

The Farmers' Forum

in conjunction with the thirty-fifth Session
of IFAD's Governing Council

20-21 February 2012



The Fourth Global Meeting of the Farmers' Forum

What is the Farmers' Forum?

It is an on-going, bottom-up process of consultation and dialogue between small farmers' and rural producers' organizations (FOs), IFAD and governments, focused on agricultural and rural development and poverty reduction. The Forum is rooted in concrete partnerships and collaborations at the country and regional levels.

The Farmers' Forum was born in 2005 and it meets every two years for a global consultation, in conjunction with the Governing Council of IFAD.

Who will be attending?

Representatives of farmers' organizations attending the global meeting of the Forum are nominated by its Steering Committee. This year's edition, to be held in Rome on 20 and 21 February 2012, brings together 90 farmers' leaders, representing millions of smallholders and rural producers from all over the world, to interact with IFAD staff and selected partners, including FAO, AgriCord, the EC, donors, research institutes and NGOs. The Forum will be opened by the President of IFAD, Kanayo Nwanze. Its closing session, in the afternoon of Tuesday, 21 February, will be open to the IFAD's Executive Board representatives.

Youth in the spotlight

Following a recommendation of the 2010 Forum meeting, a special effort has been made by participating FOs and by IFAD to invite young farmers and representatives of rural youth movements. A special preparatory session is being held on Saturday, 18 February to share experiences and views of young rural people from different regions and to contribute to the formulation of successful policies and programmes.

Partnership and operational matters

The 2012 edition of the Forum provides space for discussion on operational matters and dialogue on thematic issues of interest to both FOs and IFAD. These themes have been selected by the Steering Committee in the context of the upcoming Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development and in relation with the overall theme of the Thirty fifth session of the IFAD Governing Council:

"Sustainable smallholder agriculture: feeding the world, protecting the planet".

In the morning of Monday, 20 February, IFAD will present its analysis of evolving partnerships with FOs. Highlights of this report are presented in the following pages. In the afternoon, five regional working group sessions will discuss collaboration between IFAD and farmers' organizations at country and regional levels.

In the morning of Tuesday, 21 February, four thematic working groups will address the following issues: (a) sustainable agriculture, agro-ecology: how to promote and scale up good practices on the ground; (b) sustainable fisheries: how fishers' organizations can contribute to sustainable management of marine resources while improving incomes; (c) institutional development and financial sustainability of farmers' organizations; and (d) engaging RIO+20: the objectives of FOs and IFAD.

A Synthesis of Deliberations and Recommendations regarding our evolving partnership will be agreed upon by participants and discussed with IFAD's management on Tuesday afternoon. This closing session will be open to IFAD's Executive Board Representatives. The participants in the Farmers' Forum are invited to the Governing Council with observer's status. The Synthesis of Deliberations of the Forum will be delivered to the Governing Council on Wednesday 22 February. A parallel side event of the Forum on women's leadership in FOs will be held on Wednesday afternoon as a follow-up of the 2010 workshop on the same subject.

After the closing of the Governing Council, six side events of the Farmers' Forum will be held on Thursday 23 afternoon, with FOs and selected partners. The themes of the side events are: (a) organic farmers' organizations: empowering farmers and promoting sustainable rural development (organized by IFOAM); (b) linking research to advocacy in farmers' organizations (AgriNatura and the ESFIM project); (c) the role of livestock for farmers coping with environmental and social challenges of the future (Vétérinaires Sans Frontières-Europa); (d) strengthening farmers' organizations in Sub-Saharan Africa—the Farmer Organization Support Centre in Africa" (AGRA); and (e) the World Agriculture Watch (WAW secretariat at FAO); (f) the International Year of Cooperatives (IFAD, WFP and FAO).



Global challenges and farmers' organizations

Over the last two years, the renewed attention to agriculture and food security, triggered by the 2008 food price crisis and the persistence of high levels of hunger and poverty, progressively merged with long term concerns with the impact of climate change and natural resources scarcity. At the end of 2011, the Rome-based organizations in their submission to Rio+20 outcome document, jointly acknowledged increasing levels of risk: "erratic weather patterns, natural disasters, price volatility and market risk are all increasing uncertainty for global food and nutrition security". They recognised that "an unsustainable agricultural and food system has contributed to these social and environmental failures but agriculture also offers many solutions for sustainable development and a green economy." They called for "a profound change of our agricultural and food system . . . urgently needed to achieve global food security, improve people's lives and manage the environment more sustainably". They further stated that "including and empowering hundreds of millions of smallholder households and landless farmers – many of them women – is critical to this reform."

Stronger organizations of smallholder and family farmers, fishers and pastoralists are essential to face these challenges

and empower their members to seize new opportunities. Cooperation among rural producers can improve their access to markets and knowledge. It allows for economies of scale and stronger bargaining power in agricultural and food value chains where millions of smallholders have to deal with increasingly demanding urban markets, business partners and competitors. It enhances small farmers' capacity to manage resources and infrastructure and to influence public policy and development programmes.

During 2010-2011 IFAD continued to increase its programme of work achieving an unprecedented level of loan and grant commitments of USD 1.8 billion over the biennium. A new Strategic Framework was approved for 2011-2015. Therein, the role of organizations of poor rural women and men is specifically mentioned in two of the five strategic objectives of the Fund. The two main functions of FOs, both as economic agents and as social representation for policy influence, are acknowledged at the most strategic level. "IFAD will continue to support the empowerment of poor rural women and men by promoting effective and sustainable rural producers' organizations and by engaging with existing organizations".

IFAD and farmers' organizations: Partnerships in progress

The report "Partnerships in progress 2010-2011" is based on a survey of all IFAD Country Programme Managers (CPMs) and a number of IFAD country staff. The survey showed that **IFAD relationships with FOs in country programs are now widespread in all regions**. Over the biennium, IFAD and FOs entered into at least one type of collaboration in most of the countries where IFAD operates. In West and Central Africa, collaboration occurred in all countries. This is the first region to achieve the 2010 Farmers' Forum recommendation to extend the partnerships to all countries.

Consultation with FOs in the formulation of IFAD country strategies (COSOPs) and the design of agricultural development projects is now the norm.

According to CPMs all COSOP formulations during the biennium included consultations with FOs and this was also the case for about 90% of project design processes. The nature and intensity of these consultations varied from one country to another according to the national context, FO capacity and government and IFAD staff willingness to engage with FOs. In 2010, the Forum recommended the creation of a flexible demand led facility to facilitate the participation of FOs in the COSOP and project cycle. A first attempt to respond to this request has been a pilot program

with AgriCord to support FOs in their engagement with IFAD country programs in selected sub-Saharan African and CEN countries. The impact of this improved participation on the livelihoods of smallholder farmers is yet to be fully assessed. A joint assessment of results and impact should be discussed during the Forum meeting.

Direct support to farmers' organizations has increased significantly since the beginning of the Farmers' Forum process. During the last biennium, the large regional grants in support of FOs approved in 2008/2009 reached full implementation and new grant programs with FOs were approved. Direct support for capacity building has reached 80 national FOs in 60 countries, including 36 national FOs in sub-Saharan Africa. This support has enabled FOs to engage independently on policy dialogue, lobbying and advocacy or to conduct their own studies or consultations for the interest of their members. Significant results have been achieved in this regard in a number of countries of sub-Saharan Africa (with the SFOAP program), Asia (MTCP program) and Latin America (COPROFAM and REAF programs). The ESFIM program operating in 10 countries in three regions also delivered its first results in 2011. Direct grant funding also strengthened national FO institutional and

operational capacities, enabling them to become more effective partners for engagement in large investment projects, including as key implementation partners in agricultural and value chains development projects. For IFAD, the systematic use of regional/global grants (instead of country grants) to support national FOs allowed for a considerable reduction of transaction costs per unit. In some cases, as for the grants under the SFOAP program, co-financed by IFAD and the European Commission, this approach strengthened both national FOs and their regional networks in a mutually reinforcing way. A number of these regional grants to FOs triggered by the Farmers Forum process already reached or will soon reach completion. Directions for next phases will be part of the discussion at the 2012 meeting of the Forum.

Despite significant progress in the partnerships, the level of integration, coherence and synergy between the different types of collaboration at country level remains uneven.

In some countries such as Argentina, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kenya, Moldova, Senegal or Vietnam, the partnership is now multidimensional, ranging from national policy dialogue with the government to specific project implementation at provincial or district level.

In these countries, grant- and loan-funded projects and tripartite dialogue with government are complementary. In other countries, the collaboration is still patchy or simply formalistic. There are country specific reasons for such differences which will be discussed during the Forum. What is emerging from the survey and mapping exercise is that in the majority of countries there is still a considerable potential for improving the coherence and integration of IFAD multiple engagements with the organizations of its target groups.

The 2012 global meeting of the Farmers Forum at IFAD is supported by contributions from the Governments of Italy and Switzerland.

The foundation of the Farmers' Forum: Concluding statement of the workshop "Towards A Farmers' Forum"

Members of The Farmers' Forum Steering Committee:

Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA)

Coordination of Family Farms of MERCOSUR (COPROFAM)

La Via Campesina (LVC)

Panafrican Farmers Organisation (PAFO)

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)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

Rome, 15 February 2005

The Farmers' Forum is:

- an on-going, 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 poor rural 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 avoids duplication in these cases; and
- respects existing organizations and creates 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).