

# The International Year of Family Farming

IFAD'S COMMITMENT AND CALL FOR ACTION



Investing in rural people

## What is the International Year of Family Farming?

**Small family farms are the key to reducing poverty and improving global food security.**

The United Nations declared 2014 the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) to recognize the importance of family farming in reducing poverty and improving global food security. The IYFF aims to promote new development policies, particularly at the national but also regional levels, that will help smallholder and family farmers eradicate hunger, reduce rural poverty and continue to play a major role in global food security through small-scale, sustainable agricultural production.

The IYFF provides a unique opportunity to pave the way towards more inclusive and sustainable approaches to agricultural and rural development that:

- Recognize the importance of smallholder and family farmers for sustainable development;
- Place small-scale farming at the centre of national, regional and global agricultural, environmental and social policies;
- Elevate the role of smallholder farmers as agents for alleviating rural poverty and ensuring food security for all; as stewards who manage and protect natural resources; and as drivers of sustainable development.

In 2011, the General Assembly of the United Nations invited the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) to facilitate the implementation of the IYFF in collaboration with various non-governmental, government and international stakeholders, including the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). It facilitates the International Steering Committee for the IYFF, of which IFAD is an active member.

The World Rural Forum (WRF) is the recognized International Coordinator of Civil Society for the IYFF, including some 360 civil society organizations from 60 countries that supported the campaign, plus other organizations that joined the

## TIMELINE

2008: A global food crisis drew renewed attention to food security issues.

2008: An initiative was launched by the World Rural Forum in collaboration with more than 350 civil society and farmers' organizations to declare an International Year of Family Farming (IYFF).

2010: IFAD's President formally supported the call for the IYFF.

2011: The Government of the Philippines, at the 37th Session of the FAO Conference, proposed that the United Nations declare 2014 as the IYFF.

2011: At the 66th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, 2014 was formally declared the International Year of Family Farming.

2013: Establishment of the International Steering Committee for the IYFF  
2014, approval of the Master Plan and organization of five Regional Dialogues Events by FAO.





movement later. It is guided by the World Consultative Committee (WCC), which has representatives from all continents. International organizations and NGOs also have representatives on the WCC.

IYFF National Committees have been created to ensure that the year will concretely improve the situation of family farmers through communication and awareness activities, policy advocacy and research. Over 40 IYFF National Committees have been created.

**IFAD urges governments and national stakeholders to join or create National Committees.** The national level is where governments and organizations of smallholder and family farmers can most effectively reach agreements on measures to improve the conditions of family farming.

Smallholder and family farming are central to IFAD's mission of reducing poverty and hunger in the rural areas of the developing world. IFAD-supported programmes help poor rural people improve their food and nutrition security, increase their incomes and strengthen their resilience. IFAD is unique in being an international financial institution and a United Nations agency, and is exclusively focused on agricultural and rural development in developing countries.

**Investing in family farming is investing in a sustainable, food secure future.**

The IYFF presents a window of opportunity for policymakers to act responsibly to both present and future generations in a way that will reduce poverty and eradicate hunger in their respective countries. **IFAD believes that smallholder and family farmers can and should be at the forefront of the transformation of world agriculture.**

IFAD is committed to the success of the IYFF. As a point of departure, IFAD calls on national and global policymakers to:

- Fully support the IYFF and its objectives, acknowledging the contribution of smallholder and family farmers to food security, rural development, employment and management of natural resources;
- Encourage policy changes that will make family farming a more secure, profitable and attractive livelihood, including for rural women and youth;
- Support programmes that enable smallholder and family farmers to invest in their businesses, link to markets and overcome poverty and vulnerability;
- Promote incentives to family farmers to manage their land, water, biodiversity and other natural resources in a more sustainable way.

### What are the objectives of the IYFF?

**Ending hunger and poverty is within our reach, but only if we place family and smallholder farmers at the centre of rural development efforts.**

The IYFF has four key objectives:

- Support the development of policies that will foster sustainable family farming;
- Increase knowledge and public awareness on the vital role that family farmers play in the agricultural and development sectors;
- Raise awareness of the needs and potential of family farmers, along with the constraints that they face, and ensure that they have access to technical support;
- Create synergies for sustainability

Other objectives:

- Recognize the role and rights of women in family farming;
- Strengthen the legitimacy of farmers' organizations and their capacity to effectively represent and defend the interests of family farmers;
- Create rural economic opportunities for family farmers that provide alternatives to migration to urban areas;
- Promote local and indigenous knowledge and know-how;
- Encourage research that improves food security and supports sustainable rural development, safeguards cultural heritage, protects the environment and maintains biodiversity;
- Promote dialogue on policy and decision-making processes;
- Identify and share lessons learned and successful pro-family farming policies, and capitalize relevant knowledge on family farming;
- Enhance communication, advocacy and outreach.

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## Did you know that:

- 1.5 billion people worldwide are estimated to be involved in family farming;
  - There are over 500 million small farms worldwide;
  - Growth in agricultural production to meet rising global needs using prevailing (large-scale) farming practices is unsustainable;
  - 76 per cent of the world's poorest people live in rural areas, where agriculture is their main source of livelihood;
  - Households in developing countries spend 70-80 per cent of their disposable income on food;
  - There are an estimated 842 million hungry people in the world, three-quarters of whom live in rural areas;
  - Our future food security depends on smallholder farmers, yet they are often neglected;
  - Almost half of the developing world's farmers are women;
  - Climate change threatens to increase the number of hungry and impoverished people, especially in the developing world;
  - With the right economic, social and environmental conditions, smallholder family farmers can be at the forefront of a sustainable transformation in world agriculture.
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## What is family farming?

Family farming includes all family-based agricultural activities, and it is linked to several areas of rural development. Family farming is a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family labour, including both women's and men's. Both in developing and developed countries, family farming is the predominant form of agriculture in the food production sector.

At national level, there are a number of factors that are key for successful development of family farming, such as: agroecological conditions and territorial characteristics; policy environment; access to markets; access to land and natural resources; access to technology and extension services; access to finance; demographic, economic and sociocultural conditions; and availability of specialized education, among others. Family farming has an important socioeconomic, environmental and cultural role.

## Why is family farming important?

Family farming, in all its diversity, is the predominant form of agriculture worldwide. Local and global food security depends on it.

Family farming:

- Generates food and income for hundreds of

millions of rural people, including the poor and marginalized;

- Creates jobs for women, men and young people, both within their family farms and in related enterprises along food and agricultural value chains;
- Provides models of adaptability and resilience for more sustainable food production;
- Is socially and culturally part of communities and territories constituting nations, and as such underpins national food security in most countries;
- Safeguards and protects environmental assets and natural resources, biodiversity and cultural heritage.

## Challenges that family farmers face

Smallholder and family farmers are faced with numerous challenges:

- Climate change and climate variability;
- Lack of tenure security in a context of increasing competition for land and water (population growth, urbanization) and inadequate governance of land tenure;
- Limited access to financial resources, inputs, technology, training, research and advisory services, and education;
- Price volatility (energy, food, etc.) and limited access to markets.

## IFAD's response to poverty and hunger

**"For more than three decades, IFAD has led some of the UN's most successful development efforts aimed at the rural poor across the world."**

– UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON (2008)

Since its inception in 1977, IFAD has supported countries' efforts to improve the lives of family farmers across the developing world.

A few examples:

In the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) area of Latin America, IFAD is working with the governments of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela to ensure that small-scale farmers benefit from regional integration. Through two grants, IFAD helped establish MERCOSUR and the Specialized Meeting on Family Farming (REAF). MERCOSUR seeks to create convergence among ministerial agendas on rural poverty and small-scale farming among member countries. REAF is the advisory body of the MERCOSUR common market. REAF involves an ongoing consultation process of governments and small-scale farmers' associations, with a focus on land access, funding and agricultural insurance, and other issues.

In Egypt, IFAD supports a long-term project to improve the incomes and food security of households in newly settled areas of West Noubaria. Among other activities, the project has helped establish farmers' marketing associations, which for the first time have made smallholder farmers attractive to large exporters and processors. It has organized some 36,000 producer households into marketing associations and provided training. Farm-gate prices have increased by up to 33 per cent.

In the Gambia, the Participatory Integrated Watershed Management Project, funded by IFAD, is building bridges, causeways and dykes to reclaim land for smallholder farmers. The project has enabled farming families to reclaim over 34,000 hectares of agricultural land for cultivation. In the lowlands, women are primary beneficiaries, while men, women and young people are involved in activities related to upland conservation farming.

In Viet Nam, IFAD-supported projects have strengthened food security for poor households in mountainous areas. A project in Ha Giang raised rice productivity from 2 to 5 tons per hectare, while maize increased from over 1 ton to more than 3 tons per hectare. The percentage of households suffering from food insecurity decreased from 49 per cent in 2006 to 18 per cent in 2011.

## More information

International Fund for Agricultural Development:

<http://www.ifad.org/>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations:

<http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/home/en/>

World Food Programme:

<http://www.wfp.org/>

World Rural Forum:

<http://www.ruralforum.net/default.asp?id=en>



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IFAD is an international financial institution and a specialized United Nations agency dedicated to eradicating poverty and hunger in rural areas of developing countries.

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