



Family Farming in the Caribbean Region

The United Nations has declared 2014 the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) – with the slogan Feeding the World, Caring for the Earth - to shine a light on these important and unsung heroes of the global food production system. For FAO, family farming is understood to include crop, livestock, forestry, fishery and aquaculture producers who use predominantly family labour. The head of the household participates directly in the production process and the farm activity is the main source of income for the household. However, supplemental income may come from other non-agricultural activities.

According to an FAO study, “Profile of Small-Scale Farming in the Caribbean”, and information provided by national and regional farmer organizations, the vast majority of farms use ‘predominantly family labour’. This is true not only for small holdings with a few animals, but also for relatively large holdings. The importance of the livestock family farm is not well recognized in many countries in the region, despite the fact that for many commodities, such as poultry meat, eggs, and goat and sheep meat, family farms are the predominant producers. Urban and periurban farming is also an important part of food production in family farming and is gaining popularity, as cases in Cuba and Haiti show.

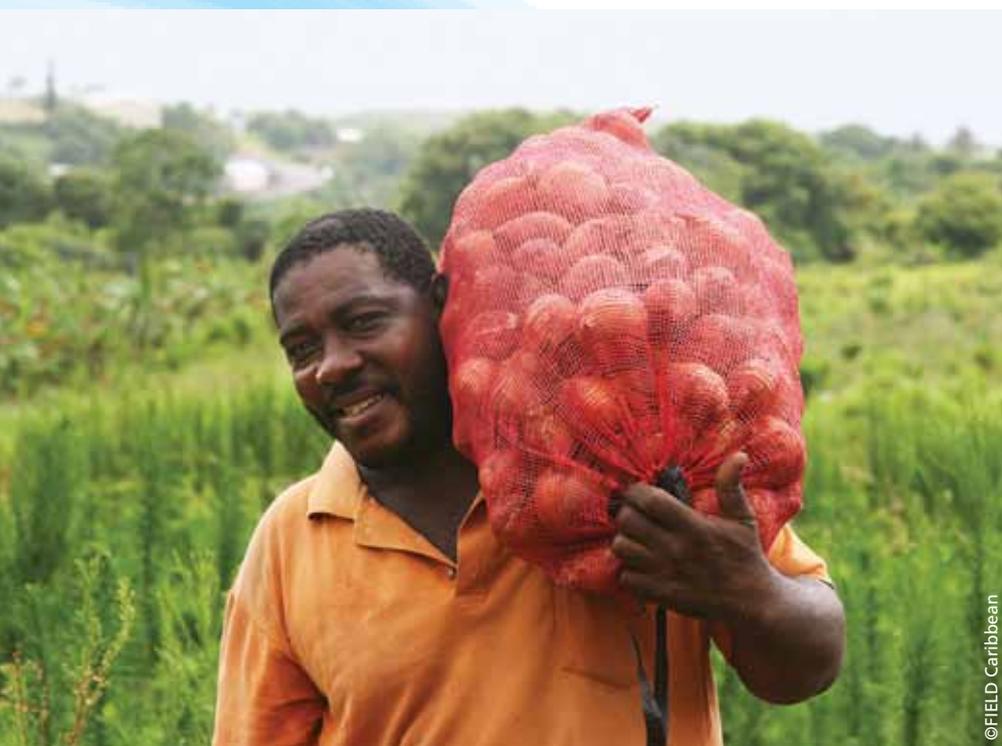
EXPERIENCES OF FAMILY FARMING IN THE CARIBBEAN

FAO has assisted family farmers through a number of technical assistance projects which have improved farmer skills and knowledge and enabled them to create more viable enterprises and generate more sustainable livelihoods. Below are two examples of such projects.

The European funded Poverty Reduction and Food Security Enhancement project for vulnerable groups in Jamaica targeted family farms and focused on creating a market driven strategy for increased production of small ruminants. The project improved production among clusters of farmers in selected communities through the demonstration and adoption of best practices and innovation in husbandry, breeding, housing, and nutrition of goats.

The clusters supported group training of family farmers in all aspects of small ruminant husbandry and management. At the cluster sites, farmers received hands-on training in areas such as feeding and nutrition of goats and sheep, planting and maintenance of protein and fodder banks, animal identification techniques, record keeping, basic housing requirements, preventative health care for goats and selection and preparation of animals for breeding.

In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, FAO assisted the Georgetown Craft Makers Association in a traditional bamboo weaving craft project to revive traditional bamboo weaving in order to generate income opportunities for interested local young people. This included capacity building in harvesting and processing



bamboo, weaving different types of bamboo baskets and craft items, and pricing and marketing products. Through this project, the community group formalized its status as a registered non-profit organization and presented a proposal to train interested young people in bamboo weaving.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Strong livestock farmer organizations can be effective in introducing farmers of small ruminants to best practices and innovation and play a critical role in ensuring the sustainability of projects.
- National and regional organizations with similar mandates can collaborate effectively to build synergies while recognizing their particular strengths and areas of weakness.
- The development of community based livelihood opportunities is a complex undertaking and can only be achieved in close cooperation with a strongly rooted local community organization.
- Promoting partnership between government agencies and civil society organizations as well as interaction among different civil society groups nurtures dialogue and collaboration. Establishing this culture of trust is the foundation on which any successful programme or policy is built.

FAO PROMOTION OF AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR FAMILY FARMING IN THE CARIBBEAN

FAO with the World Rural Forum (WRF), the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and the World Farmers' Organization (WFO) held the first Regional Dialogue on Family Farming in Latin America and the Caribbean in Santiago, Chile, in October 2013. The objective of the forum was to improve the understanding of the role of family farming in each country and region, as well as to define the main regional issues that should be addressed during IYFF. Eight participants from the Caribbean subregion took part.

As a result of that regional dialogue, a Caribbean Family Farming Working Group was formed to serve as a catalyst to develop and implement an agenda to promote increased recognition and development of family farms in the Caribbean subregion. Members of the working group include: FAO, Caribbean Farmers Network (CAFAN), Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), The University of the West Indies (UWI), Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA) and



the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

The Working Group has initiated work in five areas:

- Public policy to support family farming technology development, extension, and investment;
- Information and communication systems to facilitate data collection and analysis and the preparation and dissemination of publications on family farming;
- Succession planning to promote an increase of young people and women in family farming;
- Business and economic planning and analysis for enterprise development; and
- Sustainable development of family farms emphasizing building resilience and reducing risk.

CONCLUSION

Family farmers make a significant contribution to food and nutrition security in the Caribbean. This contribution must be quantified, recognized and facilitated. FAO is ready to continue its support to this vital sector of the farming community.



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