

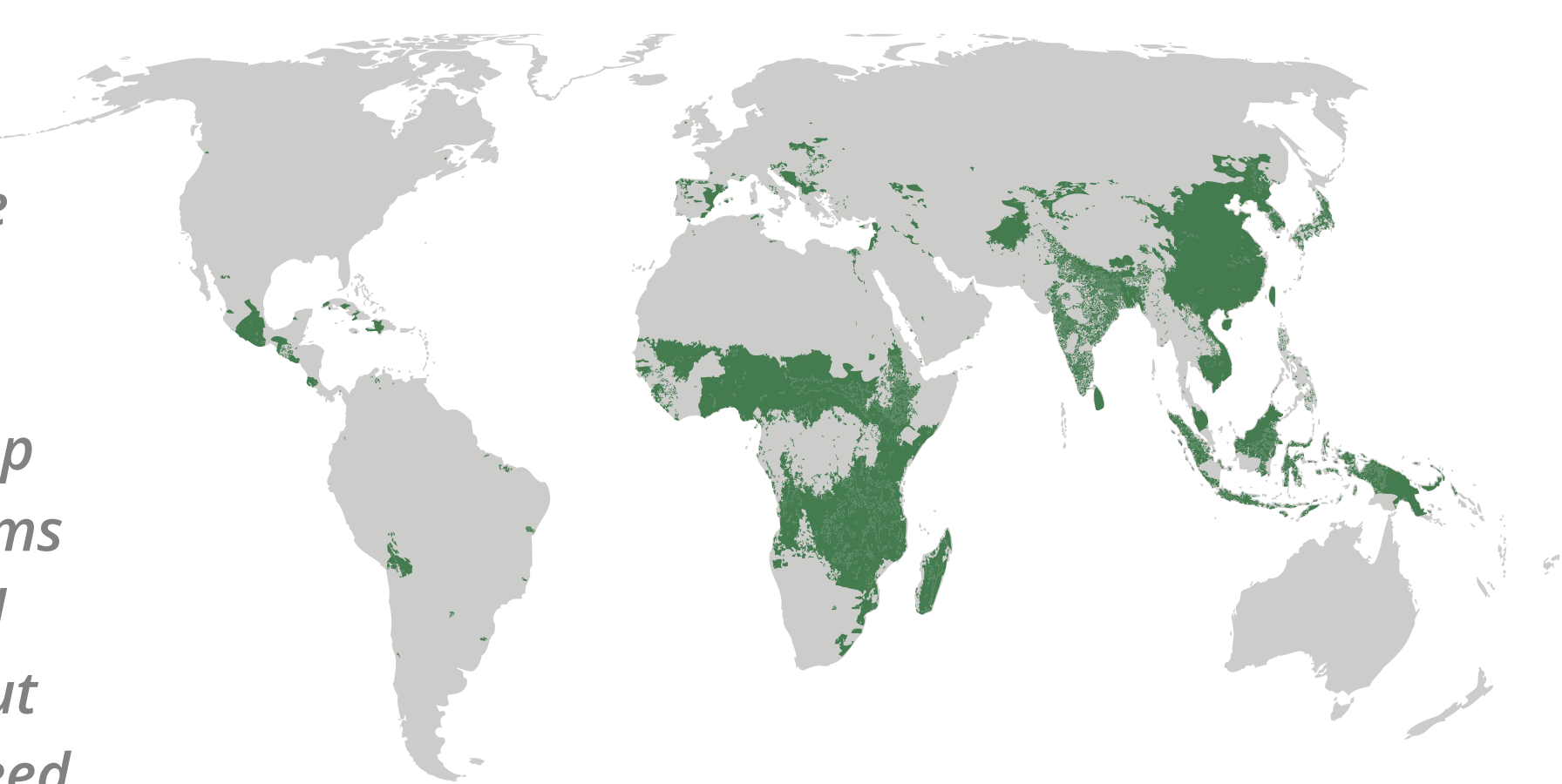
SMALL FARMS

of the world



Farm sizes are changing.

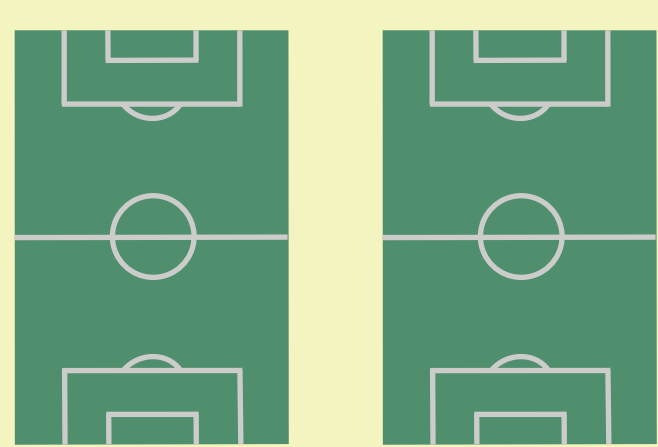
Small farms are becoming larger in high-income countries and smaller in low-income countries. These shifts in farm size have environmental and social implications — smaller farms are highly productive, promote crop and non-crop biodiversity, and make up 84% of the world's 570 million farms. Yet smaller farms face growing pressure from global market forces and climate change that exceed their capacity to climb out of poverty. To support farmers on small farms, we need to take stock of their global importance.



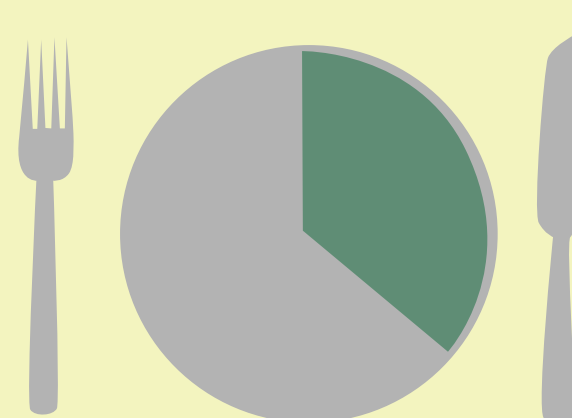
WHAT DEFINES A SMALL FARM?

2 hectares or less

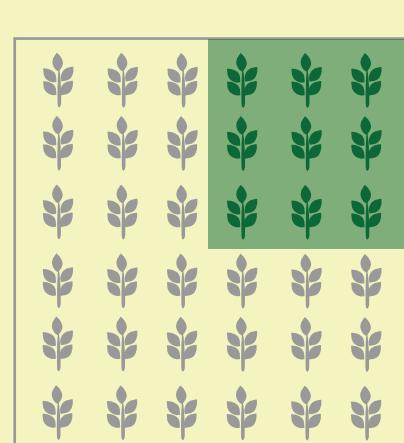
(that's equivalent to 2 soccer fields)



SMALL FARMS MAKE UP:



33% of all food produced globally



25% of all global farm area



84% of all farms in the world

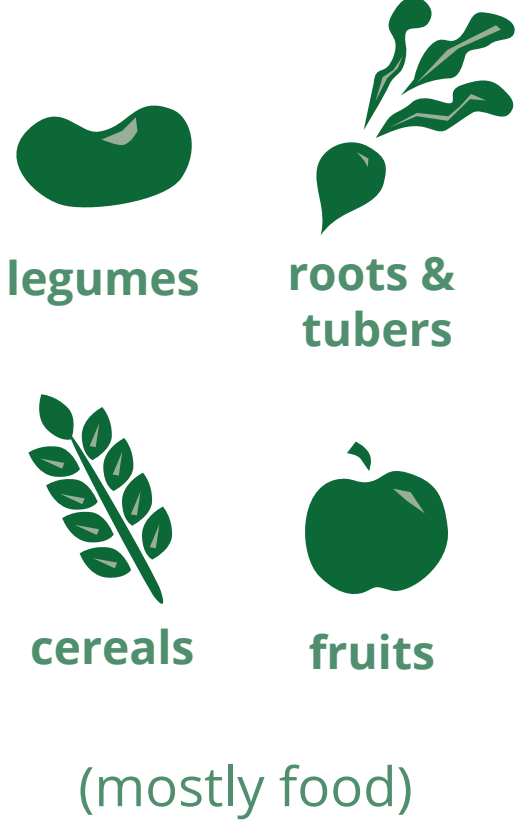
SMALL FARMS vs. LARGE FARMS

Small farms and large farms typically grow different kinds of crops and therefore serve different niches in global food markets and supply chains.

SMALL FARMS

are this big (≤ 2 hectares)

main crops:



(mostly food)

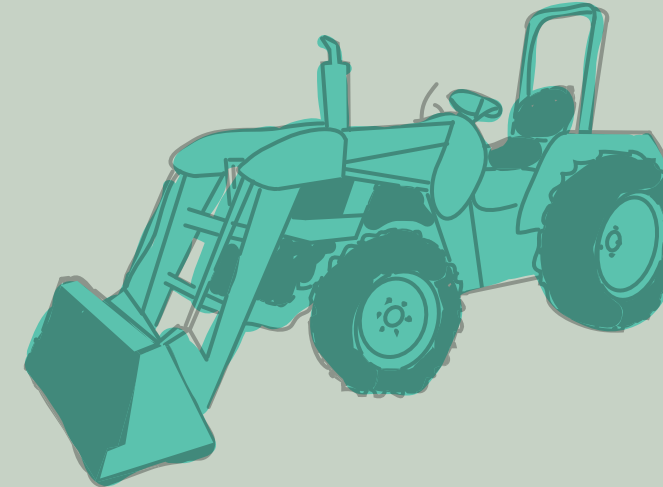
LARGER FARMS

are roughly this big (~100 hectares)*

main crops:



(mostly feed & processed goods)



compared to larger farms, small farms have:

MORE CROP DIVERSITY
MORE BIODIVERSITY
HIGHER YIELDS

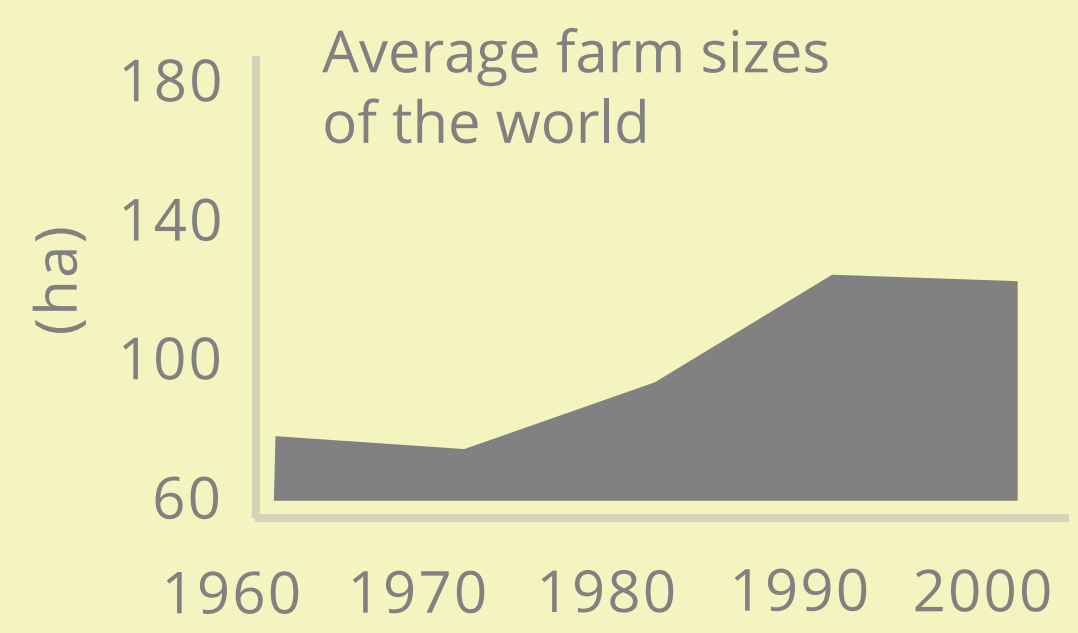
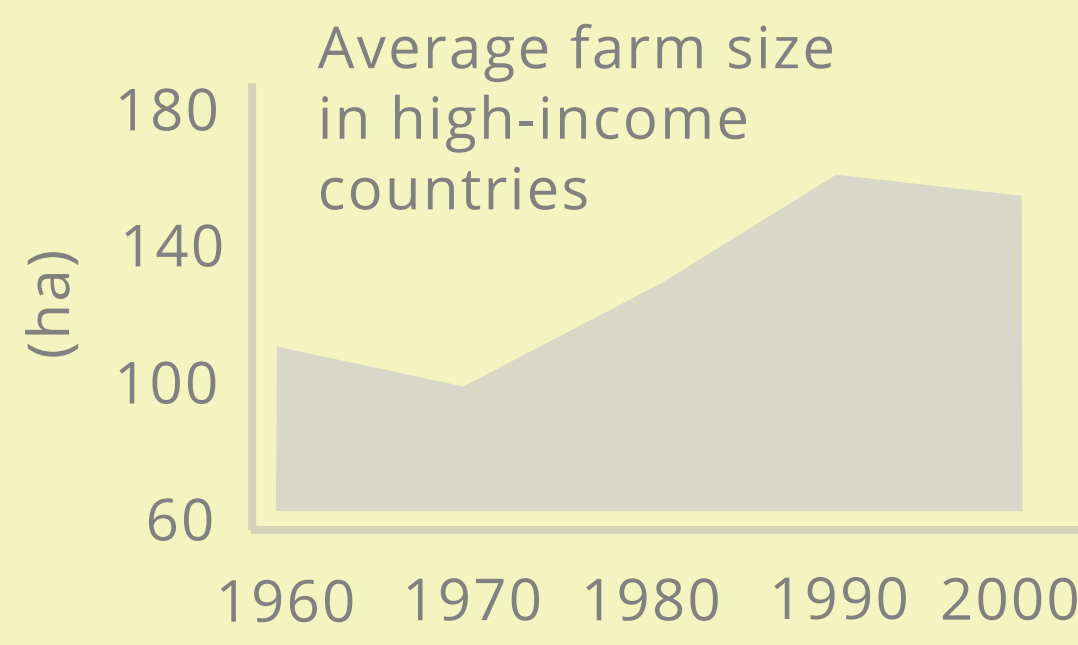
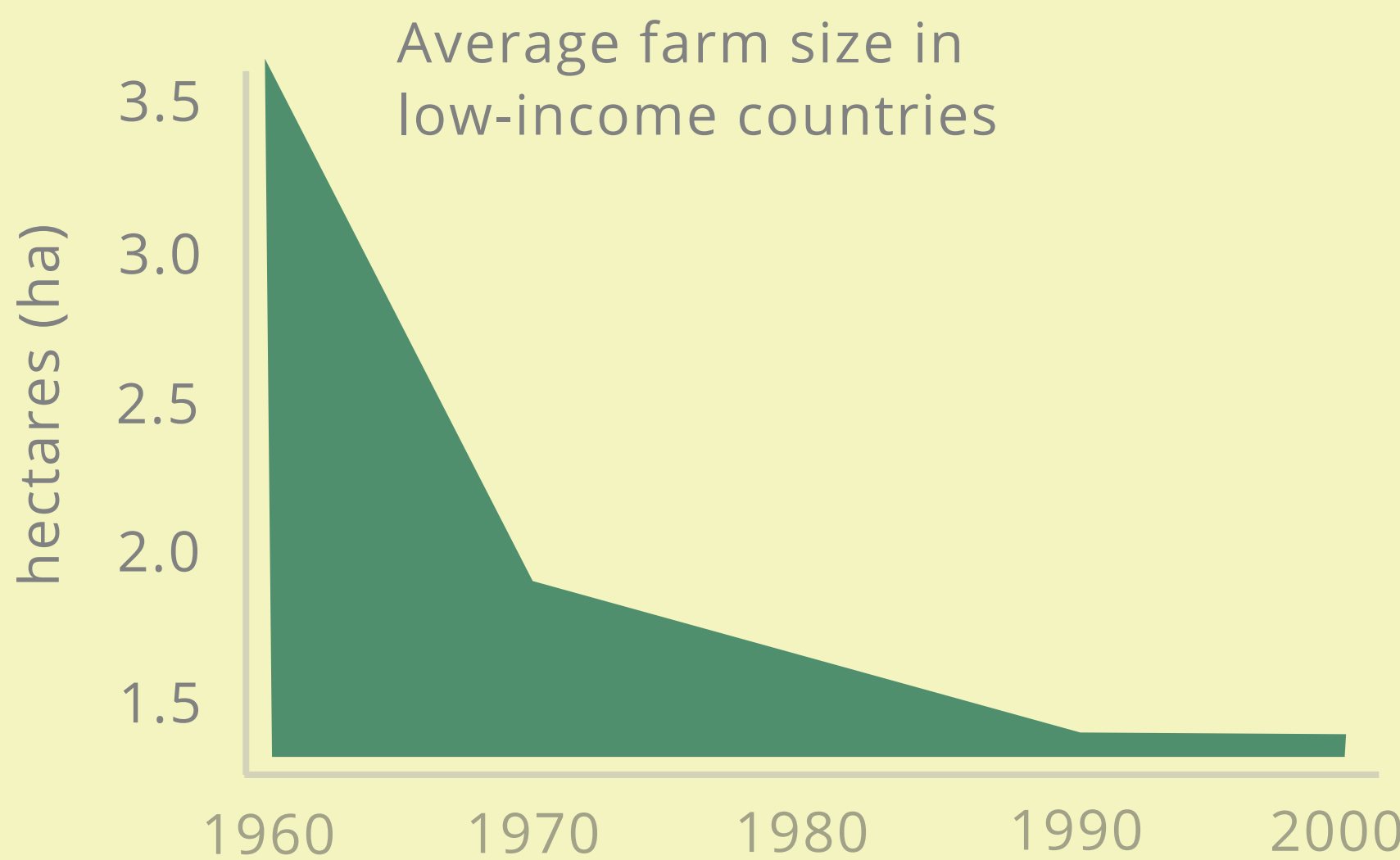
no differences have been found in:

RESOURCE EFFICIENCY
PROFIT PER HECTARE
GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

* This square represents 100 hectares, which is a common size for the largest farms of the world, but their size can span as big as 9.1 million hectares (Mudanjiang City mega farm in China).

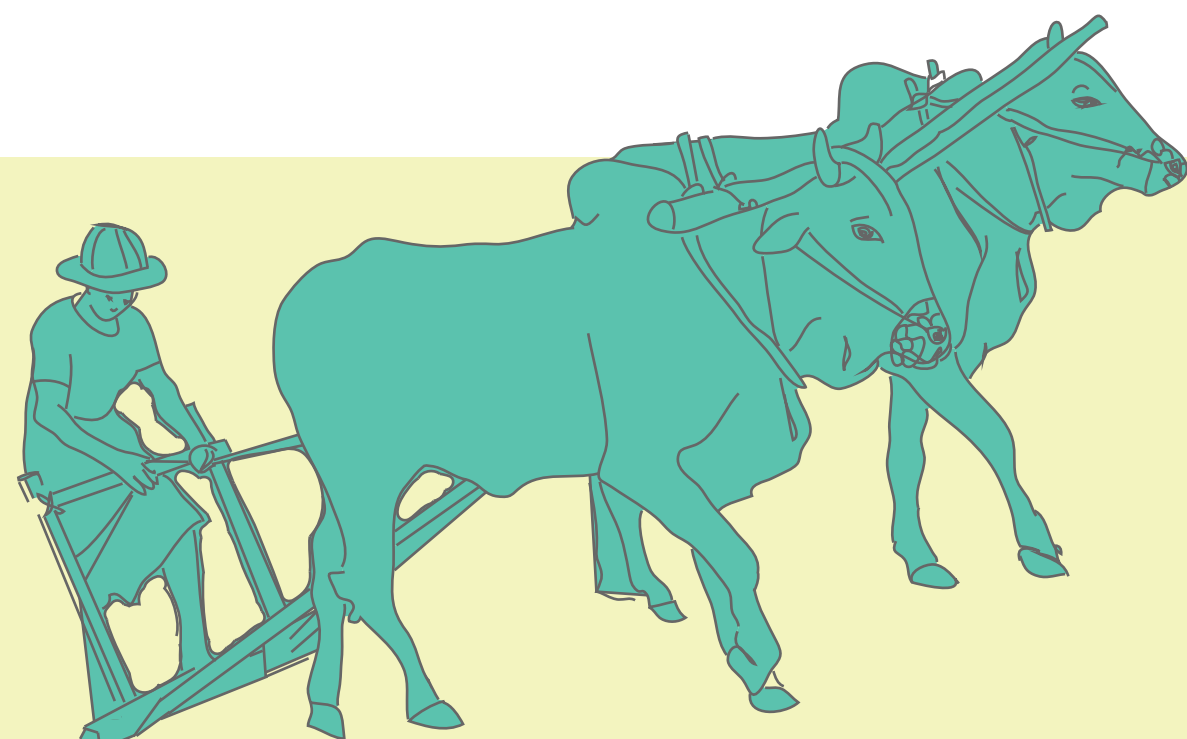
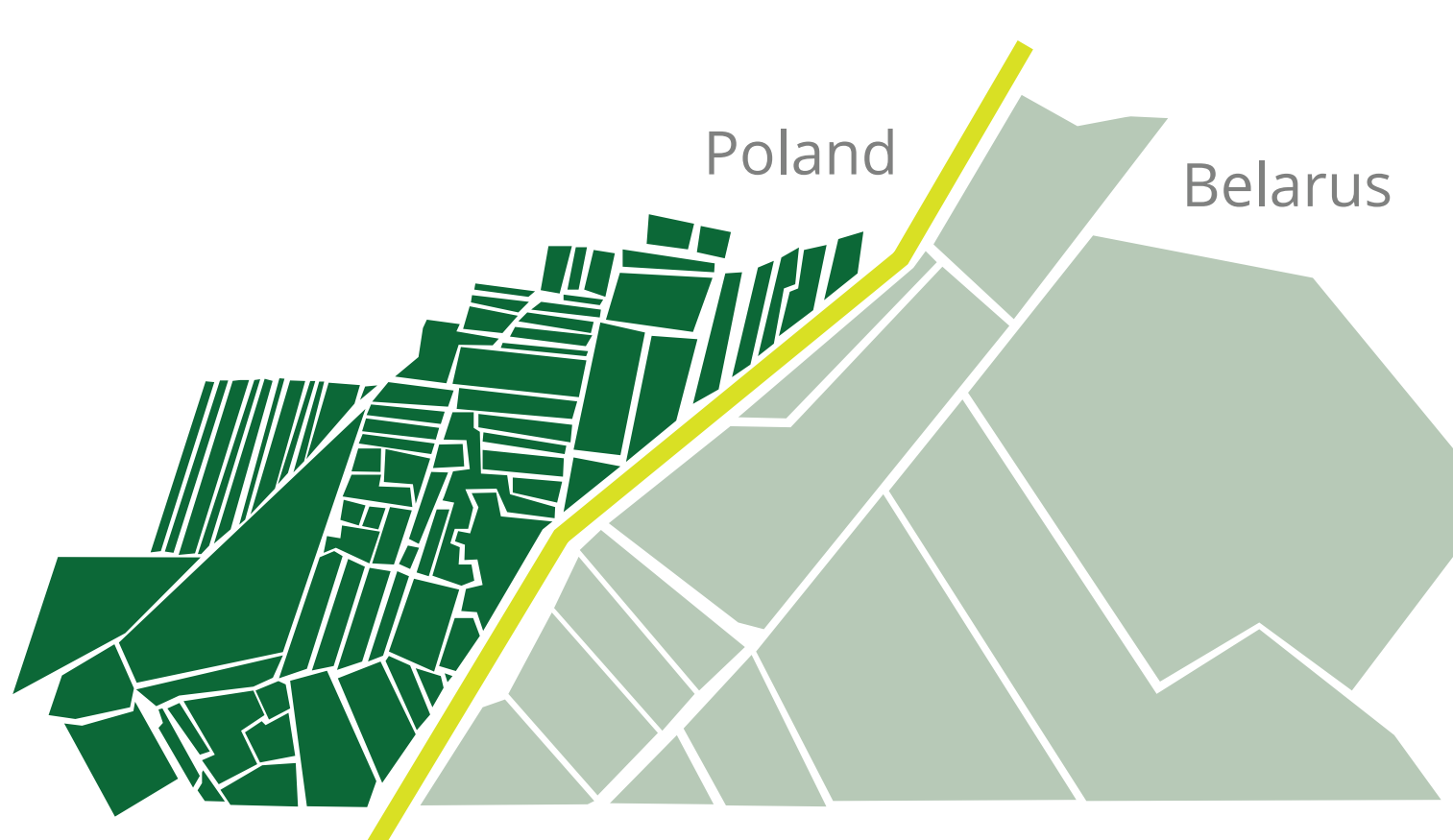
CHANGING FARM SIZE

Farms are getting larger and more industrialized in high-income countries and smaller and more fragmented in low-income countries.



POLICIES MATTER

Land consolidation and redistribution policies, an upsurge in Large-Scale Land Acquisitions (LSLAs), and different development trajectories have resulted in a wide disparity of farm sizes across and within countries.



created by Ellie Barber

based off research from the Land Use and Global Environment Lab at the University of British Columbia:

Ricciardi, V, Mehrabi, Z, Wittman, H, James, D, Ramankutty, N. 2019.

Small farms are higher yielding and more biodiverse than large farms: A systematic review and meta-analysis. (In Prep).

With input from Nathanael Johnson at Grist Magazine

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