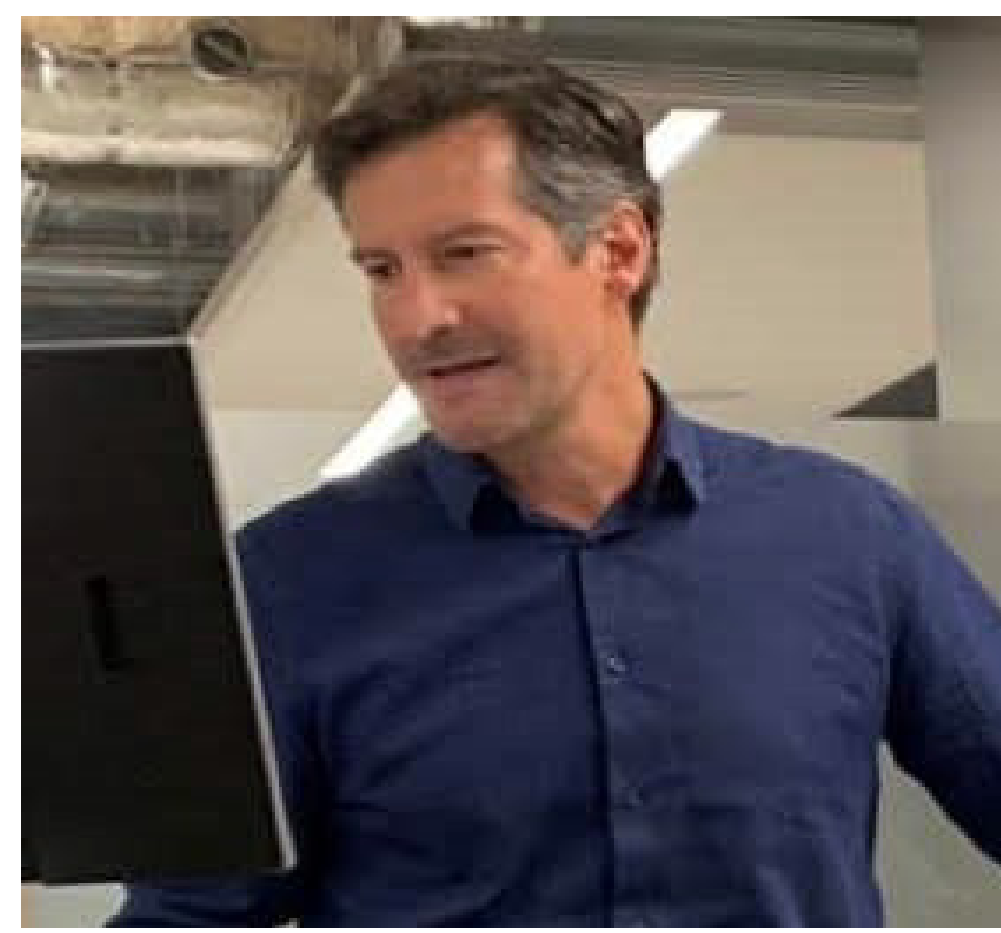


# Does history matter? Weeds, power, and value chains in a watershed in Martinique

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## Introduction

The recognition of power relations, conflicting self-interests, and potential inequalities over time, is a first step towards sustainable and responsible value chains. In this paper, we focus on a 44 km<sup>2</sup> watershed in an Island in the French West Indies, Martinique.

## Mat & Methods: the Galion watershed

We focus on a 44 km<sup>2</sup> watershed in an Island in the French West Indies, Martinique. This watershed concentrates different competing value chains, different power relations, different access to factors of production, and different business models. The elements in common between the stakeholders are the geographical location, the constraints of stringent norms and standards towards less dependence on synthetic pesticides, and a strong attachment to the island. We interviewed 54 farmers in vegetable, sugarcane and banana production.

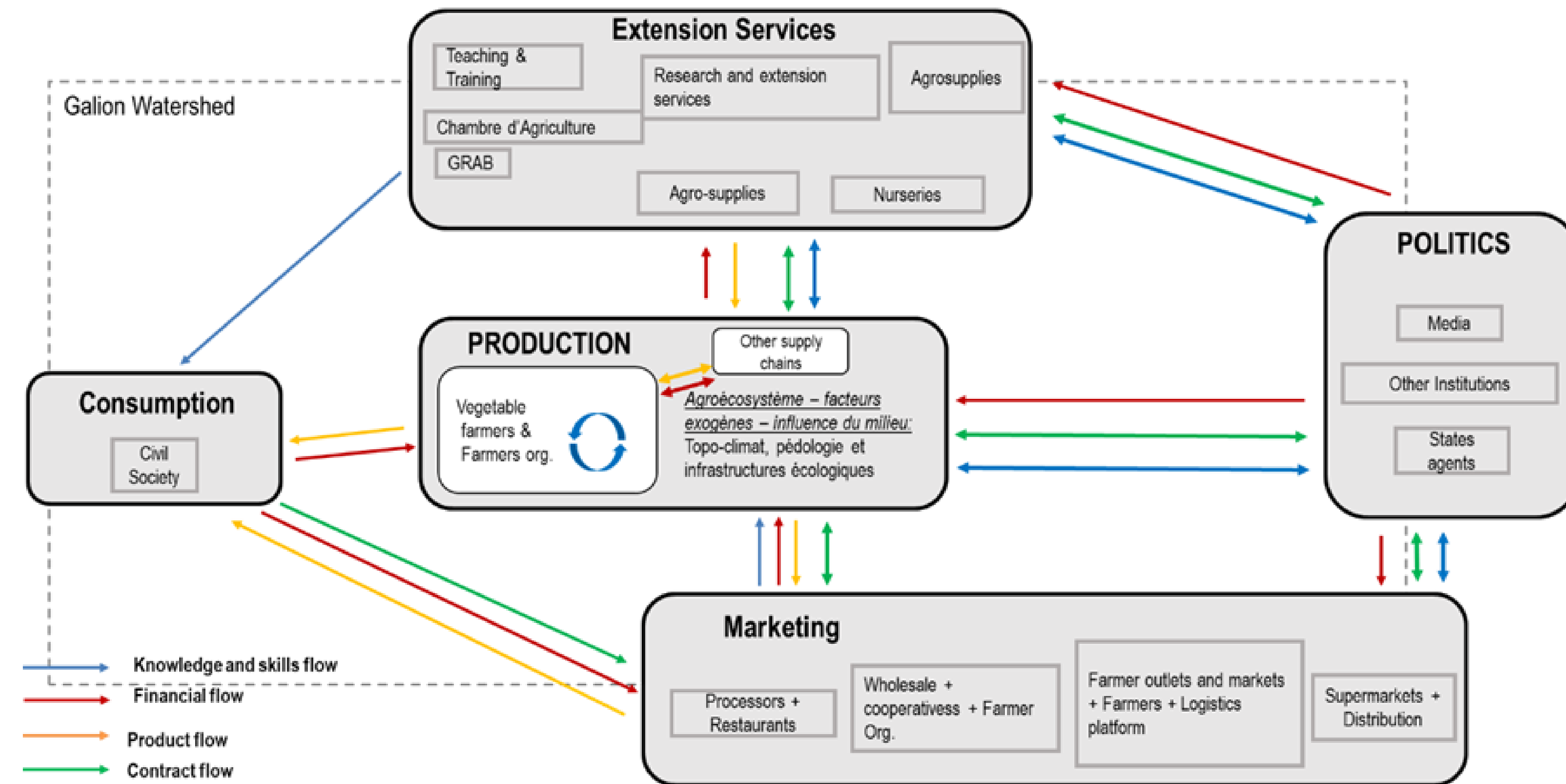
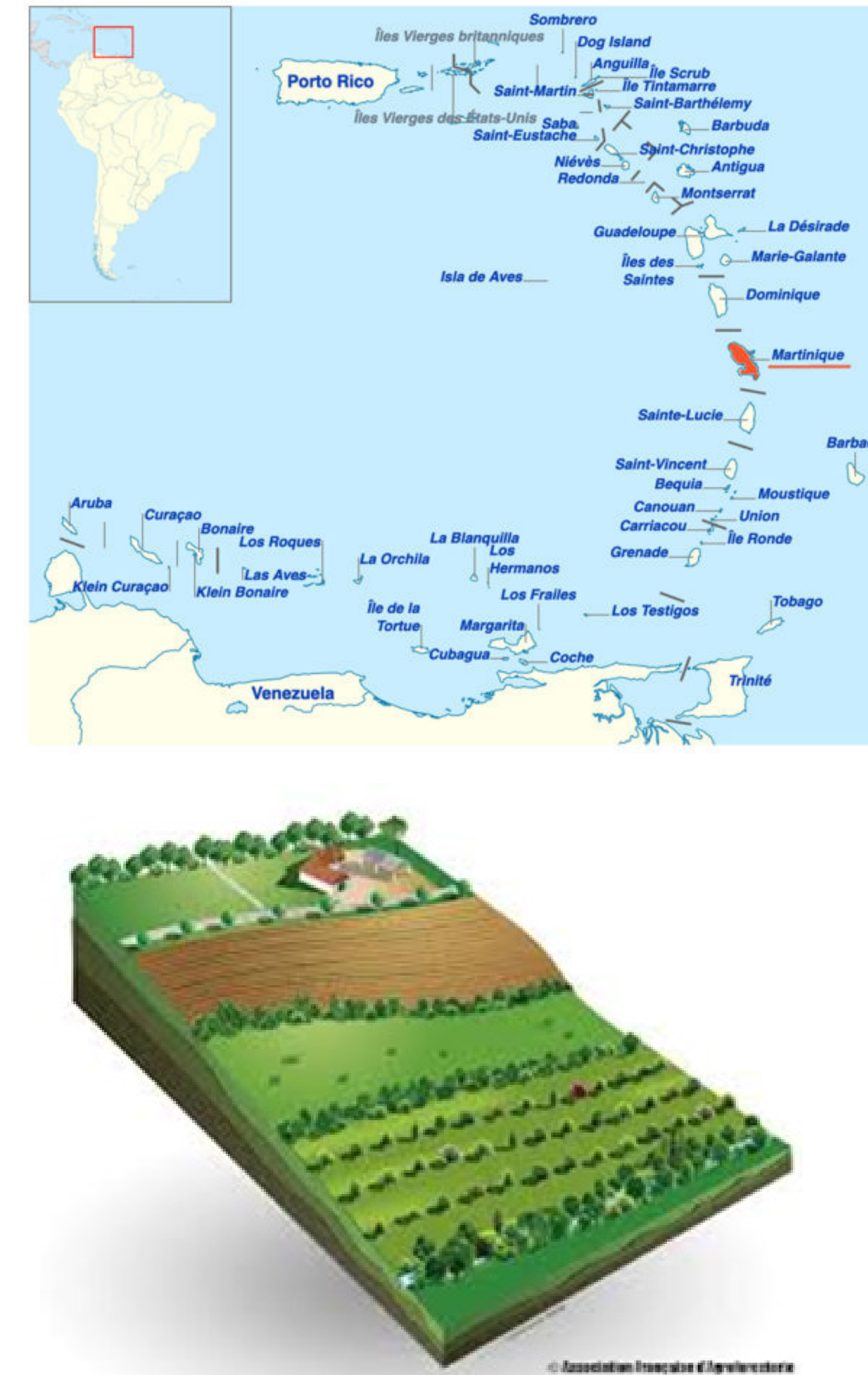


Fig. 1 The main stakeholders in the watershed of the Galion, in Martinique. Source: the authors

## Results: the challenge of labor

Vegetable farming in Martinique dates back some 60 years, and was defined in opposition to banana and sugarcane crops (Chauleau, 1973; Larose, 2015). We used the following variables for the typology: the hourly wage, daily employment, full time equivalency, unit time equivalency (Signarbieux, 2022).

Tab. 1 Typology of the 24 vegetable farmers in the Galion watershed. Source: Signarbieux (2021).

First class.	Second classification	Third classification	Prospects
> 50 years old	Food crops	Formal medium farms, family labor	Low income: decline
> 50 years old	Food crops	Formal small to medium farms, paid labor	Low income: decline
> 50 years old	Diversification	Formal medium farms, mechanized	Medium income, livestock: rise
< 50 years old	Vegetable farm, livestock, and off-farm income	Formal small farms, family labor	Medium income: rise
< 50 years old	Vegetable farm and off-farm income	Formal small farms, mechanized	Medium income: rise
All ages	Jardin Creole	Informal farms, self-consumption	Low income: resilient
All ages	Niche market	High value vegetable niche market	High income: rise
All ages	Niche market	High value tree crops niche market	High income: rise

The typology reveals that most farms with intensive family labor will probably decline in the near future because the income does not cover all transactions costs to access the factors of production: paid labor, land, processing units, and public aid. The results show systemic inequalities in land access, labor, technology, and access to credit between export-oriented farms and the other non export-oriented farms. These systemic inequalities find their roots in the course of an history of power relations. These power relations are influenced by the structural rent-seeking strategies provoked by the ultra-marine status of remote islands attached to the European Union.

## Conclusions and perspectives

New alliances between the different stakeholders should be based on 1) higher farm-gate prices to small farms in order to influence the opportunity costs in favor of new certification schemes, 2) investments in human capital among extension services, and 3) higher and better targeted subsidies to small vegetable farms in order to reduce the current transaction costs to access the subsidies. Supply chains could not only compete for natural resources, including land, but also for labor.

References: Chauleau, L. (1973). Histoire antillaise: la Martinique et la Guadeloupe du XVIIe à la fin du XIXe siècle; éléments d'histoire antillaise (É. Gros Desormeaux); Larose, G. (2015). L'histoire de la Martinique des Arawaks à l'abolition de l'esclavage (la Savanne des Esclaves); Signarbieux, O. (2022). Développement agricole sur le bassin versant du Galion en Martinique: Une histoire de la captation de la valeur ajoutée par des tiers au détriment des petits, mémoire de stage, (AgroPariTech).

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