

# The Farmers' Forum

in conjunction with the Thirty-First Session  
of IFAD's Governing Council

**11-12 February 2008**



We have reached the mid-point on our way to 2015. Despite impressive progress in the reduction of income poverty, mostly in Asia, many regions are not on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Hunger persists and inequality is rising. Extraordinarily complex challenges are emerging, from global warming to fossil fuel scarcity, to erosion of biodiversity, to growing demand on agriculture for food and energy. International prices of food and agricultural commodities are rising sharply. At the same time, millions of smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fishers, the majority among them women are struggling to feed their families and find their way to increasingly concentrated urban markets. Moreover, agriculture – the livelihood of the vast majority of extremely poor people – is and will be the human activity most directly hit by climate change.

On the basis of the mandate it received from its member states, IFAD faces these challenges with a sense of urgency and responsibility. The Fund is taking action to further improve its development effectiveness, while its programme of work and its in-country presence are growing. A new Strategic Framework guides its operations towards the goal of “empowering poor rural women and men to achieve higher incomes and improve food security”. The strategic objectives include: better access to natural resources, services, agricultural markets and policy making processes; and the development of stronger skills and organisations of poor rural people to take advantage of this access. Six clear principles shape IFAD’s engagement in all countries. Among them: “empowerment” and “partnership”.

In this new framework, partnership with smallholder farmers’ and rural producers’ organizations (FOs) is paramount. These are the organizations that rural producers are building to empower themselves and find their way out of poverty. The Farmers’ Forum is the process through which this partnership, between IFAD and FOs, is forged, developed and assessed worldwide.

## The Second Global Meeting of the Farmers’ Forum in conjunction with IFAD’s Governing Council

The Farmers’ Forum is an on-going process of consultation and dialogue between Farmers’ and Rural Producers’ Organizations (FOs), IFAD and governments, focused on rural development and poverty reduction. It is rooted in partnership and collaboration at the country level. Engagement at field level and dialogue at the international level are articulated as mutually reinforcing processes. The Forum meets every two years for a global consultation, in conjunction with the Governing Council of IFAD. It is guided by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives of seven global and regional federations of FOs and an IFAD interdepartmental reference group.

The first global meeting of the Farmers’ Forum was held February 2006, in conjunction with the Twenty-Ninth session of IFAD’s Governing Council. It brought together 50 leaders, representing millions of small farmers and rural producers, from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Near East. The main recommendations to IFAD related to:

- Involvement of FOs in IFAD operations
- Direct financial support to FOs
- Support to FOs to engage in policy dialogue at regional and global levels
- Inclusion of the role of FOs in IFAD’s corporate policies

The second global meeting of the Farmer’s Forum will be held on 11 and 12 February 2008, in conjunction with the Thirty-first session of IFAD’s Governing Council. More than 70 FO leaders from around the world will participate together with IFAD managers and staff. Representatives of FAO, members of Agricorn, selected NGOs and other partners will also participate as resource persons or observers.

It will be a moment of accountability, assessing progress over 2006-2007, of dialogue on future directions for collaborations and of renewed commitments.

On the first day, working group sessions will discuss on-going and future operational partnerships in each geographic region of IFAD’s operations. On Tuesday, three critical challenges for smallholder farmers will be discussed: i) climate change: how smallholders, their organisations and development partners can respond to the adaptation and mitigation challenges, ii) better and more secure access to land, and iii) strengthening FO engagement with policy processes.

A synthesis of deliberations and conclusions regarding future partnerships will be discussed in the final session of Tuesday afternoon, 12 February. This session will be open to IFAD’s Governors and Executive Board members.

The participants in the Farmers’ Forum are invited to the Governing Council as observers and will participate in the roundtable discussions. FO representatives will present the synthesis of deliberations of the Farmers’ Forum to the plenary of the Governing Council.

Working sessions and side events with IFAD staff will continue over the 13th and 14th, including a meeting with women leaders and a debate on tripartite partnerships between FAO, IFAD and FOs.

Over the period of 2006-2007, IFAD and FOs have significantly developed their partnerships along the lines recommended by the Farmers' Forum in 2006. Some examples are described below.

### **Involvement of FOs in IFAD operations**

**Country Strategic Opportunities Programmes (COSOPs).** New guidelines for the development of IFAD's country strategies explicitly call for the involvement of FOs, including as members of the country programme management teams, alongside government representatives, IFAD-supported project directors and civil society organizations. There has been a significant increase in FOs' involvement in the design of the COSOPs approved between 2006 and 2007, with FOs actively participating in 60 percent of the cases in 2007.

In Cambodia, Honduras, Jordan, Nepal, Panama and Yemen, FOs were invited to formal local and national consultations where their representatives put forth their proposals and expectations regarding IFAD's strategy and interventions in their country. In Burkina Faso, Madagascar, Mali, Moldova, Rwanda and Tanzania, representatives of FOs were members of IFAD's country programme management teams. Strengthening FO capacities and their participation in policy processes and IFAD programme implementation is now an explicit objective in almost half of the COSOPs.

**Projects.** In 2006/2007, FOs actively participated in the design of one third of all projects approved by IFAD; in 40 percent of these projects, FOs are involved as implementation partners or service providers for some of the project activities. IFAD's new guidelines for project design, internal project review and quality assurance, approved in January 2008, call for involvement of FOs. This accountability mechanism is expected to substantially increase FO involvement.

### **Direct financial support to farmers' organizations**

Direct financial support to FOs, through grants, has increased significantly. The amount rose from USD 2.4 million, in 2004/2005 to over USD 5.8 million in 2006/2007. Most of them focus on capacity building and institutional strengthening, as well as on supporting FOs' independent policy engagements and enhanced involvement in IFAD's own operations.

A grant of USD 500 000, was extended to AGRICORD for capacity building activities in support of FOs in sub-Saharan Africa. Another grant of USD 1.4 million has been developed for a three-year Cooperation Programme with Farmers' Organizations in Asia and the Pacific, to start in 2008. The programme, which will be implemented in ten countries, has been developed and negotiated in collaboration with national and regional FOs of the region, who will also manage it. In sub-Saharan Africa, IFAD is currently funding regional and sub-regional FOs and networks for capacity building and institutional strengthening purposes, among them the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) and the Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et de Producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROPPA).



## Support to FOs' engagement in policy dialogue at regional and global levels

IFAD extended five grants to regional organizations of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) to support their engagement in the mid-term review of the Economic Partnership Agreement between the European Union and ACP countries. In South America, IFAD supported family farmers' organizations to engage in the MERCOSUR Specialised Commission on Family Agriculture (REAF) and is developing a similar programme in Central America.

At the global level, IFAD provided direct support for the parallel Civil Society Forum to the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD), and for the World Forum on Food Sovereignty in Nyeleni, Mali.

## FOs in IFAD's policies

IFAD's own corporate policies are giving increasing prominence to the role of FOs. The Strategic Framework 2007-2010 defines them as key actors in the empowerment of poor rural people. The Policy on Targeting calls for the inclusive and informed participation of organizations of rural people in analysing the challenges they face and in identifying effective responses. Additionally, the Knowledge Management and Innovation strategies give the highest importance to the knowledge and innovation of poor rural people and their organizations and the need to draw upon them. Finally, the policy on Promoting Equitable Access to Land and Tenure Security for Rural Poverty Reduction considers FOs as critical contributors to this process. This newly formulated policy will be discussed at the Farmers' Forum 2008.

## The foundation of the Farmers' Forum: concluding statement of the workshop "Towards A Farmers' Forum". Rome, 15 February 2005

### Members of The Farmers' Forum Steering Committee:

International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)  
La Via Campesina (LVC)  
Reseaux des Organisations Paysannes et Producteurs Agricoles de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROPPA)  
World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers (WFF)  
World Forum for Fisher Peoples (WFFP)  
Coordinadora de produtores familiares del MERCOSUR (COPROFAM)  
Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA)  
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

The participants, in the workshop, share with IFAD the fundamental objective of overcoming rural poverty through the economic, social and political empowerment of the rural poor themselves and their organizations.

They agree with, and support the overall project of, a farmers' forum for consultation and dialogue on ways to "enable the rural poor to overcome their poverty" and on IFAD operations.

### The Farmers' Forum is:

- an ongoing, bottom-up, process – not a periodic event – spanning IFAD-supported operations on the ground and policy dialogue;
- a tripartite process involving farmers' and rural producers' organizations, governments and IFAD;
- a space for consultation and dialogue focused on rural poverty reduction;
- an instrument for accountability of development effectiveness, in particular in the area of empowerment of rural poor people and their organizations; and
- an interface between pro-poor rural development interventions and the process of enhancing the capacity of farmers' and rural producers' organizations (including

organizations of artisanal fishers, pastoralists, landless workers and indigenous peoples).

### The Farmers' Forum:

- is guided by the principles of inclusiveness, pluralism, openness and flexibility;
- builds on existing forums where possible and avoid duplication in these cases; and
- respects existing organizations and create new spaces where needed.

### Conditions

- The forum process starts with national-level consultations that feed into regional or sub-regional meetings. The latter will then shape the content of, and participation in, the Farmers' Forum at the IFAD Governing Council.
- The forum process should feed into IFAD's governing bodies.
- The forum's success depends on IFAD's capacity to enhance country-level consultation with farmers' organizations and contribute to their capacity-building needs.
- Participants recommend, in particular, institutionalizing engagement with farmers' organizations in key IFAD operational processes (projects and country and regional strategies).