



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS (FAO)

Office of Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development (OPC)

**Forum on Communication for Development
& Community Media for Family Farming**

Rome, Italy, 23-24 October 2014

Today, with more than 500 million family farms out of 570 million farms worldwide, family farming is the predominant mode of agricultural production in both developing and developed countries and a major player in food production throughout the world. Family farmers tend to run crop-diversified agricultural systems and preserve traditional food products, contributing both to a balanced diet and the safeguarding of the world's agro-biodiversity. To recognize and celebrate the importance of family farming for eradicating poverty and improving global food security the United Nations proclaimed 2014 as the **International Year of Family Farming (IYFF)** and tasked FAO to facilitate its implementation in collaboration with Governments, UNDP, IFAD, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, as well as relevant non-governmental organizations.

In connection to the IYFF, FAO will convene an international **Forum on Communication for Development & Community Media for Family Farming (FCCM)** in Rome from 23 to 24 October 2014, to showcase the role of *Communication for development (ComDev) methods and tools* as a driver for innovation and family farmers' participation in rural development strategies. FAO is a pioneer in using participatory communication to engage farmers and make their voices heard in policy processes. The FCCM will address opportunities for promoting new *rural communication services* as sustained, inclusive and efficient communication processes involving family farmers and the rural population.

COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT: KEY TO ADVANCE FAMILY FARMING POLICIES

In recent years, communication has proven to be crucial for family farmers dealing with development challenges such as new market and employment conditions, climate change and environmental degradation, growing world population and higher food demand. Successful family farming and resilient rural livelihoods are increasingly linked to:

- *Access to agricultural knowledge and information* - timely access to up-to-date and reliable information is fundamental for farmers as they try to better understand, adapt and respond

to new challenges and changing conditions.

- *Social learning* - family farmers need communication resources and suitable channels to share experiences, learn from each other and coordinate strategies with their partners.
- *Engagement in policy dialogue* - family farmers must participate in policy-making processes to express their concerns, articulate their demands and make their voices count.

In this sense *ComDev* methods and tools, integrating community media and the ICTs, have a remarkable impact on family farmers' capacity to access and process relevant information, get organized and participate in decision making. New services providing agricultural marketing and finance information through community media, mobile phones and low-cost ICTs are helping family farmers worldwide to save time and negotiate better rates, resulting in income increases as high as 30 percent. For instance, a recent study in Africa revealed that farmers using communication tools such as mobile phones have made steady incremental steps out of poverty, at a rate of 2.5 percent over 3 years. In India, participatory video was found 10 times more effective in promoting the adoption of sustainable farming practices than conventional extension approaches. Nevertheless, the emphasis should not be only on media and technologies but on the promotion of inclusive and demand driven *ComDev* services to meet the knowledge and information needs of various stakeholders in the agricultural sector, especially family farmers.

Emerging opportunities

New opportunities that can maximize the potential of *ComDev* and community media to strengthen family farming are clearly emerging:

- *ComDev* is now acknowledged as a necessary dimension of rural development.
- Communication tools, ICTs (e.g. mobile phones, internet) and social media are being appropriated by farmers and local communities for their own development purposes.
- Civil society, farmer and indigenous peoples' organizations are claiming their right to communication.
- Policies and programmes conducive to family farming which require *ComDev* strategies and services are being promoted.
- Governments around the world are adopting legal and regulatory frameworks more amenable to local and community broadcasting.
- New *ComDev* programmes are being piloted in the context of the reform of agricultural extension and advisory services, to make them more participatory, interactive and efficient.
- Universal access funds and private investments (e.g. mobile and telecommunications sector) are stimulating innovation and providing new opportunities to expand the provision of communication services in rural areas.

These developments can have a remarkable impact on the future of family farming and should be adequately considered, in line with the IYFF objectives of better understanding family farmers' needs and supporting their engagement in policy dialogue. The need for rethinking policy frameworks and investments is urgent and must be higher in the rural sector agenda, as emerged from FAO Regional Dialogues on Family Farming. Building on successful farmer-led experiences and on the commitment of international organizations such as FAO, the FCCM marks a global commitment to harnessing the potential of *ComDev* in the rural sector. The Forum will provide an opportunity to examine what is working in different regions and to promote demand-driven *rural communication services* as an integral part of public policies for rural and agricultural development.

FORUM ON COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY MEDIA FOR FAMILY FARMING (FCCM)

The FCCM will take place at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 23 to 24 October 2014. Its recommendations are expected to contribute to the Global Dialogue on Family Farming (Rome, 27-28 October 2014).

Objectives

The FCCM main objectives are:

- 1.** Showcase the contribution of *ComDev* and in particular community media to family farming providing evidence of innovative programmes and farmer-led experiences;
- 2.** Raise awareness about the potential of communication in agriculture and rural development, giving voice to farmers and civil society organizations, rural institutions, private sector and community media;
- 3.** Identify opportunities, policy options and strategic initiatives to promote *ComDev* policies and services in support of family farming and rural development.

Expected results

The FCCM shall contribute to achieve the following outcomes:

- Relevant experiences shared to demonstrate the role of *ComDev* and community media for family farming (through case studies, videos, multimedia presentations);
- Multistakeholder policy dialogue facilitated on communication services in rural areas (and FCCM recommendations and final declaration presented at the Global Dialogue on Family Farming);
- Strategic initiatives identified to promote rural communication policies and services;

- Strengthened *ComDev* networks addressing family farming issues and increased collaboration at the regional and global level.

Organization and Advisory Group

The FCCM is an official event of the 2014 International Year of Family Farming. It is organized by FAO in collaboration with the World Association of Community Media Broadcasters (AMARC). Relevant organizations and partners will be invited to join an Advisory Group on ComDev for Family Farming to contribute their expertise to the forum and its preparation.

A half-day follow-up meeting of the Advisory Group will be held on 25 October 2014.

Methodology and participants

The FCCM will be an interactive event bringing together a variety of rural stakeholders. Participants will represent farmer organizations, rural institutions, development agencies (including FAO regional offices and technical divisions), private sector, civil society, indigenous peoples, academia, community media and communication networks.

Selected participants will be invited to present outstanding experiences to spark discussion on the contribution of communication and community media to family farming and to showcase the wide range of actors working in this sector. The FCCM sessions will have an interactive format with presentation of case studies, multimedia materials and a *ComDev Fair*. Through webcast and social media participants from various regions (including grassroots organizations and community media practitioners) will also be able to contribute their views and stories.

Preparatory process

Leading to the event, a number of preparatory activities will collect different regional and sector perspectives to help set up a relevant agenda for the FCCM and pave the way for its follow-up:

- Background paper on communication trends and issues pertaining to family farming highlighting the impact of *ComDev* and community media.
- Regional consultations on the role of *ComDev*, community media and ICTs to advance family farming. Three e-fora will be hosted by regional platforms jointly supported by FAO and AMARC in Asia (ComDev Asia), Africa (YenKasa Africa) and Latin America (Onda Rural). Their outcomes will be discussed and complemented during a global online forum hosted by the e-Agriculture community of practice.
- Online discussion of the FCCM Advisory Group to fine tune the Forum contents and shape up a final declaration and proposal for follow-up. The discussion will be hosted by the CComDev community.

Furthermore, the FCCM will build on the results of the XIII UN Roundtable on Communication for Development (Rome, 16-18 September 2014) that will focus on the UN contribution to mainstreaming *ComDev* in policies and programmes.

Outreach

The following activities will contribute to the visibility and outreach of the FCCM:

- Launch of the event in connection to the preparatory consultations and knowledge sharing through FAO's and co-organizers' websites and platforms (e.g. FAO website, IYFF website, AMARC website, CCComDev, FAO-AMARC regional ComDev platforms);
- Media coverage;
- Web streaming and social media reporting;
- Audio/video recording of the sessions (with audio reports made available to AMARC's global network of community radio stations);
- *ComDev Fair* to display and make available relevant communication materials and resources to the participants of the FCCM, as well as FAO staff and visitors.

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