



Regional perspectives of family farming

by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG)

The International Year of Family Farming (IYFF2014) aimed to raise the profile of smallholder and family farmers by focusing global attention on their important role in alleviating hunger and poverty, providing food security and nutrition, improving livelihoods, managing natural resources, protecting the environment and enabling sustainable development.

In fact, the IYFF2014 has succeeded in enabling thousands of initiatives at local, regional and international levels, fuelling a robust process of political dialogue among the 197 Member States of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), other United Nations (UN) agencies, international organisations, family farmers' networks, civil society organisations, academia, research organisations and the private sector.

In addition to the promotion and support given to activities at its headquarters in Rome and at its regional, sub-regional and national offices, the FAO organised six Regional Dialogues (Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Near East and North Africa, North America and sub-Saharan Africa). The main findings of the Regional Dialogues have been summarised in the publication *Towards Stronger Family Farms*, which is available at: <http://www.fao.org/publications/card/en/c/33a0aa55-7438-48ea-a5e3-6f767acb217b/>.

The need for a comprehensive assessment of family farming-related issues highlights the importance of significantly engaging relevant key actors and partners. To this end, leading scholars and experts were commissioned to write six Working Papers focusing on family farming—one for each region—to enrich the ongoing debate by providing an independent point of view from an academic perspective.

These contributions were condensed into 'regional perspectives' in a synthesis paper, presented during the Global Dialogue on Family Farming held at the FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy, on 27–28 October 2014. In the context of the closing event in November 2014, *Deep roots*, a special book to mark the IYFF2014, was launched.

The complete versions of these six Working Papers are now being published, in a collaboration between the FAO and the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), aiming to contribute further to the ongoing follow-up of the IYFF2014 and its positive achievements.

Family farming in the international debate: IYFF2014 achievements and beyond

After more than a year since its conclusion, it is increasingly evident today how much the global mobilisation for the IYFF2014 has affected and continues to affect the debates on the international agenda for sustainable development.

The celebration of the IYFF2014 significantly raised the profile of family farming, which was included in the follow-up to the Zero Hunger Challenge launched by the UN Secretary-General in 2012, in the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) in 2014 and in the preparation for the UN's post-2015 development agenda. The recognition of the central role of family farming is evidenced by many different goals and targets, constituting an integrated, indivisible set of global priorities that address the sector in all of its dimensions relevant to sustainable development and its central importance in strengthening sustainable agriculture.

In particular, a specific Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 2) was created, aimed at ending hunger, achieving food security and promoting sustainable agriculture; within this broad goal, a specific target (2.3) is dedicated to the strengthening of family farmers, thereby recognising their central role in combining environmental sustainability and food security. The target aims at doubling, by 2030, the productivity and incomes of small-scale producers, with explicit reference to family farmers, by guaranteeing them access to land and other productive resources and inputs, and by promoting the creation of non-farm jobs in rural areas.

The IYFF2014 has also greatly informed the work of the FAO, particularly informing the launch of the fifteen Regional Initiatives, which constitute the main mechanism for implementing and realising the organisation's five Strategic Objectives.

The Regional Initiatives were launched under the five different Regional Conferences in 2014, and have been reviewed and evaluated in the context of the FAO Regional Conferences held in 2016. Three Initiatives deal directly with family farming (specifically put in place to support Strategic Objective 3—reducing rural poverty), while all 15 are meant to tackle, in a coordinated manner, the several structural factors of vulnerability that limit the potential of family farming.

This new strategic and integrated approach opens the way for family farming to effectively deal with current and future challenges posed by demographic trends and environmental issues, providing support through effective political commitment and the implementation of policies designed to address the specific needs of family farming.

Unfortunately, during the production of this Working Paper series, Professor Sam Moyo, author of the regional perspective on Africa and a giant of agrarian studies, has tragically passed away. We hope that the publication of these papers could be a way to honour his memory and his intellectual struggle, and to build on his legacy to realise social justice and sustainable development.