

Family farming – Recognizing the contributions of women and men

Family farming and smallholder farming are an important basis for sustainable food production throughout the world. While family farms tend to be highly efficient in terms of agricultural productivity per unit of land, those that produce on a small or medium scale have limited bargaining power and capacity to defend their interests in food markets. FAO gets ready for the International Year of Family Farming in 2014.

Beyond an agricultural model, family farming is a way of life, where both men and women have different roles and responsibilities. As elsewhere, what men and women do and are responsible for is largely determined by what is socially considered acceptable. In many cultures, men serve more often as managers – making decisions about what crops to plant, how much land to use, whether to make by-products and where to sell the food. Their tasks on the family farm can also include preparing the soil for planting and harvesting, while women usually do the planting, weeding and post-harvest processing. It is the combination of men's and women's efforts that make family farming work.

The challenges family farmers, especially women, face also include the lack of a clear line to divide family life and work. National data from a number of countries show that most unpaid family farmers are women, who also work longer hours than men when both agricultural work and household chores are counted.

Family farmers, who tend to be unsalaried workers, miss out on benefits, such as retirement, maternity leave and child care. And here women face greater disadvantages. Female managers of family farms tend to own less

land and livestock than their male counterparts, and have less access to financial credit and services, markets to sell their products and time-saving technology. Climate change, food price volatility and economic globalization also create difficulties for family farms.

To highlight the important contribution that family farming and smallholder farming can make to food security and poverty eradication, the year 2014 was named the International Year of Family Farming by the UN. "FAO and its partners will hold consultations, encouraging countries to adopt policies that support family farmers with social protection programmes and rural services, including medical care and agricultural extension and training," says Ana Paula Dela O Campos, FAO Gender Policy Officer. "If agricultural policies are designed to respond to both women's and men's needs and consider their roles in family agriculture," she explains, "they will be in a stronger position to increase agricultural production and reduce rural poverty."

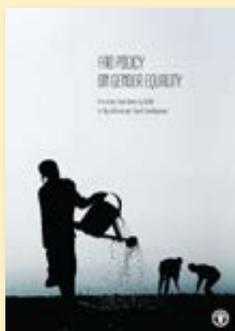


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What is family farming? Family farming, or family agriculture, is a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production, which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family labour, that of both women and men. The family and the farm are linked, co-evolve and combine economic, environmental, reproductive, social and cultural functions.

* www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/home/en

FAO Policy on Gender Equality



Gender equality is central to FAO's mandate to achieve food security for all by raising levels of nutrition, improving agricultural productivity and natural resource management, and improving the lives of rural populations. FAO

can achieve its goals only if it simultaneously works towards gender equality and supports women's diverse roles in agriculture and rural development. Gender equality is not only an essential means by which FAO can achieve its mandate, it is also a basic human right.

In pursuing its goals, FAO is mandated to promote and protect human rights and gender equality and to work in ways that ensure that it contributes to their realization, by addressing the underlying causes of human rights violations, including discrimination against women and girls. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is the overarching UN document that formally recognizes universally agreed human rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is central to the issue of gender equality. CEDAW obliges governments to promote, protect and fulfil the equal rights of men and women in their own jurisdictions.

The purpose of this policy document is to provide FAO with a framework for guiding its

efforts to achieve gender equality in all its technical work, and for assessing results; it calls on the whole Organization to contribute to these efforts. The policy specifies FAO's goal and objectives related to gender equality and delineates an accountability structure for ensuring policy oversight and achievement of results. This structure includes specifications of the roles and responsibilities for coordinating and supporting implementation of the policy. A separate human resource action plan addressing gender parity issues within FAO has been developed for 2010–2013, and a gender policy for human resources is planned for the longer term.

* [FAO, 2013 - www.fao.org/docrep/regina.laub@fao.org](http://www.fao.org/docrep/regina.laub@fao.org)