



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

A statement by FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva

15 October 2012

**LAUNCH OF THE JOINT PROGRAMME OF UN WOMEN, FAO, IFAD AND WFP
“ACCELERATING PROGRESS TOWARDS THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF
RURAL WOMEN”**

Your Excellency Zenebu Tadesse, Minister of Women, Children and Youth of Ethiopia

Ms Ertharin Cousin, Executive Director of WFP

Ms Tacko Ndiaye, representing UN Women

Mr Kanayo Nwanze, President of IFAD,

Ms Gerda Verburg, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands

Ms Tehmina Janjua, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Ms Lani Eugenia, Secretary General of the Indonesia Farmers and Fishers Society Organization

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you all for being here. This is the official launch of the joint program by UN Women, FAO, WFP and IFAD to promote the economic empowerment of rural women.

The agencies involved in this program share the belief that this empowerment is crucial to guarantee food security.

This joint program is also a concrete example of our willingness to work together. We believe that, by joining our efforts, we can achieve better results.



This program was presented last month in New York, during the United Nations General Assembly.

Today's event allows us to share this new initiative with the Members of the Rome Based Agencies and other partners gathered here as we celebrate the International Day of Rural Women.

FAO has long recognized the diversity of roles that women play in rural economies, and in food value chains.

This includes their activities both on and off the farm, which are crucial to guaranteeing adequate nutrition for their families.

Women already play such an important role. Imagine what they could do if they had more opportunities to make a bigger difference in the lives of their families, communities, and countries!

For this reason, FAO is considering this joint program as an integral part of its work, directly linked to the strategic objectives we are working on.

We are committed to building the capacity of rural women to contribute to nutrition and food security, by increasing their productivity and incomes, and facilitating their economic autonomy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The challenge ahead of us is great, but *not* impossible.

Experience tells us that a range of interventions is required.

Rural employment is a top priority. Initiatives to reduce hunger and poverty need to focus on improving decent employment opportunities for the rural poor.

That is why FAO attaches such importance to expanding opportunities for women, in areas like food processing, distribution, and marketing.

At the same time, FAO actively works to provide adequate social protection to those who need it most.

FAO's experience shows that good policies and programs can make a difference. But sporadic fixes, here and there, are not enough.

FAO's responsibility is to help put in place strategies to promote rural development.



It is my hope, and belief, that this joint program will contribute significantly to this goal, so that men, women and children everywhere can lead better lives in the rural areas.

To end, I want to once again thank you all for your presence and invite you to watch the message that UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet sent us today.