



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# Towards stronger **FAMILY FARMS**

2014  International Year of  
Family Farming



Voices in the International Year of Family Farming

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This publication draws from reports and notes from a series of events in the International Year of Family Farming:

**Regional Dialogues on Family Farming** were organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization in collaboration with the World Rural Forum, the International Cooperative Alliance and the World Farmers Organization to increase the understanding of the family farming context in each region, and identify challenges, opportunities and policy priorities to support family farming and eradicate hunger.

**Civil society consultations** are organized in conjunction with FAO Regional Conferences to ensure engagement in FAO regional policy discussions and decision making by civil society, social movements and producers' organizations that give organizational, economic, and social clout to smallholder farmers, pastoralists and those who rely on fishing and forestry for their livelihoods.

**FAO Regional Conferences** are an official bi-annual forum where ministers of agriculture and high officials of Member States from the same geographic region meet to elaborate on challenges and priority matters related to food and agriculture, to enhance regional policy coherence. Family farming was on the agenda of each Regional Conference in 2014.

Read more about the International Year of Family Farming at [www.fao.org/family-farming-2014](http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014)

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# Foreword

With more than 500 million family farms in the world out of 570 million farms, family farming is the predominant mode of agricultural production in the world. Family farms produce about 80 percent of the world's food in value terms, and collectively they are the largest source of employment worldwide. The United Nations General Assembly declared 2014 the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) in order to raise the profile of family farming in the agricultural, environmental and social policies in national agendas.

As the agency tasked with implementing the 2014 IYFF, FAO set in motion an extensive policy dialogue process with its Member Countries, relevant agencies of the United Nations, international family farmers' organizations and networks, civil society organizations, academia and research organizations, the private sector as well as other non-state actors, in order to achieve these goals.

Six Regional Dialogues on Family Farming held in Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Near East and North Africa, North America, and Sub-Saharan Africa helped pinpoint the challenges facing family farmers in each region. All FAO Regional Conferences further discussed the main issues facing family farming at regional level. The Regional Conferences were preceded by Civil Society Consultations that broadly debated family farming and made concrete recommendations to governments, FAO and other organizations.

Family farmers are a large and extremely diverse group. Despite this diversity, the dialogues concluded that they have a great deal in common in terms of the challenges they face. These include the globalization of the food sector, climate change, lack of suitable financial services,

poor market access, insecure land tenure and policies that do not respond to the needs of family farmers. Women and youth are particularly affected by these challenges.

We have learned that targeted agricultural policies should be developed that respond to the specific needs of family farmers, region by region. They must respect their way of life, because family farming is much more than a mode of food production, it's also a way of life. The resounding goal of this process is to bring about strong political commitment in support of family farmers.

The fruits of this journey are captured in this publication. Together, these key moments weave together a narrative of the challenges and opportunities for family farming at regional level. FAO is grateful to ILEIA for its support in producing this publication to synthesize the outcomes of the dialogues. The publication is not a comprehensive account of every action of the IYFF but rather a portrayal of many important voices and experiences gathered throughout major points of the Year, which demonstrate the important steps we have taken together and where we must go in the future in terms of supporting family farmers.



Marcela Villarreal  
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# I am the family farm

I am all those sunny mornings full of energy and the pleasure of moving the herd from paddock to paddock.

In the spring in Québec, I am a holiday for thousands of families, who renew the tradition of “sugaring off,” the smell of the maple sap boiling and the sugary dampness that sticks to the skin.

And how many other odors can be associated with me? Hundreds? Thousands? Think only of the smell of the earth. Then think of how the ground moves as you walk on it. Dream of the sweet perfume of the strawberries, of the greenhouses where plants that will soon decorate the fields, all through the southern United States, are now growing.

Thinking of me brings back memories of the freshly mowed valleys of New England, of a father creating a shelter in a bale of hay for his little boy to take a nap. I keep among my souvenirs the memory of ingenious grandparents, simple people full of good sense... the grandfather who knew everything about the forest and tried to teach it to me, how to cut a walking stick, the shepherd's essential tool. Or those grandmothers who were so good at making the best of whatever food they had and already practiced the principles of economy and recycling.

I feed on conviviality, on animated discussions; every day I challenge people to work together. But I am also stress and distress, uncertainty and insecurity, and I have the weakness of too often relegating my family to second place, even if I am described as a ‘family’ institution.

I mark territories, I design and redesign the landscapes that are lovelier when they do not all look the same. Everywhere I leave traces of human activity.

On market days, I know how to be present even in the heart of cities. In fact, I intend to make more and more allies among city dwellers, to sell organic food, promote food sovereignty and the importance of diversified models and crops. I want to help create a food system that is fairer, in which farmers live better and eaters eat better.

I am dynamism and honesty, hard work and freedom, warmth and resilience, sometimes deaf and resistant to economic pressures, sometimes proud of my technology.

I am composed of multiple experiences. My differences give my character and are the source of both my strength and my fragility.

I am all sorts of succession plans, like the one imagined by the farmer who “adopted” a successor who was not a member of the family, in order to hand on what he called “his life's work.” But to renew and respond to the young people who want to live with dignity from their farming, I will have to invent new forms of transfer because I certainly intend to continue to cultivate values.

I am the Earth and its memory, as well as its future.

This text is based on the responses given by participants to the North American Dialogue on Family Farming (on 7 and 8 April 2014 in Québec City) to the question: “In your daily life or your memories, what farming woman or man, what farm, what landscape, what emotions do you associate with the family farm?”

# Introduction

## The International Year of Family Farming

When 2014 was proclaimed as the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF), the United Nations put the spotlight on the essential contribution of family farmers to food security, community wellbeing, the economy, conservation and global farm biodiversity, sustainable use of natural resources, and climate resilience.

The IYFF seeks to support the development of policies conducive to promoting sustainable family farming and create a better understanding of the needs, constraints and potential of family farmers. The trend in recent decades has been for governments to focus on agricultural commodities and free markets, with less support to the producers themselves. The majority of the world's 500 million farming families and the communities in which they live are being deprived of investments that would enable them to grow in their landscapes. This is leading to an unprecedented outflow of young people to urban centres, the degradation of natural resources, increased rural poverty and chronic hunger especially in drylands and other marginalized regions.

The idea for an international year of family farming was born in the wake of the financial and food crisis in 2008 which put agriculture back on the political agenda. It was first proposed by the World Rural Forum and the Philippine government, followed by many others, and finally endorsed by the UN in 2011. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was appointed as the facilitating agency of the Year.

The voices presented in this synthesis summarize policy recommendations and best practices that were presented during the International Year of Family Farming. It builds on a series of regional dialogues, civil society consultations and FAO regional conferences that explored the topic of family farming in the second half of 2013 and throughout 2014, culminating in the Global Family Farming Dialogue in October 2014. Important issues were raised in other relevant events as well, such as the Global Forum and Expo on Family Farming hosted

by Hungary in March 2014, Brazil's National Agroecology Conference on family farming in May 2014 and the International Encounter on Family Farming and Research in Montpellier in June 2014. This synthesis does not pretend to be exhaustive of such rich a debate but aims to grasp key issues as they were raised by hundreds of participants worldwide.

We can already see advances as a result of the IYFF. The visibility and recognition of family farmers has taken a leap. Importantly, there are many signs of greater political commitment to support family farmers and to create pro-family farming policies. The farmers themselves, women, men and youth, have been able to articulate their perspectives, needs and aspirations. Their organisations are gaining strength, and they have effectively used the spaces generated during the year. It is our hope that these empowering processes will continue, which is especially urgent as there still remain areas of great concern. We can only truly celebrate the power of family farmers when we also guarantee their rights, and when the political, economic and cultural space is created for them to use their strength and choose their own development paths. Secure tenure of land and other natural resources is a key issue, especially in a time when global land grabbing is unprecedented. As this synthesis points out, the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Tenure of Land, Forests and Fisheries is considered crucial on all continents. Yet a great number of obstacles have yet to be overcome before these guidelines will offer any practical benefits for hundreds of millions of family farmers.

With an enabling policy environment, family farmers will improve food, nutrition and economic security, and also help to safeguard soil health, restore biodiversity, recycle nutrients, build climate resilience and save precious water. Pro-family farming policies will also be win-win if they encompass those that support agroecological practices.

Improving the situation of family farmers around the world is a burning issue. And producing an estimated 70 percent of the world's food, it is not just their issue either. This report highlights some of the key advances and proposals made during this International Year of Family Farming. And may the light of this year continue to shine brightly for the future of those farmers and their communities.

*Edith van Walsum*  
Director  
ILEIA

### **Signs of greater political commitment to support family farmers can be found across the globe.**

For example, in the Regional Initiatives endorsed during FAO's 2014 Regional Conferences, three of which specifically target family farming while most of the other initiatives address it indirectly. Strong commitment to support family farmers also came from the Heads of States and Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAC) gathered in Havana, Cuba in January 2014, as well as from the Declaration on Family Farming adopted by the Latin American Parliament on 26 August 2014. An important declaration of support for family farming came from 34 Ministers and high level representatives as well as FAO gathered in Paris in February 2014, and from the Ministerial Conference for the International Year of Family Farming for Asia and the Pacific held in Chennai, India, on 07 August 2014. In the Malabo Declaration adopted by the 23rd Assembly of the African Union in June 2014, African states express commitment to strong support for smallholders. In September 2014, the US Senate passed Resolution 544, endorsing the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF). And finally, family farming was the central theme of World Food Day 2014.

# Africa

**Regional Dialogue on Family Farming:** Cape Town, 6 and 7 November 2013

**Civil Society Consultation:** Tunis, 21 and 22 March 2014

**Regional Conference:** Tunis, 24 – 28 March 2014



Family farmers in Africa are crucial for food security, now and in the future. Some of the most marginalized and vulnerable family farmers of the world live in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, as highlighted in the region's conversations, family farmers lack support, are faced with incoherent policies and have insecure rights to resources. This is especially the case for women – often undervalued even though they take up most of the farming work in many African families- and youth – who see no future in agriculture. Policies are needed to ensure family farmers have control over resources, that facilitate the creation of farmers' organizations and that support youth and women. Moreover, these policies should be developed through a process that includes a strong voice of family farmers themselves.

## Core trends in family farming

### Regional Dialogue

Family farms, defined at the Regional Dialogue as farms that rely on family labour, feed and employ two-thirds of the African population and work 62 percent of the land. In Sub-Saharan Africa, about 60 percent of the farms are smaller than one hectare, and these farms make up close to 20 percent of the farmland. Further, 95 percent of farms are smaller than 5 hectares and make up the majority of farmland in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Family farmers can be found along the whole spectrum of food producers in Africa: from livestock to crop production and from staple food to cash crop producers, and they produce for both subsistence and local markets. They rely mostly on traditional modes of farming – many do not use irrigation, chemical fertilizers or commercial seed varieties. These family farmers also contribute significantly to ecosystem preservation and environmental protection.

As FAO reports in its *State of Food & Agriculture 2010-2011*, on average, **women** make up a greater share of the agricultural labour force in sub-Saharan Africa. But, as Dialogue participants pointed out, they enjoy less than their share of income and other bene-



Senegal. Photo: Alfons Trigas Rodriguez

fits. In many societies, land is usually inherited by male siblings, in most cases the oldest brother. It was highlighted that women are also often disproportionately under-represented in decision making positions in agricultural institutions, even in the very farmer organizations that claim to champion their interests. As for youth, it was generally observed that few want to stay in agriculture: many seek careers outside the sector, including by moving to cities.

The context of African farmers is rapidly changing. Dialogue contribu-

tors narrated how supermarkets are spreading on the continent, land is being privatized and trade flows are intensifying, both within Africa and globally. Most countries in Africa suffer from unacceptable levels of hunger and many of these are forced to depend on food aid or costly imports of food, feed and fibre.

Discussions at the Dialogue highlighted how African governments in the past tended to adopt ‘one-size-fits-all’ solutions suggested by their overseas development partners. Participants agreed that these blueprint approaches to rural development (such as Structural Adjustment prescriptions) have not succeeded in the face of the diversity of family farmers. They called for acknowledging Africa’s great diversity by making **individual policies for each country**: policies adapted to each country’s specific circumstances, but based on good general principles and a strong commitment to family farmers.

The role of **farmer associations** and

## Ways in which producer organizations deliver key support to family farmers

- advocacy and lobbying to raise the voice of farmers for enabling policies, legislation, programmes, financial resources and protection of the rights of family farmers;
- ensuring quantity and quality in production;
- facilitating post-harvest handling, including processing, preservation, storage and marketing of farm produce;
- helping to develop clear communication strategies for family farmers and serving as a medium for mobilization and sensitization of farmers;
- facilitating mobilization of financial resources, technologies, human resources and inputs;
- establishing partnerships among actors and collaborators along value chains; and
- developing programmes and influence policies to make agriculture youth-friendly and promote youth leadership in agriculture.

*Taken from the report of the African Regional Dialogue on Family Farming.*

## Good practices

Participants in the Regional Dialogue noted some successes that Africa can build upon. These include **Ethiopia’s** retention of smallholdings that specialize in different coffee varieties, **Namibia’s** support for organic agriculture, **Rwanda’s** accelerated growth in agricultural productivity through the professionalization of its farming sector, **Mali’s** holistic arrangements for participatory management of the rural space and **Uganda’s** budding successes in connecting consumers with family farmers.

However, participants noted that while some of these successes are at national scale, many remain localized pilots which can only really be meaningful through being successfully scaled up. Africa can claim real victory, they stated, when family farmers are working and living so well across all countries, that they turn Africa into a continent of plenty, with sustained surpluses, profits and rural prosperity.

Many positive experiences were also shared at the Regional Conference. For instance, in **Algeria**, US \$1 billion in loans is allocated to young agricultural graduates and 43 000 hectares of land is secured for them. In the first year, the loans are interest-free and after that the interest is set at three percent for ten years. *“This helps rural youth in establishing their agrofood businesses: 6 500 farms have already been created with support from the loans. We see this as a model to get young people back into farming.”*

other member-based organizations in agriculture, forestry, livestock and fisheries was also emphasized. These organizations can not only help family farmers receive more cost-effective support services but can also enable them to support each other, jointly articulate coherent proposals to governments and advocate for more helpful policies (see box on page 3 for more detail).

The African Dialogue concluded that family farmers can and must play a central role in attaining a sustainable future for agriculture, eradicating hunger and poverty, achieving social cohesion, employment and sustainable use of natural resources.

### Civil society consultation

These conclusions were echoed at the CSO Consultation in Tunis. There, Ms Elizabeth Atangana, of the Pan African Farmers Organization, first expressed appreciation to FAO for implementing the 2014 International Year of Family Farming and applauded the African Union for making 2014 the Year of Agriculture. She continued, *“Family farmers have been food producers for quite a number of decades but nobody had thought of recognising their importance. As the agricultural sector employs the majority of the rural population in Africa, especially women and youth, it is high time to invest in family farmers holistically.”*

Participating CSOs noted that family farmers in Africa face inconsistent and **poorly implemented policies**, programmes and projects at local, national, regional and continental levels. They highlighted how this compromises food security, nutrition and poverty reduction. Pointing to the mixed record of the Maputo commitments after 11 years and the low implementation of CAADP, they argued



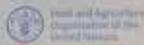
that even existing mechanisms and financing tools that are tailored to the needs and realities of family farms have failed to deliver benefits. They added that one reason for this may be that allocating funds to industrial agriculture under Public-Private Partnerships is not always an appropriate instrument to support family farming.

Further, participants pointed out that the needs of **young people** are rarely addressed through policy, as in many African countries the legal and regulatory frameworks are weak and do not support agricultural projects for young people. Their land access and tenure security needs are insufficiently integrated. The same is the case for other vulnerable groups such as women and indigenous peoples.

### Regional Conference

The minister of agriculture for Tunisia also underscored the urgency of investing in youth during the Regional Conference in Tunis: *“To combat hunger in Africa, governments should support young and small scale farmers and make agriculture a more attractive venture.”* He also highlighted the need to increase agricultural productivity, supported with low interest rate loans for small-scale farmers. He then made a plea to include farmers in decision making: *“Small scale family farmers protect natural resources and biodiversity. They will do this more effectively when they are involved in agricultural decision making.”*

In a similar vein, the delegate from **Sudan** shared how they established a national young farmers’ union, through which they were able to reach a number of youth. **Tunisia**, the host country, said that young graduates were given appropriate technology which enabled them to establish arable, livestock and fish farms. The delegate from **Congo Brazzaville** explained how the government built houses for family farmers to improve their living conditions. Mr Idudu Pascali, president of a **Burkina Faso** cooperative, said that the funds received from FAO are being successfully used to establish family farmers’ irrigation systems, infrastructure and markets. **Tunisia** emphasized its investment in natural resources protection and the creation of early warning systems for climate change and weather fluctuations. And **Mozambique** said that since 2009 they have been reducing poverty by investing in small scale farmers and their organizations through projects related to trees, fruits, bees, and high value agriculture crops. Small scale farmers in Mozambique can access commercial credits if they have a recommendation from the government which functions as a guarantee.



24 - 28 March 2014, Tunis (Tunisia)



Africa Regional Conference. Photo: FAO

In Africa, malnutrition reduced from 56% to 32% since 1999, as stated by FAO South Africa's representative. Delegates to the Conference recognized challenges such as insufficient rural infrastructure, harsh working conditions, difficult access to productive resources and the growing divide between youth aspirations and agricultural opportunities. On a bright side, they noted that Africa's ongoing demographic transitions and the continent's growing agrifood markets offer enormous potential for agricultural development for African youth.

## Policy recommendations

### Regional Dialogue

Participants to the Regional Dialogue concluded that the overarching ambition for Africa was for it to be able to feed itself and contribute to global food security, and to do so by having a more productive family farming sector that is able to defeat poverty and hunger and that engages men, women and future generations effectively.

Dialogue participants called upon FAO to recognize and **support family farming as a sustainable model** for feeding the world. Policies and programmes are needed to help farmers increase production while ensuring security and smooth transfer of family patrimony, sustaining cultural heritage, ensuring territorial and landscape

integrity and contributing to community togetherness. This includes improving access to reliable and stable financing (from both public sources and from farming activities), ensuring that markets allow farming to be profitable and supporting 'technological upgrading' of family farmers.

Better education and knowledge were identified as necessary components to support family farmers in adapting to a world that is urbanizing, globalizing and becoming more competitive and where marketing chains have gained a lot of power.

The Dialogue also called for specific programmes to empower women and to reduce or eliminate adverse discrimination in access to land and other resources, including knowledge. This can be done by investing in labour-saving and productivity-enhancing technologies and infrastructure to free women's time for other productive activities and by facilitating the participation of women in flexible, efficient and fair rural labour markets. A recommendation was made that FAO and the African Union (AU) should aid African governments in implementing the Voluntary Guidelines on Land Tenure and the Framework Guidelines of the AU with respect to land tenure. Specific programmes are also needed to make agriculture attractive to youth.

Finally, participants emphasized that producers need to organize in order to be able to assist themselves.

They called upon FAO to include Producer Organizations in its consultations on family farming, along with all concerned ministries.

### Civil society consultation

This call was repeated by Ms Atangana at the opening of the civil society consultation. She requested that FAO play a pivotal role in encouraging governments to **include farmers in decision making** on agricultural policy, from policy formulation through to the implementation stage. *"Africa can feed itself because we have enough arable land and fresh water. What is lacking is the commitment of our governments to work hand-in-hand with all stakeholders including civil society. But the voices of food producers are crucial. Much attention has been given to industrial agriculture which has ended up ruining biodiversity, polluting waters and degrading our soils. I applaud small scale producers and their organizations who put the spotlight on these issues. I encourage you all to continue pushing our governments as this will help to improve the livelihoods of small-holder producers in all sectors."*

One major conclusion of the CSO consultation was that consistent policies and funding should be adopted that promote the **integration of young people in agriculture**. Vocational training should be designed to target agriculture and rural youth entrepreneurship where there are no existing programmes and existing programmes



Ethiopia. Photo: Alina Paul-Bossuet

should be consolidated. Furthermore, CSOs recommended an inclusive mechanism of dialogue involving governments, youth organizations and other stakeholders.

CSOs also called for better targeting of support to family farms in the framework of **CAADP** to ensure their long-term sustainability. They called for increasing funding and involving small scale family farmers throughout the process to respond to their needs and concerns. They recommended that the management of natural resources be left in the hands of the food producers, guided by **pro-family farming policies**. Value chain approaches and policies should be inclusive, with support for family farmers as a priority. Access to financing by small-scale family farmers should not be hampered by bureaucracy and financial institutions must stop looking at farming as a risky investment.

CSOs encouraged their governments to implement the **recommendations of the Committee on Food Security**. Specific mention was made of the need to implement the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests through involving all stakeholders, with particular attention

to small producers and young farmers. The organizations strongly condemn land grabbing and support for industrial agricultural businesses and demand a moratorium on industrial agro-fuel production on the continent.

Finally, the organizations recommended that the decentralization of FAO processes happen in an inclusive, transparent and consistent way. Policies and programmes of the regional office must be defined through dialogue with all actors, including the organizations of small scale family farmers and fisherfolk.

### Regional Conference

Mr Bukar Tijan, the Assistant Director-General of FAO, told the Regional Conference that small scale farmers and family farmers must be the main target group when developing agriculture on the continent. He added that *“FAO will do what it takes to support initiatives by the governments to invest in smallholder agriculture and family farmers to ensure food security and nutrition on the continent.”*

The Regional Conference recommended that governments make agriculture more attractive to youth and create an **enabling environment for youth** within the overall agricultural and rural development policies

and programmes. This should include youth access to productive resources, especially land and financial resources. They also recommended policies that encourage rural transformation and investments in young people’s technical, vocational and entrepreneurial skills. This could include the development of activities across the agricultural value chain that would encourage youth to engage and remain in agriculture. Finally, they called for greater facilitation of youth engagement in agricultural development programmes and in decision making.

Regarding the **CAADP**, the Regional Conference recommended that African governments effectively integrate nutrition goals into agricultural sector plans. They suggested that constraints to improved productivity, incomes and food security of small scale family farmers be addressed, preferably through support to farmer organization and cooperatives and sustained investment in agricultural research. Social protection programmes and risk management instruments targeting family farmers should be established to foster resilience. Furthermore, it was emphasized that country and regional efforts should be strengthened to improve the formulation and implementation of legal frameworks governing **land tenure**. ■

# Asia Pacific

**Regional Dialogue on Family Farming:** Bangkok, 21 and 22 November 2013

**Civil Society Consultation:** Ulaanbaatar, 8 and 9 March 2014

**Regional Conference:** Ulaanbaatar, 10-14 March 2014

In the highly diverse Asia and Pacific region, family farmers face a lack of public support and they face unfavourable policies. Many have been displaced and are threatened by climate change. Nevertheless various examples exist where family farmers worked together with others to strengthen their farming systems and their voices. Policies can play a role in supporting these processes, by protecting the rights of family farmers, especially of women and forest dwellers, and by ensuring that food prices are stable. Actors in the region make a clear call for more involvement of family farmers in policy, research and extension.

## Core trends in family farming

### Regional Dialogue

It is often said that the Asia-Pacific region is the global home of small-scale family farmers. The region holds 60 percent of the world's population and 70 percent of its family farmers. And small-scale food producers, farmers, fishers and herders produce 80 percent of the region's food. Participants to the Regional Dialogue noted that family farming in the Asia and the Pacific region is so diverse that it is difficult to come up with a simple and comprehensive definition of what family farming is. Presenters at the conference described it as family-based and small-scale, ranging from full-time family members farming with support of wage labour to small-scale and subsistence farmers.

Various interventions at the Dialogue highlighted how family farmers in the region contribute to local market development, community level cooperation and resilience, and ultimately to countries' global domestic products. Family farmers also help preserve and enhance local traditions, heritage and food systems, as well as community ecosystems and rural landscapes.

Aquaculture is important in the region – 80 to 90 percent of aquaculture farms in Asia are family based. These farms vary in size and crops and in the gender roles assumed on them.



Vietnam. Photo: Truong Minh Dien



India. Photo: Bina Ray Rungta

It was emphasized that women play a major role in most family farming, although this is poorly recognized. They contribute up to 85 percent of the work in family farms but receive barely 20 percent of the family's farming income – only two percent own assets. **Rural women, particularly, remain invisible, undervalued and unrecognized.** They have unequal access and control over resources, despite their roles as seed savers, land tillers, community leaders and family managers.

In general, participants noted, family farmers are confronted with a lack of proper support, unfavourable policies and lack of access to markets, assets, seeds and technology. On top of this they face emerging environmental changes brought about by climate change, floods, diseases and pests.

Further, smallholder family farmers in the region face enormous challenges due to rapid globalization of the food sector and threats from large-scale commercial farming and extractive industries. Participants pointed out that **trade liberalization, privatization and deregulation have had a very detrimental impact** on family farmers. These processes have reduced the capacities of countries and peoples to ensure self-sufficient food production and have “worsened hunger, poverty, malnutrition, and contributed to the displacement, landlessness, loss

of livelihood and income, and curtailment of rights of small food producers and consumers.” Many small farmers and pastoralists are victims of landlessness, having been displaced due to land grabbing, large infrastructure and mining projects. There is a lack of genuine land reform. The **tenure rights of indigenous peoples** that are critical to their livelihood and survival are still not being recognized.

In addition, agricultural workers are faced with low wages, job insecurity and poor and hazardous working conditions. Furthermore, fishers and fish workers, including women, are being marginalized due to the expanding commercial fisheries. Their **need for access to fishery resources has been ignored** and they lack support in processing and marketing. And the health of aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity is not protected.

The region also faces **changes in rural population structures.** The rural population is ageing and young farmers and men are migrating, leaving behind an increasing number of elderly and women. Participants at the Dialogue heard many cases of rural people who, seeing no jobs and livelihood options for themselves on the countryside, are forced to migrate to cities. The youth who are abandoning the family farm do not want to continue to have what they perceive as ‘a miserable life’, in the words of one

## Good practices

Various examples of good practices were presented at the Regional Dialogue. These included the successful experiences of cooperatives and self-help women's groups, as well as those of advocacy and pressure groups. These represented key models for collective organizing to strengthen the roles and contributions of family farmers. Policy makers were encouraged to support these models by facilitating the scaling up of successful grassroots experiences and other collective efforts so that they gain wider impact.

One particularly successful example of scaling up was presented by Chhaya Bhavsar of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India. She shared how their ‘Sustainable Agriculture Campaign’ provides an effective **model to empower women farmers** by improving their collective strength and bargaining power. SEWA worked with women farmers and their families to assist them in establishing their own organizations, and ‘trained the trainers’ on marketing, organizational development and access to finance. In this way, SEWA built a cadre of women farmer-trainers at the grassroots level. These women have now opened agriculture schools to provide knowledge and training to other local women farmers, enhancing their access to financial and marketing services, tools and technology, and processing facilities for their products. This integrated approach also eliminated the role of middlemen. The campaign initially began in Gujarat and has been replicated in 14 other Indian states, reaching more than five million farmers at the national level.

Based on their initial success, SEWA felt the need for a national learning and exchange platform for small and marginalized farmers and established the All India Women's

participant. Instead, they seek jobs in industry, information technology, tourism (with its US dollars), and other work geared towards 'sophisticated' lifestyles.

It was also agreed, however, that closer examination is needed to understand the situation of marginalized small-scale family farmers, especially the context of power relations, structures and equity specific to each country in the region.

### Regional Conference

Delegates to the Regional Conference noted that even if the Millennium Development Goal target of ending extreme hunger and poverty is reached by 2015 in Asia and the Pacific, more than half a billion people in the region would still be undernourished. Achieving a food-secure Asia-Pacific region by raising the productivity of small-holder family farmers and alleviating poverty while protecting the region's

natural resources base were identified as major challenges.

## Policy recommendations

### Regional Dialogue

Priority actions and key recommendations formulated at the Regional Dialogue could, if implemented, go a long way towards creating conditions in which family farmers can thrive, flourish, gain their dignity, become self-sufficient and contribute to society as a whole. As Esther Penunia of the Asian Farmers Association and ambassador of the IYFF stated, *"We want to uplift the conditions of family farmers so that they can have real dignity and be proud to be family farmers... and that the young generation will continue to go to family farming, and thereby reduce poverty and increase food security and nutrition."*

Farmers' Association, a country-wide network of women farmers. This concept has already been replicated in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh as a 'Farmer's Forum'. Women farmers from 2400 villages across these three countries and 11 Indian States now share their issues and best practices using the Forum. This has empowered them in many ways, strengthening their production systems, improving their livelihoods and increasing their visibility, voice and representation in local and national policy making processes.

A key element for making this happen, are policies that support food sovereignty, according to participating civil society organizations. Food sovereignty can help achieve food security and the eradication of hunger and poverty as it "recognizes and upholds the rights of peoples to decide their own food and agricultural policies and the right to develop ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate food systems." Another main recommendation from the Dialogue was the urgent **reform of legal frameworks and policies** in order to address the unfavourable macro-economic and trade policies that are major obstacles to tapping the potential of family farmers. This is particularly relevant in relation to access to land and other resources such as credit and knowledge.

Another priority identified at the Dialogue is to strengthen **family farmers' participation in decision making** on policies and programmes at the national and regional levels through their organizations. The participants stated that FAO and IFAD have an important role to play in encouraging governments to include farmer organizations. Jean Philippe Audinet, Senior Technical Adviser at IFAD, agreed and argued for the recommendations of the International Year of Family Farming to feed into the Global Consultation on Responsi-



Mongolia. Photo: Erdenebileg Ulgiit



Asia Pacific Regional Conference. Photo: FAO

ble Agriculture Investment.

Participants highlighted the need to clarify and strengthen the respective roles of governments, producer organizations and cooperatives, civil society and the private sector in delivering agricultural services and strengthening family farmers. Emphasis was placed on capacity building programmes that are *'family farmer-centred, owned and led'*, on issues such as **climate change adaptation, disaster risk response, value addition and the influencing of and engagement in policy dialogue**. It was also recommended that producer organizations develop income generating activities that allow family farmers to be more independent and move towards self sustenance.

A specific proposal from the Dialogue was to compile country-specific data on family farmers, including the roles and structures of producer organizations. One of the strategies that participants to the Dialogue recommended was to **support existing producer organization networks** and strategies that are making an impact on family farming. A suggestion for doing so was to include more producer organizations and lead farmers in IYFF activities and making these activities more meaningful, for example by organising field visits. Finally, they expressed the need for a **long-term strategy** to support family farmers, perhaps in the form of an International Decade of Family Farming.

### Civil society consultation

The CSO community in the Asia-Pacific region underscored the call for genuine agrarian, aquatic, forestry and pastureland **reform**. This reform should incorporate the right to resources, including for women, and the protection of ancestral domains and territories for small food producers. In conjunction with this, they stated, **agroecological, integrated, diversified farming, fisheries and livestock practices** should be promoted that protect the traditional rights of peoples, local and indigenous knowledge and wisdom and provide the basis for climate resilience. Governments should incorporate the principle of **Free Prior and Informed Consent** in their laws and regulations.

Participating organizations argued further that to safeguard people's right to safe and nutritious food and to strengthen the livelihoods of small scale farmers, corporate technologies such as genetically engineered seeds, hazardous pesticides, and agrofuel plantations should no longer be promoted. Instead, they called for the facilitation of **farmer-led agricultural research and extension**, technology and training, as well as the development of local markets and jobs that are appropriate for small scale food producers, particularly rural women.

They also called upon governments to implement laws and mechanisms that provide **affordable and stable**

**prices** for staple and basic food products. They also called for support in **building the capacity** of small food producers to create organizations that can allow them to use economies of scale and establish better bargaining power.

Civil society also formulated a series of recommendations for FAO. These call upon FAO to ensure meaningful **participation of social movements and CSOs** in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of policies and guidelines. The Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests were specifically emphasized. CSOs further call on FAO to ensure that the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment include the central role of small food producers in food production and as primary agricultural investors, and that it protects their rights.

Specific attention was given to **forest dwellers**. It was recommended that FAO recognize them as food producers as well as protectors of the forest and natural resources. FAO should support forest dwellers' initiatives on climate change mitigation, and any projects for forest restoration and reforestation should be done in a way that respects forest dwellers and their future generations.

Finally, the CSOs recommended that FAO **continue the dialogue on the concept of family farming** considering different contexts of small food

producers. They proposed that FAO establish national committees that are farmer led and initiate policies and programmes that serve small scale food producers and their communities. The civil society committed to working together with FAO, governments and with other international institutions to meet the needs of small food producers and their aspirations for food sovereignty.

### Regional Conference

The Regional Conference acknowledged that a transition to sustainable production in agriculture should focus on supporting the prosperity of family farmers and rural communities, while addressing key sustainability issues related to the management of land and water resources. Recognizing the **multifunctionality of family farmers**, the conference highlighted the importance of expanding income opportunities in rural areas, including non-farm income such as agri-tourism and targeted payments for specific ecosystem

services. Delegates acknowledged that discussions on the future of agriculture and meeting farmers' aspirations should include more than just the agriculture and natural resources sectors. They should also include, as a start, issues related to urbanization, rural infrastructure, traditional and indigenous knowledge and culture, education and support services and youth development.

The conference also proposed that FAO assist member countries in creating opportunities and resources for women and youth, and promote under-utilized indigenous food resources. It recommended analytical

and policy work to improve **food and nutrition security**, fostering linkages between social protection programmes and the agricultural sector in order to make farmers more productive and resilient.

With regards to forests dwellers, the conference highlighted the many environmental, social and economic benefits that can accrue from effective forest and grassland restoration, while stressing the need for **safeguards to ensure that restoration activities protect and enhance biodiversity and respect the rights and interests of local people**, especially indigenous people and traditional forest and grassland dwellers. In that respect, collective action by member countries, FAO and other development partners was urged in order to accelerate the pace of restoration in the region, accompanied by secure tenure rights.

The conference encouraged member countries to facilitate multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder **public policy dialogues on rural poverty reduction** and the long-term future of agriculture, especially with respect to family farmers. It urged FAO and member countries to use the International Year of Family Farming as an opportunity to facilitate such policy dialogue, including through the creation of long-term, national follow-up mechanisms such as National Committees. ■



Philippines. Photo: Irvin Jethro Velas



Myanmar. Photo: Kyaw Kyaw Win

# Europe and Central Asia

**Regional Dialogue on Family Farming:** Brussels, 11 and 12 December 2013

**Civil society consultation:** Bucharest, 29 and 30 March 2014

**Regional Conference:** Bucharest, 2 and 3 April 2014

Family farms account for a vast majority of farms in Europe and they are the biggest investors in agriculture and food production. However, they are trying to survive in a context of an ageing farming population and policies that favour large scale corporate farms and free trade agreements. At the same time, numerous examples of productive and resilient family farmers exist, often strengthened by farmer organizations and regional food systems. Among the region's recommendations is the re-direction of public investments and knowledge towards family farmers and their needs, and removal of constraints so they can “step up productivity and create even more jobs in the rural areas”.

## Core trends in family farming

### Regional Dialogue

Family farms were defined at the Regional Dialogue as those that have a high proportion of family labour, where the family has managerial control and where farm continuity is secured through inter-generational succession. Family farms in the European Union, apart from France, account for more than 85 per cent of all farms. One third to one half of the population in the region lives in rural areas – nearly two thirds in Central Asia – and most of these people are involved in agriculture, predominantly family farming. Many of their farms have been **in the same family for a very long time** and there is a cultural attachment to the land. The farms are of many different types and sizes, with both full- and part-time farmers, and those with and without other sources of income. Some are specialized business operations and some are semi-subsistence. In the EU, semi-subsistence farmers are more concentrated in



Turkey, Photo: Hakan Yayla

the new members states and in Greece, Italy and Portugal. In some countries of Central and Eastern Europe, a large share of **land is concentrated** in production cooperatives and corporate farms as a result of post-communist land reforms.

The Dialogue emphasized that the roles played by family farmers and the challenges they face are similar to those in the other regions in the world. Among these challenges, and a concern for many participants in the Dialogue, are **policies that favour larger and corporate farmers**, often influenced by multinationals. A related obstacle for many family farmers was **quality and hygiene standards**. These are generally designed for industrial agriculture and not for the realities that family farmers face. Combined, the policies and the standards make it very difficult for small scale farmers to continue to produce. This causes youth to leave the rural areas and drives women out of food production, after which corporate farms, financed by foreign investors, take over the land.

### Civil society consultation

The virtues of family farming were also highlighted at the civil society consultation. A representative of the peasant organization Alburnus Maior explained that when the financial crisis hit Romania, the least affected were those small scale family farmers who were not very dependent on international markets. He also spoke about the **productivity potential** of family farmers: *“We peasants can produce food for the entire humanity if we are allowed to do so. But we need secure access to our land. In Rosia Montana, where I live, I felt what it means when somebody comes to your territory to take it for mining operations.”*

Other representatives shared concerns, especially those regarding access to land, finance, inputs and natural resources. These concerns are especially cogent regarding **young people**. In Europe, participants noted, only seven percent of farmers are below 35 years.

The ‘so-called free trade agreements’ were highlighted as a threat. The organizations argued that the agree-

ments are set up in an opaque and non-democratic manner, and have a negative effect on small and medium scale farmers and on food standards, while the food processing industry, commodity traders and transnational companies are the ones that benefit. They emphasized that in the end, **family farmers are the biggest investors** in agriculture and food production, providing not only food, but also employment: *“Programs on innovation should not be run entirely through the private sector. Peasant family farmers should be included in these programs, because they are the real innovators. One of the initiatives that is driven by the private sector, Climate Smart Agriculture, is not a solution. This very high input agriculture is not efficient, makes farmers dependent and degrades water and soil. The real responses to the climate crisis and to food waste and losses are in agroecological production, with high yields, vital rural communities, biodiversity and healthy soils and water.”*

It was observed that the current celebration of the International Year of



Italy. Photo: Martina Thaler

Family Farming contrasts directly with current trade policies. *“Many of the current policies, including those promoted by the World Trade Organization and adopted in free trade agreements, have led to the displacement of peasant family farmers. There is a need for a political framework that allows family farms to produce in a remunerative way and get fair prices for their products”.*

### Regional Conference

At the opening of the Regional Conference, family farming was also presented as unique and important. The Austrian delegate pointed out that, *“Family farmers are a social and economic unit. Frequently, three generations are living under one roof and working together, unlike industrial type agriculture. Family farmers take responsibility for their products, produce sustainably, preserve cultural heritage and maintain landscapes.”* The Swiss representative stated that *“family farming is the backbone of our agriculture. All our agricultural policies are inspired by family farming and the diversification of farming”.* Family farming is also a dynamic sector in Belarus. The country’s delegate shared that 2500 families provide 60 percent of the country’s agrarian production, producing both for markets and for themselves. But there were also concerns. Kyrgyzstan, for example, shared that its regions that are based on the monoculture

production of beans and potatoes suffer from severe soil degradation.

The regional conference emphasized the key responsibility of governments in the achievement of national food security and nutrition. The region is making good progress in the fight against hunger, as the vast majority of countries have already achieved rates of undernourishment below five percent. Insufficient calorie intake is no longer the major problem in the region, with almost all countries having reached the 2001 Millennium Development Goal hunger target. However, there are other challenges in the area such as malnutrition (including obesity) and reducing food loss and waste. The conference discussed the serious impact of **food losses and waste** on hunger and malnutrition, recognizing that reducing food losses and waste is closely linked to the Right to Adequate Food for all people in the world. It was stressed that the reduction of food losses and waste should be embedded in the broader concept of promoting sustainable food systems, which encompasses food production on the one hand, and diets and consumption on the other. The reduction of food losses and waste in **regional, short chain food systems** was emphasized.

Other challenges noted were strengthening sustainable family farming and small-scale production; and building resilience in the face of

## Good practices

Participants at the Regional Dialogue agreed that family farming is rich in good practices and fulfils various functions. Numerous examples were shared of family farmers producing healthy food while re-using waste and maintaining biodiversity. Family farmers are, moreover, climate resilient, have good relations with the local community and generate rural employment. **Cooperatives and other types of producer organizations** were mentioned as a successful means to strengthen the position of family farmers especially in relation to the market. It was, however, noted that membership control often diminishes with an increase in cooperative size, and that, in contrast to grassroots cooperatives, large cooperatives are often no longer under the control of producers. It was emphasized that trust, willingness to cooperate and loyalty are central to cooperatives’ success and that their development requires the long-term commitment of all partners, including family farmers, local communities, government and donors.

Participants at the civil society consultation highlighted the benefits of **regional food systems** which require less fuel for transport, and often lead to less food waste because supply can respond better to demand and the quality of produce is generally better. Here family farmers can have direct relation with consumers in short chains, leading to them receiving remunerative prices for their products. Nutritional and health benefits of regional food systems were also mentioned. In addition, **new ways for people to become farmers** were noted, including through the establishment of community farms or by buying land from outside the family. Government policies can help to support these processes.

**climate change.** Referring to the alarming report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, José Graziano da Silva, director of FAO, said “*We really need to step up efforts to mitigate, to adapt and, most importantly, to shift to more sustainable food systems*”. Mr Da Silva announced FAO’s first regional initiative in Europe for 2014-2015, which aims **to reduce rural poverty by supporting family farmers and smallholders**, by focusing on sustainable production technologies, land tenure, access to markets, and income diversification. FAO will also advise national governments on policies and strategies in favour of family farming and small-scale production.

In short, participants at the Regional Conference considered family farming to be crucial for the sustainability of agriculture, for achieving food security and for the preservation of natural resources and cultural heritage. The Conference agreed that the sustainability of family farming requires an **enabling environment**. Legal frameworks should provide much needed access to natural resources, in particular land, seeds and water, and to finance. And supportive policies should also contribute to improvements in rural infrastructure and education and encourage equal opportunities for men and women.

## Policy recommendations

### Regional Dialogue

National and regional authorities need to recognize the **specific policy needs of family farmers** and design policies that will protect them and increase their future sustainability, agreed the participants of the Regional Dialogue.

They added that small and medium scale family farmers need to be exempted from policy measures that have been designed for larger farmers. They also emphasized the need for **land-related regulations**, such as those covering the use of communal land and pastures, penalizing the ‘grabbing’ of land and water, and facilitating improved access to natural resources.

The importance of cooperatives and other types of **producer organizations** in providing a balance to the economic and political power of other actors in the value chain was also noted. The Dialogue highlighted the particular importance of these organizations in consolidating the voice of family farmers in the policy-making process.

Furthermore, the Dialogue recommended that education, training, information, research and **investments should be better directed at family**

Civil society organizations offered to contribute to strengthening these new developments by circulating experiences and good practices around new ways to organize farm and food systems, by enabling the sharing of farmers’ knowledge and by offering their capacity to implement projects and to organize people.

At the regional conference, the delegate from **Tadzhikistan** shared a number of initiatives. “*In the years of our independence we have developed a total of 150 organizations that enhance family farming and we have increased production by over € 50 billion in the past 50 years. About 25 percent of our GDP comes from the agricultural sector and farming is a priority in our development policies.*” The delegate from **Kyrgyzstan** shared the impact of their land tenure reform, which established 350,000 farms. Some of these farms are governmental, some are owned by stock companies, some are owned by cooperatives, and many are owned by family farmers.



Europe and Central Asia Regional Conference. Photo: FAO



farmers, particularly women and youth. For instance, public investments should target rural infrastructure that makes it easy for (women) farmers and their families to move into new farming and non-farming activities. Participants also felt that in order to stimulate youth to become farmers, states should guarantee education, access to land, seeds and financial support in the context of revitalized rural programmes.

As many existing dialogue mechanisms between farmers and policy makers are weak, the Dialogue proposed permanent national civil society committees to support family farmers.

### Civil society consultation

At the civil society consultation, ten key recommendations were formulated to protect and support peasant family farmers, women and other people working in rural areas. Summarising these ten points, Natalia Laiño of the World Forum of Fisher People said: *“We are not seeking subsidies, we are seeking legislation that facilitates the lives of small scale farmers and fisherfolk.”*

Among the ten recommendations is the call for governments to guarantee **access to natural resources** to peasants and other rural communities. In this regard, the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests was strongly recommended.

Participating organizations emphasized that it is now time to imple-

ment the Right to Food guidelines and use them as a baseline to assess the state of food in the world. It was also recommended that the right of farmers to produce, reproduce, exchange and sell their seeds, as stated in the International Treaty on Plant and Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, be recognized, because *“Without land, water and seeds, no peasant family farming is possible”*.

Civil society organizations also argued that **trade agreements and policies should serve smallholders** and local populations or be reconsidered when they are harmful. Notably, concerns were expressed regarding the transatlantic free trade agreement between the EU and the USA (TTIP), the Common Agricultural Policy and the Stabilization and Association Agreements. It was also argued that agriculture should be excluded from the World Trade Organization. As proposed by civil society, FAO should develop new rules for the trade of food and agricultural products that are in line with the obligations of states under the Right to Food guidelines.

Policies should also promote local production in **short food supply chains** that are accessible to all, including the most vulnerable. This includes using public procurement to make local purchases from smallholders. These systems currently lack support and participants pointed at various ways to strengthen these systems. Some examples: establishing points of distribution specifically for small volumes, supporting public pro-

curement from local family farms and other smallholders, and enhancing support for local processing facilities.

Finally, the organizations stressed that the participation of **youth and women** in agriculture should be strengthened in all possible ways, as *“the generation and gender gaps are the biggest threats to family farming.”*

### Regional Conference

The Regional Conference reiterated the importance of family farming from economic, socio-cultural and environmental perspectives. Strengthening of family farms was seen as a key part of **comprehensive approaches to revive the rural sector** and enhance food security and livelihoods. Civil society organizations offered to contribute to this process, using their relevant knowledge and their ability to organize farmers and the rural population.

Various participants emphasized the regional relevance of the **Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Forestry and Fisheries**, which countries have yet to implement, and of the on-going process to develop Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investments. When discussing food waste, the conference requested that FAO take the lead in sharing knowledge and **best practices to reduce food losses and waste**, including at the small scale farm level in the region.

Participants at the regional conference noted that so far the commitment to family farming in the region has been mainly focused on awareness raising. In the words of the delegate from France: *“It is now time to develop public policy to support the development of family farmers, and to remove constraints, so they can step up productivity and create even more jobs in the rural areas, particularly for young people.”* ■

# Latin America and Caribbean

**Regional Dialogue:** Santiago de Chile, 30 and 31 October 2013

**Civil society consultation:** Santiago de Chile, 4 and 5 May 2014

**Regional Conference:** Santiago de Chile, 6-9 May 2014

Latin America and the Caribbean have made the greatest advances with regards to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In this region, the contribution of family farming to development is increasingly being recognized, policies related to food and nutrition security are becoming more prevalent and independence and equality for women in the fight against poverty is being promoted. On the continent, democracy is deepening and social and environmental

movements are gaining strength. And, the second Presidential Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States in January 2014 gave “the highest priority” to the development of agriculture including family and peasant farming. At the same time, many challenges remain including the persecution of farmer leaders, low participation of farmers in organizations, and policies that do not favour small scale producers. Building on successful rural development programmes and public procurement schemes were emphasized as important ways to reverse the situation, as well as policies in support of food sovereignty.



Peru. Photo: Joseluis Alfredo Franco Castro



Colombia. Hernan Vanegas Ochoa

## Core trends in family farming

### Regional Dialogue

At the Regional Dialogue, many shared the view that family farming is not defined only by its agricultural characteristics, but is rather a way of life that respects the environment, protects biodiversity, conserves cultural traditions and promotes rural development.

Family farmers currently produce up to 70 percent of the basic food basket of various countries in the region. Dialogue participants emphasized that family farming has the **potential to increase food supply** and improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable rural people. Family farmers can also contribute to employment, the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity, the preservation of cultural traditions, multi-ethnic diversity and rural poverty eradication. But this great potential, as the Dialogue highlighted, is not currently fully recognized by society and in policy.

For example, family farmers have **limited access to land and water**. This was seen as a consequence of highly concentrated land property patterns in many countries, and the use of land and water for purposes other than agriculture. The increasingly low quality and limited availability of soil and water resources has undermined the productive systems of family farming and is alarming for the many family farmers that do not have irrigation systems in place. In recent years,

this has become even more urgent as the region has been experiencing **changes in rainfall patterns and in temperature**, making family farmers even more vulnerable, especially the most marginalized farmers. They do not always have the resources to adapt to this new scenario in a timely manner, such as by using appropriate irrigation technologies, developing resilient varieties or adjusting their harvest calendars. Others lack adequate technical assistance to make the necessary changes.

Another factor that impedes family farmers from reaching their full potential is the **low availability of adequate sources of financing**. The credit instruments that do exist often use rules and requirements that do not correspond with the reality of family farmers. Loan guarantees, for example, are impossible to obtain for small scale family farmers without assets. For women farmers access to credit is even more difficult in most countries of the region. This contributes to greater poverty in households headed by women. Participants pointed to the need to analyze the causes underlying this inequality.

Since youth see limited opportunities in agriculture, and policies so far have not encouraged them to remain in rural areas, many **young people migrate to urban areas** in search of greater opportunities.

The Dialogue highlighted that public policies and institutions for family farming have not developed at the same level in all countries of the

region. The countries in the Southern Cone are the most advanced in this respect. Where family farming programmes are in place however, they often emphasize increased production above connection to consumers and markets. At this moment, family farmers in the region are confronted with high costs for their inputs and low prices for their products. However, it was noted, future growth of the world's population will result in a rising demand for food – at least in the short term. This provides an excellent **opportunity to strengthen trade in and markets for the products of family farmers**. However, participants cautioned that seizing that opportunity requires programmes and instruments that are explicitly geared towards small scale family farmers, otherwise it is likely that only large scale farmers with their greater resources will be able to benefit from the new opportunity.

Farmer organizations can enable farmers to overcome some of these challenges and to raise the political profile of the sector. However, the **participation of family farmers in rural organizations is low** in most countries of the region. It was observed that in



Peru. Photo: Hélène Labrousse

some countries the **persecution** of farmer leaders has further weakened these organizations.

The International Year of Family Farming was considered by Dialogue participants to be a unique opportunity to highlight family farmers' important roles and make them a key pillar of strategies to achieve food security and food sovereignty and to eradicate hunger and malnutrition in the region.

### Civil society consultation

It is remarkable that despite the many difficulties family farmers face, including little support from governments, they have proven to be able to feed two thirds of the world population, the civil society organizations present at the Consultation noted. Moreover, these farmers maintain the diversity of ancient and traditional cultures and protect and conserve natural resources and biodiversity. According to the organizations, there is ample evidence that the industrial model of food production and marketing with its large-scale monocultures of genetically modified crops sustained by chemical fertilizers and pesticides, has not only failed to resolve human poverty and hunger but has in fact deepened these problems.

Participants highlighted **family farmers' great capacity for resistance and resilience**, which enables them to generate healthy food for people everywhere. They argued that the reason that this food does not reach all people lies mainly in fact that the means of **production and distribution of food is concentrated** largely in the hands of the major agrochemical and biotechnology corporations.

The civil society organizations also stressed that in many countries there are high rates of **violence against women** in rural areas, as well as **perse-**

**cution and murder** of peasants, indigenous peoples and members of rural workers unions.

### Regional Conference

The region has made significant progress towards achieving food security. At the same time, major challenges remain. Apart from climate change, forest loss was mentioned as a new risk to food and livelihood security, as **forest resources play a key role in sustaining the livelihoods of family farmers**, pastoralists and fisherfolk.

At the Conference, Chile's Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Carlos Furche, stressed that the meeting was an expression of his commitment to a type of agricultural development that emphasizes peasant family farming. The delegate from Guyana pointed out that **everyone is born with the right to food**, but that in today's world this right is often denied. The delegate added that the provision of food is a responsibility that should be shared by all ministries, and that national, regional and global policies should be harmonized to strengthen the fight against poverty.

Brazil's institutional recognition of family farming was presented as an outcome of a political decision to include trade unions and social movements in policy making processes. As a result, family farming policies are developed in direct relation with policies on other contemporary issues such as climate change, housing and economic development. Such **integrated, cross-sectoral policies** must have a special focus on land reform and be



Honduras. Photo: Claudia Calder

## Good practices

### REAF, the Specialized Meeting on Family Farming of

MERCOSUR countries and associates, is a space for dialogue between family farmers and the public sector. It emerged as governments recognized the political and socio-economic importance of family farming. REAF aims to develop adequate public policies for family farming and to promote trade in products produced by family farmers. Ultimately, this should reduce market asymmetries and bring rural development to the region.

REAF has already achieved considerable results in terms of institutional change based on political dialogue and consensus. For example, criteria have been defined for family farming at the national level, a Family Farming Fund has been created, there are now guidelines for gender equality in public policies and a regional gender programme, and there is both a regional knowledge sharing programme and a training programme for rural youth. As quantitative information on family farming in the region is scarce, REAF has also encouraged the establishment of National Registries of Family Farming, which enables countries to measure the contribution of family farming and provides key information for new policies and programmes. REAF



Argentina. Photo: Andrés Lotiego

developed with the participation of many actors. It was agreed that the public purchasing programmes developed in Brazil, where products are purchased from family farmers and links are promoted between local producers and consumers in local markets, are a successful means to strengthen the food security of family farmers and other citizens.

## Policy recommendations

### Regional Dialogue

There was agreement at the Dialogue that the priority for countries should be the creation of a new generation of public policies that form a strong **institutional framework to develop family farming**. Where policies and institutions exist that support family farming, they should be evaluated in terms of their impact. The International Year of Family Farming constitutes a historic opportunity for countries to implement such policies, said participants, many of which can be taken up in the short term.

Budgets should be increased to develop programmes and policies that respond to the needs of farmers in relation to technical assistance, research and credit. It was repeatedly observed that **financing instruments are required to meet the specific needs of family farming**, with regulations that facilitate their use by the farmers who need them. For example, loan guaran-

tees can be covered through the implementation of Guarantee Funds, which have been used in Southern Cone countries.

Improving access to land and water should be prioritized through **special programmes which include land use and water management plans**. These should be complemented by programmes for farmer-led experimentation and the use of new water harvesting and soil conservation practices. Education should also be strengthened, especially regarding such **sustainable production practices**.

In order to create awareness of the benefits of family farming in society, the Dialogue recommended that governments develop **communication strategies** to provide information on their socio-economic and productive contributions, especially emphasizing the contribution of women, youth and indigenous communities. One specific suggestion was that countries establish a national Day of the Family Farmer, which may help to highlight the place of family farming in each country.

It was also recommended that countries **build on successful initiatives** that are already in place in the region, such as family farming registries, cross-sectoral rural development programmes and public purchasing programmes (see Good practices). If they use a harmonized methodology, countries can compare information, and better **evaluate the impacts of public policies on family farming**. This will require not only solid data, but also relevant, reliable and measurable performance indicators that are developed in an inclusive way.

Generally, it was felt that the par-

expressed its commitment to promote South-South cooperation, share experiences, and expand the process of integration between family farmers. The Dialogue recommended that countries explore the feasibility of replicating the REAF methodology in other sub-regions.

**Public procurement systems** for family farming products are in place in various countries in the region, Brazil's being the most advanced. These systems facilitate the participation of family farmers in a market with fair prices, while promoting access to food for vulnerable people and stimulating local development. A decade ago Brazil implemented an exemplary system that has three components: the Food Purchase Programme (PAA), the National School Feeding Programme (PNAE) and Institutional Purchases for municipalities, states and the federal government. Re-directing public spending to local producers has achieved notable results, including access to more nutritious and diverse diets, better prices for family farmers, revitalized local cultures and knowledge and more financial security for farmers, enabling them to make investments and grow.

Argentina has replicated this initiative at the provincial level, while Uruguay and Bolivia are studying the feasibility of implementing similar systems. There are still multiple challenges in the system, for example in the areas of food safety, farmers' cooperatives and diversification of production. Some of these may be addressed through coordinated actions, exchange of experiences and joint proposals by countries in the region.

**Rural development programmes** that are developed and implemented across sectors can ensure a systemic view on rural development and family farming. Focusing resources and actions



Latin America and Caribbean Regional Conference. Photo: FAO

participation of farmers in the formulation of policies and programmes improves their effectiveness. This can, for example, be achieved through Permanent Working Groups for policy development and research that include both governments and farmers.

Strong recommendations were made to develop specific policies to support rural women and youth. These should take into account women's combined tasks of farming and domestic activities. Regarding youth, a holistic view of their needs is required, including offering work and living conditions that are better than those currently available in many rural areas. **Positive discrimination** must be put in place for both women and youth, especially regarding access to land and capital. The implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance for Land Tenure, Fisheries and Forests were mentioned as a valuable tool to promote this process.

The advantages when farmers work together to decrease costs and access to markets are evident. Therefore, the Dialogue recommends that governments promote the creation of family farming organizations, noting that they should not be imposed from above but come from the farmers themselves. **Key incentives for the development of rural organizations** are education and training programmes for rural leaders and support for the exchange of experiences between farming organisations.

Governments should also **strengthen family farmers' access to markets** and ensure fair prices, and the Dialogue suggests various ways to do so: promoting local markets, public purchases from family farmers, collective marketing and improved storage and transport logistics. It was suggested that **the value of family farming products can be heightened** by establishing rules of origin, or creating specific family farming labels.

It was emphasized that all pro-family farming policies must be developed and implemented in a **cross-sectoral** manner, in other words through collaboration with non-agricultural sectors such as housing and education, which will enhance their impact in the field. This can be done for example through rural development programmes (see Good practices).

Finally, the Dialogue recommended a **broad platform for dialogue** and exchange of experiences on family farming. A Regional Committee could be created as an international platform for the development of family farming in order to promote the creation of policies conducive to the consolida-

where they are needed benefits farmers and their families more efficiently. In this context, the education of farmers deserves special attention because it can generate synergies and encourage an integral approach. Two initiatives were highlighted at the Dialogue: Mexico's Integrated Rural Development Program, which coordinates support for family farming across 16 ministries, and Ecuador's Good Rural Living Plan, an inter-ministerial programme that supports family farmers. In another example, the government of Nicaragua, a country with an alarming context of almost 25 percent of people living in extreme poverty, focuses on the holistic development of small and medium scale producers through comprehensive policies and programmes that involve people at all levels from the community to the country. And Guatemala launched the National Policy on Integrated Rural Development, which brings together a number of sectoral policies in an effort to strengthen family farming.

FAO's **Regional Initiatives** in the region were also mentioned as good examples of ways family farming can be supported. The initiatives are: Support to a Hunger Free Latin America and Caribbean, Family Farming and Rural Territorial Development and Improving National and Regional Food and Feed systems in the Caribbean.



Peru. Photo: Natalia Virginia Lozano Broncales



tion of the sector. Various institutions have offered to contribute to this effort.

### Civil society consultation

FAO must prioritize the promotion and implementation of **public policies that strengthen food sovereignty** as a key way to eradicate hunger, the civil society organizations stated. They also recommended that governments recognize and demarcate indigenous territories, where indigenous people can develop their livelihoods. The importance of guaranteeing the human, economic, social and cultural rights of small scale family farmers and food workers by **respecting national laws and international commitments**, and implementing campaigns against slave labour and violence in rural areas was emphasized. A specific call was made for governments to renew their commitment to implementation of the ten year old Guidelines on the Right to Food.

In order to stop migration to urban areas, participating organizations called upon governments to implement **comprehensive agrarian reform** for land development and public policies for men and women to gain access to land, water and irrigation, infrastructure, education, health and marketing. Public policies for young people should be formulated and implemented to ensure their right to live their lives in their own territory.

As women farmers possess specific capacities and knowledge, the civil society organizations called for regional programmes and **policies that enable women to use their skills** for example in the marketing of food and

the promotion of food sovereignty. Furthermore, addressing the climate crisis implies a move away from a sectoral approach towards a **territorial approach**. Recommended actions include restoring degraded ecosystems, promoting native seeds for the benefit of farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk and valuing community knowledge.

The organizations recommend that **agroecological production** be promoted and supported through specific policies, especially in the transition phase, recognizing the potential of agroecology for mitigating and adapting to climate change. Emphasis was also put on the need to implement policies and programs that support the development of food processing on a small scale, and the marketing of food directly between producer and consumer. This should take place in the framework of agroecology and social solidarity economies and would include the promotion of the nutritional benefits of products of artisanal and smallholder family farmers. As civil society stated, *“The IYFF should be the beginning of a longer process that ... strengthens non-patriarchal, indigenous and peasant family farming from an agroecological perspective. We are part of the solution.”*

### Regional Conference

It was agreed at the regional conference that in order to strengthen family farmers, **national frameworks** are needed for policies and strategies to secure food security, protect natural resources, reduce risks and improve rural people’s resilience to climate change. *“What we have seen in this*

*Conference is a huge regional commitment to food security at the level of governments, civil society and the private sector, which has been turned into a concrete agenda of actions to eradicate hunger”*, said FAO Director-General, José Graziano da Silva. The importance of **including forest producers in the development of policies** and national development programmes was specifically noted.

The regional conference further agreed that small scale family farmers, especially women, youth and indigenous people, should have **access to production factors** such as land and water. Again, it was agreed that access to land can be best guaranteed through the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests.

**Public purchasing** from family farms and rural producers was highlighted during the conference as a very effective way to enhance food security, as proven in Brazil’s experience. The conference recommended more **exchange of such best practices** and of other types of knowledge and experiences related to family farming.

Finally, participants expressed, FAO should not only cooperate with governments but also promote a broad and dynamic debate that involves civil society and academia in **analyzing the concept of food sovereignty**, as its meaning has not yet been agreed by governments or the United Nations system. Such a process should take account of recent experiences, including discussions held during the adoption of the Strategic Framework of the Committee on World Food Security. ■

# Near East and North Africa

Regional Dialogue on Family Farming: Tunis, 21 and 22 November 2013

Regional Conference: Rome, 24 – 28 February 2014

Forty percent of the region's population lives and works in rural areas and nearly 85 percent of agricultural land holdings are farmed by families. However, agriculture only represents 5.5 percent of regional Gross Domestic Product. The reason is that oil and gas production makes up a major part of the region's income. Just looking at GDP therefore does not do justice to agriculture's important contribution to employment and food and nutrition security in the region. Insecure land tenure, violent conflicts, water scarcity and the impacts of climate change are some of the contextual elements that make life very hard for family farmers. Key recommendations include the provision of land titles, greater autonomy for farmer organizations and more inclusive policy making processes.

## Core trends in family farming

### Regional Dialogue

The Dialogue defined family farming as a type of agricultural production system that is managed by one or more members of a family, and is primarily reliant on non-wage family labour. Family farming, including agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture activities, is often characterized by **multifunctionality** as the family tries to diversify its income and protect itself from external shocks. Family farmers in the region are often, but not necessarily always, small-holders, while nearly all small-holders tend to be family farmers. The average size of a family farm in the region is less than two hectares and this is steadily decreasing as a result of population growth and the division of farms on inheritance.

Despite being large in number, family farms control only 25 percent of arable land, while 75 percent is in the hands of corporate-type agriculture. Participants in the Dialogue expressed concern that governments in the region have **neglected family farming** and have focused on the development



of large-scale agriculture. Examples were mentioned of projects that aim to build canals of over 100 km and irrigate hundreds of thousands of hectares in the region. Some participants argued that those large scale projects often have dubious economic, social and environmental impacts while not benefitting small scale family farmers.

Various constraints to family farming were mentioned. Dialogue participants agreed that **access to finance** and investment resources is one of the most important challenges in the region. Existing financial institutions, credit instruments and bank procedures are ill-adapted to the needs of family farmers, they say, and many banks consider agriculture to be too risky.

**Access to land** was mentioned as another important challenge for family farmers. Many family farmers in the region do not have a title to their very small holdings. And in some countries, land continues to be legally owned by the state, and farmers are considered as tenants, although they often lack a legal document proving this relationship. This makes it difficult for family farmers to obtain credit, while uncertainty about their ownership of land also discourages them from investing. Inheritance laws that divide land among children and the absence of well-functioning land markets that allow consolidation complicate access to land in the region even further.

The Dialogue also discussed the **special role of women and youth** in family farming. Between 25 and 40 percent of the labour on family farms is provided by women and, as participants in the Dialogue pointed out, their role is increasing, because rising numbers of male family members are **migrating** to oil-rich countries and to cities in order to earn a better living and send remittances to their families back on the farm. Women, however, suffer even more than men from lack of access to land, credit and technology. They generally represent less than five percent of landholders in the region. **Land fragmentation**, which is widespread in the region, poses a special problem for women, who are hampered by social norms from moving between plots. In addition, women have even greater difficulties than men in obtaining rural credit, which often require literacy and a husband's agreement, which is in many cases impossible for women to get.

**Youth unemployment** is another major challenge facing the region today, with rates of around 25 percent. Participants in the Dialogue pointed out that youth are increasingly losing interest in agriculture and are looking for jobs in urban areas. They noted that this is putting pressure on urban infrastructure and is depriving rural areas and family farms of important labour resources that are generally more educated and dynamic.

## Good practices

Various good practices were mentioned during the Regional Dialogue. Several of these were in the area of credit and finance. The Micro Finance Development Facility of **Sudan** has supported the creation of 16 new micro finance institutions and has reached nearly half a million beneficiaries. About 80 percent of funding under this programme is directed to agriculture activities, notably small investments by family farmers. It gives special preference to women and youth. In another example, **Lebanon's** 'Disaster Fund for Agriculture' provides financial compensation to farmers suffering from bad weather conditions and natural disasters. Half of the resources for this Fund are provided by the government and the other half by the farmers themselves. **Algeria's** Plan for Agriculture and Rural Renewal also introduces an insurance scheme to protect farmers from the impact of natural shocks that affect output. In addition, it provides family farmers with interest free crop financing, and reinforces the system of leasing in order to facilitate purchase of farm machinery and equipment.

Responding to the issue of access to land, **Kuwait** offers family farmers 20 year leases to land. The leases are renewable provided the family continues to farm the land. The leases can also be used to obtain finance, and they are inherited by the farmer's children. And in the area of international trade, **Egypt** shared several innovative aspects of its West Noubaria rural development project, including arrangements



Yemen. Photo: Salah Ahmed Ali Almeshragi

Participants stated that family farmers in the region tend to retain a very small share of value added from their products, partly as a result of poor marketing. They also expressed concern that many **extension** workers are underfunded and often not trained to communicate with family farmers, making them ineffective. Most extension programmes lack qualified personnel, have limited capacity, or do not take women’s cultural and time constraints into account.

The region is heavily affected by **climate change** and this is likely to continue. Higher temperatures, less rainfall and increased land salinity are expected in a region that is already very hot and arid and where **per capita water availability is the lowest in the world**. The Dialogue expressed concern over the future of family farmers in this scenario.

The region is further characterized by a multiplicity of **weak producer organizations** that are highly dependent and under the authority of governments, which restricts their autonomy and ability to support family farmers. It was also noted that many producer organizations in the region suffer from inadequate human, financial and material resources which severely limits their ability to participate in agricultural and rural development.

### Regional Conference

The Regional Conference noted the **high number of chronically undernourished people** in the Region, estimated at 79.4 million in 2010-13, or 11.2 percent of the population. At the same time, they observed, obesity is estimated at one quarter of the total population. They recognized the critical importance of agricultural **water management** for sustainable development in the region.

The delegates also noted that **conflicts** and civil insecurity are major driving factors for major and increasing food insecurity in the region.

## Policy recommendations

### Regional Dialogue

Participants in the Dialogue called for various **reforms in finance** to support family farmers. They recommended the creation of new institutions or the reinforcement of existing ones and simplification of lending procedures to adapt them to the realities of family farmers. Other suggestions included the establishment of government lines of credit to encourage banks to lend to family farmers, developing insurance and guarantee facilities to reduce the risk of lending to agriculture, and en-

between Egyptian family farmers producing organic potatoes and an Italian trading company, which links the farmers to new markets and better prices.

Another international effort, a successful knowledge and advocacy initiative across countries, was shared by the Union of Sheep and Goat Growers Associations in the Maghreb (UMOAC). This Union was created in 2011, with support from FAO by **growers associations in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Mauritania**. Its over-arching objective is to set up a regional professional framework for sheep and goat growers’ organizations so as to contribute to the development of the subsector in the countries of the Maghreb. It facilitates knowledge sharing across the sub-region, and works to elaborate joint strategies and programmes as well as joint coordination mechanisms among its member organizations. UMOAC also operates as an advocacy group to defend the interests of its membership. As a union of several national producer organizations it has more political weight than any of its individual members and hence can be a more effective interlocutor with governments.



Near East and North Africa Regional Conference. Photo: FAO

couraging the development and farmer-centred financial institutions in which farmers have a stake. They also argued for increased public investment in rural areas to build the social and physical infrastructure necessary for the development of family farming.

To ensure secure access and control over land, Dialogue participants also recommended that governments facilitate **land titling** for farmers, and in some cases distribute public and collective land to small family farmers. Further, in order to protect the rights of small tenants, laws and regulations have to be changed.

To support **women** farmers, the Dialogue recommended the revision of existing laws concerning access to land and credit, and the adaption of extension services to the realities of women farmers. To attract more **youth** to farming, they argued for greater availability of adequate services and job opportunities, as well as privileged access to land, credit and knowledge. The Dialogue concluded that there is a need to consider **innovative types of research and extension that put farmers at the centre** instead of at the end. This is particularly needed to help family farmers adapt to the impact of **climate change**. While many farmers are already employing new strategies, for example by adjusting planting times, research and extension can be helpful in strengthening these strategies, such as by informing farmers about new cropping patterns and jointly develop ways to efficiently use limited water resources.

Regarding marketing of products, the Dialogue recommended that gov-

ernments **promote family farmers' products** by establishing special labels and developing information campaigns to emphasize the benefits of consuming local products.

Dialogue participants called upon governments to **support producer organizations**, cooperatives and other civil society organizations working with family farmers, and to ensure their political and financial independence. Producer organizations and cooperatives can play an important role in strengthening the governance system of the agriculture sector, increasing productivity, enhancing family farmers' access to technology, inputs and markets. Producer organizations could also facilitate the exchange of experience and know-how between farmers and ensure that farmers' voices are heard in policy discussions. Supporting these organizations requires **legal and policy changes** that provide more autonomy to civil society organizations, moves them out of governments' control, and provides them with greater financial and operational freedom.

Finally, participants recommended the creation of national committees/platforms for family farming, which would allow different actors to discuss and agree upon public policies and programmes to support family farmers.

**Regional Conference**  
Delegates to the regional conference encouraged

governments to develop **coherent policy frameworks for food security and nutrition** at the national and regional levels. They expressed their support for the Regional Initiative on 'Building resilience for improved food security and nutrition' as a vehicle to promote food security and nutrition in the region, and called on FAO and member nations to mobilize extra-budgetary funding for this purpose.

They also requested that member nations collect, analyze and disseminate statistics about the situation of women in the agriculture and rural sector, and requested FAO to provide technical support for this effort. Similarly, they requested FAO to undertake an assessment of institutional capacities in the region to respond to climate change and its impact on agriculture and food security, and to establish a mechanism for promoting collaboration in this area. This mechanism should include provisions for combating drought and desertification.

Generally, the regional conference appreciated the efforts made by FAO to promote family farming and noted the recommendations to support family farming as developed at the regional dialogue. ■



Morocco. Photo: Issam Zerrok

# North America

I Regional Dialogue on Family Farming: Québec City, 7 and 8 February 2014

In the North America region, which includes the US, Canada and Mexico, a Regional Dialogue highlighted how the countryside is being emptied and that food products are generally sold at the lowest price. This situation needs to be reversed, the Dialogue said, and called for new trade policies and better access to finance and farmland.

## Core trends in family farming

According to socio-economist Jean-Michel Sourisseau, in his address at the Regional Dialogue, we can speak of family farming in cases where the farming operation cannot be disassociated from the family, with both entities organically connected to each other. He also identified specific **characteristics** that can be used to place a farming system in the spectrum of family farmers towards industrial farming, which include the source of the permanent labour on the farm; the source of capital; the ultimate destination of its production; the landholding status and the farm's legal status. The Dialogue also highlighted that compared to large corporations dependent on fossil fuels, family farms are very **flexible** and therefore much better able to adapt to climate change.

Farms are disappearing rapidly in the region. According to Sourisseau, the dominant North American production model, based on capital and technology, is reducing the number of farmers and emptying the countryside. The number of farms has decreased by 10 percent between the last two censuses, both in the United States and Canada. This makes it all the more urgent to **promote farming among young people**, who don't have the same relationship to farm work and want to enjoy free time and modern life, as Dialogue participants noted.

Various other challenges to family farming were raised. One of these is that we need to move away from the



USA. Photo: Evan Wiens



USA. Photo: Marina Belloc

## Good practices

**Sanders Farm**, located near the Québec-Vermont border, sells 90% of its output to the United States through the Deep Root Organic Coop. The cooperative sells the products of some fifteen producers. Trucks come to the farm from New York and Boston to collect pallets of vegetables every week. The farm has a number of cold rooms to store its products.

With its 2013-2018 **National Development Plan**, the Mexican government allocates budgets and puts emphasis on supporting the 5.4 million small farmers spread over 52 percent of its territory and producing 28 percent of the country's farm and fishing output. The plan emphasizes education and an agrifood and fisheries system that guarantees the country's food security. Farm productivity is increased by making use of the human capital and its natural resources in a sustainable way. This is accompanied by technical assistance around efficient water management and soil conservation, and cooperative networking for better marketing connections.

Unlike many other American states, Minnesota still has a **Corporate Farm Law** in force, which keeps ownership of farmland in the hands of family farms and avoids their being bought out by large companies. The province of Newfoundland also limits land purchases by multinationals while Québec has a law governing the acquisition of farmland by non-residents, impeding purchase by speculators. Certain municipal authorities in Québec also promote the development of agriculture by leasing municipal land to young farmers, in order to revitalize the community.

Finally, **supply management** is a central element of Canadian policy. It is based on three pillars: import controls, production controls and price controls. The experience shows that this helps to attract young producers.



widespread practice of selling food products at the **lowest price**, which impoverishes family farmers and does not reflect the value of their work, knowledge and competence. In addition, **cumbersome, complex and often contradictory regulations** are difficult for average-size family farms to comply with. Finally, a number of participants consider themselves excluded from **food procurement decisions**, especially by the large supermarket chains, who seem to disregard the potential and possibilities of local food products.

It was mentioned that consumers will decide the future of the family farm, but that they often have a misguided **image of farming**. This could be explained by the fact that in the United States, consumers and urban decision-makers have been cut off from their rural roots for six generations. And finally, the phenomenon of **land grab** was raised. Farmland is being purchased by investment funds, multinational seed companies, farm machinery companies, banks, etc. This changes land-use and the look of the countryside and poses serious risks to rural communities.

## Policy recommendations

To properly formulate public policies designed to support family farming, said Dialogue participants, it will be necessary to create **favourable condi-**

**tions** that ensure its survival. According to Martin Caron, the vice president of the Union des Producteurs Agricoles in Québec, the family farm is there to stay as long as its owners maintain **strong farm organizations**, unions or cooperatives. These are needed in order to adopt a collective vision and to influence the development of the family farms. He also suggests innovative fiscal practices that do not penalize producers who retire and that facilitate the transfer of farms to the next generation.

Participants to the Dialogue developed a set of recommendations. First off, they call for the promotion of a new generation of young farmers. They also emphasized the need for **better access to financing, farmland and knowledge** and called for policies focused on the recognition of the multiple functions of family farming for the benefit of society as a whole. **Trade policies** specifically need to be changed to ensure a **fairer price** for farmers, the organizations say. Reform of the cheap food policy is needed to address climatic and social realities and promote a policy of food sovereignty. They recommended that farmers, through their organizations, be in the driver's seat when these policies are developed. In addition, they said that it is necessary to adopt social policies given the fact that some people simply do not have access to quality food. "*Family farming is an element of the solution, but it cannot be the only one*". ■

# Conclusion

Throughout this International Year of Family Farming, the importance of family farming from an economic, socio-cultural and environmental perspective was reiterated. Regional contexts and policy environments differ, but they also exhibit many similarities, and strikingly so. In all regions of the world, family farmers are the leading producers of food, though public policies do not reflect this and are generally not geared towards supporting them. Family farmers and their organizations are often excluded from decision making processes. This poses serious challenges to family farmers, and women and youth in particular, in

gaining access to land and other resources, including genetic ones especially when they have to confront climate change. These problems have different local and regional expressions, but the underlying causes are global in nature. Effective responses must be developed and applied at all levels.

This much has become clear in the International Year of Family Farming – it is crucial that an enabling policy environment be created in which family farmers can thrive. And this is important not just for farming communities, but for society as a whole. Pro-family farming policies will unlock

their great potential to provide food security, build climate resilience, manage biodiversity and sustain regional economies. This requires a stronger family farming sector that engages men, women, youth and future generations effectively and sustainably. Recommendations for policy change proposed by governments, civil society, academics and other actors are strikingly similar across regions, and key, common building blocks are highlighted below.

## Cross-sectoral approaches

Delegates at the various events acknowledged that discussions on farming should include more than just the agriculture and natural resources sectors. They should also address urbanization, rural infrastructure, traditional and indigenous knowledge and culture, education and support services, and youth development. It was therefore emphasized that all pro-family farming policies must be developed and implemented in a cross-sectoral, territorial manner, for example through integrated rural development programmes. This is especially pertinent in the context of climate change. Agroecological, integrated and diversified practices should be promoted, that protect and use local and indigenous knowledge and provide the basis for climate resilience and support is needed, especially in the transition phase. Education should also be strengthened, notably on these sustainable production practices. Recognizing the multifunctionality of family farmers, the importance of expanding income opportunities in rural areas was also emphasized, including non-farm income such as agri-tourism.





Philippines. Photo: Danilo O. Victoriano

## Agrarian reform

Repeated calls were made for genuine agrarian, aquatic, forestry and pastoral reform. Such reforms must incorporate the right and fair and equitable access to land, water, seeds, infrastructure, education, health and markets, including for women. This would also help to curb migration to urban areas. Small scale family farmers need to be exempted from policy measures that have been designed for larger farmers. A call was made for FAO to ensure that the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment include the central role of small scale producers and as primary agricultural investors in food production, and that the principles protect their rights. Furthermore, the right to food sovereignty should be promoted as a way to strengthen family farmers, achieve food security and eradicate hunger and poverty. It was suggested that FAO promote a broad, inclusive and dynamic analysis of the concept of food sovereignty.

## Access to natural resources and implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines

Improving access to land and water should be prioritized through special programmes that include land use and water management plans. These should be complemented by programmes for farmer-led experimentation and the use of water harvesting and soil conservation practices. It was

also recommended that the right of farmers to produce, reproduce, exchange and sell their seeds be guaranteed, because “*Without land, water and seeds, no peasant family farming is possible*”. Safeguards should be put in place to ensure that forest and grassland restoration not only enhances biodiversity, but also respects the rights and interests of local people. Land grabbing was condemned, and there was a call for a moratorium on industrial agro-fuel production. Overwhelming support was expressed in all regions for governments to implement the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, and for FAO to support this process. This was considered the most effective means to guarantee access to natural resources for small scale family farmers.

## Improving trade and building markets

Trade agreements and trade policies should be reformed, so that they better serve the needs of smallholder family farmers, starting with reconsidering those that are harmful. Guaranteeing the human, economic, social and cultural rights of small scale family farmers and food workers by respecting national laws and international commitments was emphasized. A specific call was made for governments to implement the ten year old Guidelines on the Right to Food. Governments should also strengthen family farmers’ access to markets and ensure fair prices, for example through the promotion of local

markets, public purchases from family farmers, collective marketing and improved storage and transport logistics. Promoting public purchasing from family farms and rural producers was highlighted as a very effective way to enhance food security. It was suggested that the value of family farming products can be heightened by establishing rules of origin, or creating specific family farming labels. Governments should develop communication strategies to provide information on the socio-economic and productive contributions of family farmers and the nutritional and health value of their products.

## Access to credit and finance

Improving the access of family farmers to reliable and stable financing through instruments that respond to their needs and realities was recommended in all regions. Various concrete proposals were made, such as simplified lending procedures, the establishment of governmental lines of credit, insurance and guarantee facilities to reduce the risk of lending to agriculture, and the development of farmer-centred financial institutions in which farmers have a stake.



## Gender equity

Specific programmes are needed to empower women farmers. This can be done by facilitating the participation of women in decision making and in flexible, efficient and fair rural labour markets. Positive discrimination must be put in place for women, especially regarding access to natural resources and capital. The implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance for Land Tenure, Fisheries and Forests was mentioned as a valuable tool to promote this process.

## Stronger farmer organizations

The importance of producer organizations in balancing the economic and political power of other actors and in consolidating the voice of family farmers in policy-making processes was highlighted. Producers need to organize themselves to help themselves. Emphasis was placed on capacity building programmes that are *'family farmer-centred, owned and led'*, and on issues such as climate change adaptation, value addition and policy dialogue. Legal and policy changes are needed that move such organizations out of government control, and

provide them with greater financial and operational freedom. Key incentives for the development of rural organizations are education and training programmes for rural leaders, and support for the exchange of experiences between farming organizations. Women's active involvement in producer organisations is crucial. It was also recommended that FAO and IFAD encourage governments to include more farmer organizations in more inclusive dialogue and decision making processes.

## Farmer-led research and extension

The need to develop innovative types of research and extension that put farmers at the centre was expressed. This is particularly relevant as family farmers are actively adapting to the impact of climate change on their own. Whereas many farmers are already employing new strategies, research and extension can be helpful in strengthening these strategies.

## Attracting youth

The participation of youth in agriculture should be enhanced in all possible ways, as *"generation and gender gaps are the biggest threats to family*

*farming."* It was recommended that vocational training be geared more towards agriculture and rural youth entrepreneurship. Policies must support the increase of youth access to productive resources, especially land and finance. A holistic view of young people's needs is required, and effective policies have to ensure the right of young people to live their lives in their own territory.

## ... and after the International Year of Family Farming?

In all regions and by all actors, the need was expressed for a long-term strategy to support family farmers. An annual Day of the Family Farmer and an International Decade of Family Farming were both suggested. Permanent national or regional committees should continue the dialogue and build on the recommendations of the IYFF. As farmer organizations from Latin America stated, *"the IYFF should be the beginning of a longer process that strengthens non-patriarchal, indigenous and peasant family farming. We are part of the solution"*. ■

Palestine. Photo: Mahmoud Nlean

Brazil. Photo: Claudia Xavier Kau

“To produce food for the world, for humanity, is one of the noblest occupations. An international year dedicated to family farmers profoundly honours our work.”

- Francisca Rodriguez of CLOC - La Via Campesina in a video produced by FAO.

“We want to uplift the conditions of family farmers so that they can have real dignity and be proud to be family farmers... and that the young generation will continue to go to family farming, and thereby reduce poverty and increase food security and nutrition.”

- Esther Penunia of the Asian Farmers Association, FAO Special Ambassador for the International Year of Family Farming at the Asia Pacific Regional Dialogue, page 9.

“Africa can feed itself because we have enough arable land and fresh water. What is lacking is the commitment of our governments to work hand-in-hand with all stakeholders. The voices of food producers are crucial.”

- Elisabeth Atangana of the Pan African Farmers Organization at the Africa civil society consultation, page 5.

“We are not seeking subsidies, we are seeking legislation that facilitates the lives of small scale farmers and fisherfolk.”

- Natalia Laiño of the World Forum of Fisher People at the Europe and Central Asia civil society consultation, page 16.

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Family Farming