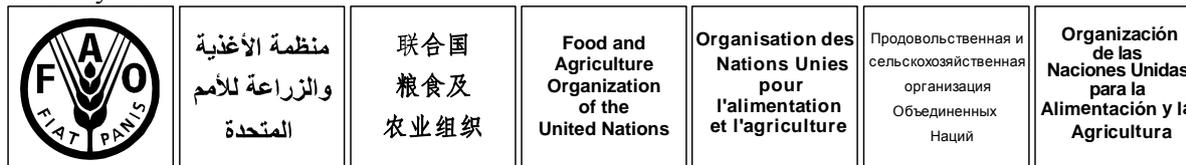


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International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) in Europe and Central Asia

Executive Summary

In the context of FAO role as the facilitating UN agency for 2014 IYFF, this paper briefly outlines the major characteristics and development of family farming in the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region as one of the main drivers of agricultural and rural development, and highlights the main recommendations of the ECA Regional Dialogue, which will feed into the Global FAO Dialogue on Family Farming. At ECA level there is a wide consensus about the crucial role of family farming for food security, sustainable development, employment generation, local development and social cohesion in rural areas. Family farms are also central to the agricultural industry and rural economy. A large proportion of the rural population depends on farming for their livelihoods. Moreover, women are central in terms of labour inputs, although much less so in terms of farm management.

The following points are of particular importance for the sustainability of family farming:

- The provision of reliable rights to land, water and other natural resources;
- Financial support that enables investments to increase the adaptive and innovative capacity of family farms;
- Public investments in rural infrastructure and public services to facilitate access to markets and labour mobility;
- The provision of sufficient training and education to increase the competitiveness of family farms.

Cooperatives and other types of producers' organizations are essential for increasing the competitiveness of family farming. Policy makers should help to create an enabling environment for the successful operation of family farms and co-operatives, while farmers have to develop trust, willingness to cooperate and loyalty as the central ingredients for success. The Dialogue concluded that the IYFF should be used to increase knowledge about the positive roles of cooperatives through the dissemination of best practices. Existing policy platforms frequently do not provide adequate attention to family farmers, particularly smaller ones, and thus have to be re-oriented towards supporting family farming. In this context the ECA Regional Dialogue emphasized the need to

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continue the process initiated by the IYFF to keep agriculture and family farming high on the political agenda. Non-governmental and other development organizations have an important role to play in consolidating the voice of family farmers.

I. Introduction

1. At its 66th session the General Assembly of the United Nations declared 2014 the “International Year of Family Farming” and invited FAO to facilitate its implementation in cooperation with governments, the United Nations system and relevant non-governmental organizations. The overall aim of the IYFF is “to promote international awareness and support country-owned plans aimed at strengthening the contribution of family farming and smallholders in eradicating hunger and reducing rural poverty leading to sustainable development of rural areas and food security”.

2. The fundamental objective of the IYFF is to help recognize and support the contribution of family farming and small holder farming in eradicating hunger, reducing rural poverty, achieving food security through sustainable production, and sustainable development of rural areas. The IYFF will promote international awareness and build on existing country and/or regionally-led initiatives and plans aimed at strengthening the contribution of family farmers and smallholders in achieving sustainable development.

3. The goal of the 2014 IYFF is to reposition family farming at the centre of agricultural, environmental and social policies on national agendas by identifying gaps and opportunities to promote a shift towards more equal and balanced development. The 2014 IYFF will promote broad discussion and cooperation national, regional and global levels to increase awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by smallholders and help identify efficient ways to support family farmers.

4. FAO is facilitating the implementation of IYFF in collaboration with Governments, the UNDP, IFAD, the CGIAR and other relevant organizations of the United Nations system as well as relevant non-governmental organizations¹. The roadmap for the implementation of activities related to the 2014 IYFF is the Master Plan² discussed and adopted by the International Steering Committee for the IYFF.

5. Besides numerous events at global, regional and national levels, and awareness rising initiatives documented on the Family Farming website, three cornerstone events in ECA region were:

- 1) Conference "**Family farming: A dialogue towards more sustainable and resilient farming in Europe and the world**", organized by European Commission was attended by some 430 participants representing governments, international organizations, European Institutions, universities, farmers’ organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. By organizing this conference, the European Commission has positioned itself as the first international organization to kick start the process of the International Year of Family Farming and to stimulate dialogue among all stakeholders, both in Europe and beyond. The conference drew attention to the important role of family farming, the key challenges and priorities for the future, and also addressed the best means of supporting family farms.
- 2) Europe and Central Asia Regional Dialogue on Family Farming: “**Working towards a strategic approach to promote food security and nutrition**”, was organized by FAO jointly with the International Cooperative Alliance, the World Farmers Organization and the World Rural Forum. The Regional Dialogue provided a unique space to some 100 stakeholders from 27 countries from

¹ The concept, overall objectives as well as the main activities related to the implementation of IYFF are documented at the official IYFF web site <http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/en/>

² http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/iyff/docs/Final_Master_Plan_IYFF_2014_30-05.pdf

across the Region to share views and experiences on the role, values and challenges facing family farmers in ECA. It emphasized that the roles played by family farmers and the challenges they face are similar to those in other parts of the world. Participants highlighted the contribution of family farmers to economic, environmental and social sustainability, and to eradicating rural poverty and food insecurity.

- 3) **Global Forum and Expo on Family Farming**³, hosted by the Hungarian Ministry of Rural Development. The Forum addressed three main subjects: (1) The role of family farms in contributing to local and global food security; (2) Family farming and the three dimensions of sustainability; (3) Key challenges and opportunities for agricultural investments in family farming. Parallel to the Forum, the Expo was the opportunity for the family farmers of the participating countries to introduce their produce and activities.

6. Family farming is also strongly reflected in the FAO Strategic Framework. To this effect, one of the main priorities of FAO's work in Europe and Central Asia is to provide policy advice to governments in support of sustainable intensification for small farms. The new REU regional initiative "Empowering Small Holders and Family Farms" focuses on empowering smallholders, family farms and rural households to increase resilience and income and food security in rural areas, through fostering better access to markets and greater participation in policy development.

II. Family farms and family farming in Europe and Central Asia

7. Family farms in ECA are central to the agricultural industry and the rural economy. They are the main agricultural employer and a large proportion of the rural population depends for their livelihood on family farms. Women are central in terms of labour inputs but much less so in terms of farm management. The flexibility of family labour to changing technological, economic and social circumstances, on and off the farm, contributes to the persistence of such farms.

8. As the essential agricultural producer in ECA, family farming is the main contributor to food security. Family farms enhance the diversity of crop, livestock and horticulture products that can satisfy the diverse dietary needs for an active and healthy life. In most of the region farm families are culturally attached to farming and the land, particularly on long-owned family holdings. Family farming contributes significantly to the sustainable use of natural resources, thus building a basis for future food security.

9. In ECA, family farming incorporates farms of many different types and sizes, with both full- and part-time farmers, and farmers with and without other gainful activities. Some are specialized commercial business operations, while others produce mainly to satisfy household food needs (semi-subsistence farms). In the more developed countries in the Region (and elsewhere in Europe and Central Asia, though to a lesser extent), there are also small "hobby" or "lifestyle" holdings, belonging to families with substantial non-agricultural income.

10. In the ECA Region, family farmers co-exist with non-family corporate farms. According to the 2010 Eurostat Farm Structure Survey, family farms in the EU28 – excluding France – accounted for more than 85 percent of all farms and they cultivated 143.5 million ha or 66 percent of the total utilized agricultural area. In some countries of Central and Eastern Europe – as a consequence of the post-communist land reforms – a larger share of land is still for production by cooperatives and corporate farms. Family and corporate farms co-exist but have a different balance in Russia, the Western Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Central Asia. Family farms are the predominant farm structure in the Caucasus.

11. The main factors that have shaped the farm structure and the significance of family farming in Central Asia and the other CIS countries are legislation and policy implementation concerning land

³ As the preparation of this paper took place prior to the event, the outcomes could not be presented herein.

reforms and farm restructuring. These have resulted in different paths of development of family farming in the CIS sub-regions. Despite the sub-regional differences in the ECA Region, family farmers throughout the Region are central to agriculture and the rural economy – as employers, land users and pastoralists. A large proportion of rural populations depend for their livelihoods on family farms.

Table 1: The sub-regional importance of individual and corporate farm structures in CIS countries

	Central Asia	Caucasus	Russia, Western CIS
Dominant form of organization of agriculture	1/ individual 2/ corporate	Individual	1/ corporate 2/ individual
Land under individual farms (%)	71	97	34
Share of agricultural output produced on individual farms	88	97	62

Source: Lerman (2012)⁴.

12. Even though family farmers often own their land, they also sometimes operate on rented land or with a combination of owned and rented land. The share of rented land in the total utilized agricultural area is high in the EU New Member States (NMSs) and some of the CIS countries, where the land reforms of the 1990s have resulted in highly fragmented land ownership, and the organization of viable farms requires the leasing of land from many other small landowners, or from the state.

13. Family farms are the main agricultural employer and a large proportion of the rural population depends on them for their livelihood. Family labor is usually used in farm production although some members of farm families have other gainful activities, and farms are sometimes run by part-time farmers. In such cases, family labor may play only a minor role, at least in terms of income.

14. In general, family farmers use their own physical capital (e.g. buildings and machinery). However, some small farmers, particularly in the EU NMSs and the CIS, have limited or no capital or their own: the only physical asset which they own is often a small area of agricultural land. Such farmers may employ machinery contractors rather than using family-owned machinery, and/or engage neighbors to cultivate their land.

15. Family farmers in Europe are central to the agricultural industry and the rural economy. In the EU28 in 2010, there were 11.9 million family farms, seven million of which were in the NMS13. They accounted for 97 percent of farms in the EU28, including 99 percent in the NMSs. However, many family farmers are small; in 2010, in the EU28 there were 5.7 million farms of two ha or less. Romania alone accounted for 2.7 million such farms.

16. Many of the small family farmers are semi-subsistence – they sell less than 50 percent of their output and use the remainder for consumption within their extended households. In the EU28 in 2010 there were six million semi-subsistence farms, most of which (4.1 million) were smaller than two ha. Semi subsistence farms are unevenly located throughout the EU. They are concentrated in the NMSs and the Southern EU Member States of the EU15 (Greece, Italy and Portugal).

17. Across the ECA Region, there are millions of people that operate household plots, but who are usually not treated as “farmers”. The exclusion of household plots from family farming for statistical

⁴ Lerman, Z. (2012) Land reform and farm performance in Europe and Central Asia: a 20 year perspective. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Discussion paper No 2.12. Available at: http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/120260/2/Lerman_ECALandReform_WP2012_1.pdf

and policy purposes may lead to a substantial underestimation of the food security and poverty mitigation functions of family farming in the ECA Region.

The characteristics, values and roles of family farming

18. Family farmers are resilient and the flexibility of family labor to changing technological, economic and social circumstances, both on and off the farm, contributes to their persistence. Cultural attachment to farming and land, particularly on long-owned family holdings, also plays a major role.

19. Family farmers adopt various strategies to build resilience and adaptation capacity, especially diversification of agricultural and/or non-agricultural enterprises and pluriactivity, and avoiding committing a large share of resources to one activity. In some countries, but not everywhere, family farmers are more active in diversification than corporate farms registered as legal entities.

20. Family farming is a model for achieving sustainable growth, food security and the eradication of rural poverty. Family farming, even on a small scale, including semi subsistence farms and household plots, is an important factor in mitigating rural poverty. Without incomes from household plots, many rural households in Russia would not be able to afford even the basic national food basket.

21. Family farming is the main contributor to food security, in its role as the essential agricultural producer in ECA. Family farms enhance food security through: a) agricultural production and agricultural trade; b) production of diverse crop, livestock and horticulture products that can satisfy the diverse dietary needs for an active and healthy life; c) production of safe food of good quality; d) sustainable use of natural resources thus building a basis for future food security; e) income generation, allowing more vulnerable households to have access to food.

22. Family farmers contribute to the sustainability of agricultural systems. They often operate mixed farming, which is probably better for the environment because it is – at least partially – a closed system. Small-scale mixed farms can be also considered a positive externality per se as they create a landscape characterized by smaller farm fields with greater length of field boundaries which increase the value of habitats and biodiversity.

23. Family farmers enhance the vitality of the rural economy and preserve traditional cultures. The existence of family farms, particularly small-scale ones, is a significant part of national cultural heritage, customs, dress, music, cuisine and habitats.

24. Despite these socially valued functions, family farms, and in particular small-scale ones, are often constrained in their access to land, physical and financial capital, and to markets. The modern food supply chain may prefer large corporate farms in order to save on transaction costs and achieve a more consistent quality of supply.

25. Another challenge faced by family farmers is that in many ECA countries the population of farmers is aging. This is especially true in the EU, both in the EU15 and in the NMSs. However, in some other ECA countries, e.g. Turkey and Central Asia countries, the farming and rural populations are in general young. The unfavorable demographics in some ECA countries make the issue of succession central to the future sustainability of family farming.

III. Main recommendations of the ECA Regional Dialogue

26. The Regional Dialogue provided a unique space to some 100 stakeholders from 27 countries across the Region to share views and experiences on the role, values and challenges facing family farmers in ECA. It emphasized that, despite some specific characteristics of the ECA region; i.e. the overwhelming effects of the post-communist reforms and the accession of some countries to the EU, the roles played by family farmers and the challenges they face are similar to those in the other regions in the world. Participants highlighted the contribution of family farmers to economic, environmental and social sustainability, and to eradicating rural poverty and food insecurity.

27. The dialogue stressed that there is often inadequate attention to family farmers, particularly the smaller ones, and that existing policy platforms have to be re-oriented towards supporting family farming. The following points are particularly important for the sustainability of family farming:

- The provision of reliable and enforceable rights to land, water and other natural resources;
- Financial support that enables investments to increase the adaptive and innovative capacity of family farms;
- Public investments in rural infrastructure and public services to facilitate access to markets and also labour mobility to new farming and non-farming activities;
- The provision of sufficient training and education to increase the competitiveness of family farmers.

28. There are compelling arguments in favor of governmental intervention in agricultural research, development, extension and education, both in terms of the economic rates of return to be expected from such investment, and in terms of future food security and environmental protection at local, national and global levels. The highly fragmented nature of much farming in the ECA Region – with no strong farmers’ associations in many countries – supports the “market failure” argument that public funding for these activities should be available; e.g. for state research institutes, state advisory services, agricultural colleges, and often state experimental stations. . In the present climate of hard constraints on government budgets, the option of public-private partnership should be explored

The key role of cooperation in allowing family farmers to take advantage of economies of scale

29. Family farmers often form agricultural cooperatives, producers’ groups, farmers’ associations and collaborative networks, in order to take advantage of economies of scale in farm production, input purchasing and product marketing. Collaboration also helps increase political influence. Such associations can reduce costs, increase revenue, or enlarge farmers’ knowledge through mutual contact.

30. The role of cooperation in adding value can either take the form of reducing the costs of inputs via input supply associations or increasing the prices received for outputs via marketing associations, both of which take the form of service associations. Across the EU27 as a whole, agricultural marketing cooperatives account for a substantial market share, especially for dairy (over 50 percent) and for olives, wine, fruit and vegetables (around 40 percent).

31. Alternative forms of farmers’ association include limited companies (investor-owned firms) in which farmers are shareholders. So-called “vertical” producers’ groups can be organized by an external party such as a supermarket chain or product processor, bringing together a number of farmers, often to ensure common observance of management and quality standards. There are also examples of “innovative” and “micro” clusters formed by farmers supplying specialist or local markets.

32. The Dialogue stressed the crucial role of cooperatives and other types of producers’ organizations to countervail the market power of (and the abuse of market power by) other agents in the value chain. Cooperation among farmers has obvious economic advantages, including achieving economies of scale and capacity for innovation, and increasing technological and market efficiency. Cooperatives improve farmers’ market position and allow them to achieve higher output prices, lower input prices, easier and cheaper access to information (technical, market or policy), and better opportunities for obtaining capital (credit). Cooperatives support the promotion and marketing of agricultural products, including traditional, local, or niche products, but they can also provide support for promoting non-farm activities such as agro-tourism and crafts. The benefits are not solely confined to cooperative members. Frequently, cooperatives provide benefits for rural development and job creation, and help build social capital in rural areas. During the Dialogue, it was reported that in Eastern Europe, cooperatives can improve the underdeveloped infrastructure through their storage facilities, IT and provision of services.

33. Professional organizations and other initiatives, such as informal networks, are equally important. Some participants stressed that peasant farmers’ organizations (NGOs) can help in establishing

cooperatives. In general, the Dialogue pointed out the need for links between producers' organizations and civil society organizations at village or local level.

34. The Dialogue discussed the choice between grassroots cooperatives versus large cooperatives and the issue of membership control, which diminishes as cooperatives increase in size. It was stated that in France many cooperatives are no longer under the control of producers. A possible solution to this, as reported for Ukraine, is the establishment of a Union of cooperatives that has a business purpose (a cluster of cooperatives).

35. The development of farmers' cooperation in the ECA Region is very diverse. Due to different attitudes of family farmers towards cooperation, there are different stories, some of which are clearly successes but there are also some examples of reluctance to cooperate. The Dialogue stressed that trust, willingness to cooperate and loyalty are central to success. It was reported that in several CIS countries people do not understand the new role of cooperatives. Due to previous experiences under the centrally planned system, farmers mistrust cooperation and have psychological barriers to cooperation.

36. In the EU, there are large variations in the development of cooperatives, particularly between the "old" EU and the NMSs. These differences stem from different political histories and different types of cooperatives. In the NMSs, social and cultural background, history and political context are extremely important. In some Member States (MSs), EU support is crucial for the development cooperation among farmers, while in other MSs such as Denmark, the Netherlands and Lithuania, the cooperation process is strictly a bottom-up one.

37. The Dialogue concluded that the IYFF should be used to increase the knowledge of the positive roles of cooperatives through dissemination of best practices. Policy makers have to create an enabling environment for the successful operation of co-operatives. National and regional governments, civil society and donors should focus on human capacity development for leadership and management of cooperatives, particularly in the CIS. It is also necessary to develop cooperation with consumers to address food health issues caused by the lack of control at the processing stage.

38. There is a need for more research on farmers' cooperatives that is free from the influence of political interests and ideological biases. Specific issues such as the position of cooperatives in the food chain, the internal governance of cooperatives, and the way the institutional environment influences the performance of cooperatives need much deeper research and exchange of information and practices between the countries in the Region.

Enabling policy environment for family farming

39. The policy environment differs in the various ECA sub-regions. In the EU15, agricultural policy over the decades has been tailored to, and has reinforced, the overwhelming predominance of family farms within a context of continuous state intervention and support. However, policy measures have increasingly benefited larger farms rather than smaller ones, for which they have been either out of reach or only marginally useful.

40. In the EU NMSs, major changes to political processes and structures, as well as land restitution and market orientation, took place as part of the transition agenda of the 1990s, but since then the preparation for EU accession and the implementation of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) have transformed agricultural policy and overshadowed the transitional objectives. Appreciation of the substantial presence of semi-subsistence farms in the NMSs is recognized in a special Pillar II measure to support the commercialization of NMS semi subsistence farms undergoing restructuring.

41. In the CIS countries, post-communist transition has varied widely, but policy has often been inconsistent, has progressed unevenly, and in some countries large corporate farms and downstream processing enterprises have frequently remained state-owned or state-dominated. The creation of family farms has not been a policy priority everywhere in the CIS. However, in the Caucasus, family farms prevail, and are a more central focus of policy interest.

42. Policies and policy administration for land rights is crucial for family farming, since secure land tenure – whether ownership or lease/rental – is necessary for successful investment and succession.

While the cadastral system is satisfactory in many EU countries, the situation in several CIS countries is much more uncertain, with unfinished or not fully implemented land reform legislation.

43. Policy instruments for market and income support can become very costly, and does little for small family farmers who do not produce much for the market and find it difficult to claim direct income support even when this is available. However such instruments strongly support larger commercial family farmers, increase their liquidity, facilitate access to external finance, and smooth household consumption.

44. Participants in the Dialogue expressed concerns that policies favour larger corporate farmers, and are often influenced by multinationals. The Dialogue formulated a global message that national and regional authorities have to recognize the policy needs of family farmers and design specific policies that will increase their future sustainability. Family farmers require particular policy measures and statuses compared to corporate farms. In view of this, some participants suggested that national governments should earmark some funds for support to family farmers; others suggested avoiding support which is proportional to sales; e.g. output subsidies, as such support will always favour larger farms, many of which are non-family farms. Price subsidies resulting in lower prices might have a negative incentive effect since they could discourage farmers to invest in agricultural production.

45. In view of the specific needs of family farmers and their economic sustainability, the Dialogue stressed improved access to land, water and other natural resources as central to policies which can benefit the family farming sector. Of particular importance are policies that set clearly defined, enforceable and transferable rights to land, as this is the basis for an efficient land market, allowing the owning, renting, purchase and sale of land, which (amongst other factors, such as the availability of capital and family labour) determines the flexibility of family farming. Insecurity of land tenure tends to inhibit land investment and care (e.g. as regards soil improvement) since long-term returns cannot be reliably estimated by the farmer. It also prevents the raising of finance on the basis of land ownership as collateral. In the area of property rights, the Dialogue participants emphasized the need for regulations for the use of communal land and pastures, and regulations to stop the “grabbing” of land and water; and rights of pre-emption of neighbouring family farmers on land transfers and purchase.

46. Family farmers are exposed to the consequences of climate change. Often they do not have capacity to make the investments that are required to adapt to volatile climate conditions. Dialogue participants asserted the need for financial support which would enable investments to increase the adaptive and innovative capacity of family farmers; e.g. improved access of family farmers to credit and credit guarantees. Family farmers act as important contributors to sustainable agriculture although they often need support, advice and incentives to make their farming practices more environmentally sustainable.

47. It is increasingly recognized that agriculture alone cannot support a modern and prosperous rural economy. The response has often been to encourage various forms of diversification; i.e. the adoption of new enterprises both on and off farms. One recent direction stressed during the Dialogue is the development of multifunctional family farms related to nature (e.g. maintenance of landscape and biodiversity). For small farmers with very few assets and poor access to credit, the main tendency is to diversify income sources through off-farm employment. In view of this, the Dialogue concluded that national and regional authorities should create the conditions and an enabling environment for an efficient rural labour market. Public investments in rural infrastructure and public services to facilitate access to markets and the mobility of farmers and/or the members of their families to new farming and non-farming activities are necessary. In this area, the experience with Rural Development programs in the EU MSs may be useful for other countries in the ECA Region, especially for Eastern Europe and the CIS. Public services, particularly adequate health and child care services are also a key to integrating more women into family farming and to keeping young people in rural areas.

48. Family farmers have to compete with corporate farms in the food chain. Sometimes smaller family farms are excluded from the standard contracting and food value chain, simply because of the high transaction costs for downstream enterprises in entering into contracts and enforcing them amongst a large number of small family farmers. Participants in the Dialogue discussed alternative avenues for

marketing and in particular the potential benefits of a short supply chain, and branding and promotional strategy. The Dialogue stressed that family farmers should make more use of the EU agricultural product quality policy. They produce some traditional local products which have to be promoted to consumers. Quality standards may sometimes be an obstacle to family farmers, but are at the same time they offer an opportunity. Some participants underlined the need for family farmers to make better use of the EU protected designation of origin (PDO), protected geographical indication (PGI) and traditional speciality guaranteed (TSG) to promote their local specialties. The possible benefits of voluntary designations for some family farmers (e.g. “mountain products”) were discussed as well. The Dialogue pointed out the need for promotion funds for quality products produced by family farmers that can benefit farmers not only locally, but also globally.

49. The Dialogue emphasized that women are the backbone of the agricultural sector. Participants called for recognizing the irreplaceable contribution of women to family farms and for developing specific measures to support female members of family farm households to have equal access to production inputs, education, training, inheritance, as well as enabling access to leadership positions. Various measures can improve the supply of female labor. For example, publicly provided education, and vocational and farm management training for women can increase their employability. One of the major policy instruments to empower women is micro credit, which can be used to buy/rent land and other assets necessary for farming or for a non-agricultural businesses.

50. The legal framework of succession is important in order for the young generation to be able to take over the family farm in an orderly manner. The Dialogue formulated several important messages concerning succession: the passing of farms to the next generation should be simplified and should not require massive resources by the young generation; young farmers should be given education and training to be successful farm managers; succession legislation should not discriminate against women; and in order to take over the farm, young people need a developed rural economy with services and leisure opportunities, otherwise they often prefer to migrate to towns and into non-agricultural occupations.

51. Although the focus of the policy discussion was on the countries in the ECA Region, several participants took a global perspective and argued that agricultural policy support instruments have to be assessed in a broader context according to their impact on farmers in other regions, particularly in developing countries. The Dialogue stressed the need for sustainable policy results to serve the interests of farmers in the ECA Region but also highlighted that they should not penalize farmers in other regions.

Family farming and the role of civil society

52. The ECA Dialogue emphasized the need to continue the process initiated by the IYFF to keep agriculture high on the political agenda and to help family farming become a more central focus of policy interests. It was stressed that there is a need to set clear goals for the period after the end of IYFF and to incorporate them into post-2014 Action Plans. In view of this, FAO should facilitate a continuous exchange of experiences within the ECA Region and help disseminate best practices.

53. The participants argued that at national level, existing dialogue mechanisms between farmers and policy makers are often weak. For this reason, the Dialogue recommended developing permanent national Civil Society committees/networks for family farming, especially in Eastern Europe and Central Asia where farmers’ organizations are relatively weak. These committees should serve as forums to discuss and agree on measures to empower family farmers and their organizations in the policy-making process, particularly small family farmers. Non-governmental and other development organizations have an important role to play in consolidating the voice of the family farmers to become influential in the policy-making process.