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Food and
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Продовольственная и
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Organización
de las
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para la
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CONFERENCE

Thirty-eighth Session

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International Year of Cooperatives 2012

Executive Summary

This report describes the International Year of Cooperatives 2012 (IYC) achievements, at national, regional and international levels. The collaborative work among partners and with FAO staff have been instrumental for the success of the UN IYC. FAO called the world's attention by proclaiming 'Agricultural cooperatives - key to feeding the world' as the theme of the 2012 World Food Day (WFD), which was observed in over 150 countries. This was one of FAO's main contributions to the celebration of the IYC on the theme 'Co-operative Enterprises Build a Better World'. This commitment is shown in three areas of intervention including: i) awareness-raising, communications and advocacy, ii) knowledge generation, sharing and dissemination and iii) strategic multi-stakeholder partnerships at country level to support capacities of cooperatives and producer organizations.

Suggested action by the Conference

As follow-up action to the IYC, FAO proposes:

- 1) to support member governments and facilitate government initiatives in establishing an enabling environment including policies, economic incentives, legal frameworks and consultation fora for producer organizations and cooperatives in order to allow them to develop and thrive.
- 2) to strengthen its partnerships with producer organizations and agricultural cooperatives through initiating and implementing strategic partnership initiatives that are multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder-oriented and responsive to stakeholders' needs with primary involvement of producer organizations and cooperatives at the national and sub-regional levels. These initiatives are aimed at supporting the capacity needs of cooperatives and producer organizations at the individual organizational and enabling environment levels using FAO's and partners' tools and methodologies.
- 3) to conduct a stock-taking exercise and document needs and practices, as well as lessons learned, for engaging in effective partnerships with cooperatives and producer organizations through consultations at regional and global levels.

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1. The 64th Session of the United Nations General Assembly held on 18 December 2009 adopted Resolution 64/136 on “*Cooperatives in social development*” and proclaimed the year 2012 the IYC to raise awareness on the contribution of cooperatives to global socio-economic development, and in particular to poverty reduction, employment generation, and promoting the growth and strengthening of cooperatives world-wide.
2. Governments, heads of international organizations and representatives of cooperative organizations launched the IYC 2012 with the slogan “Cooperative Enterprises Build a Better World” on 31 October 2011, at United Nations Headquarters in New York.
3. FAO was the lead agency for the promotion of agricultural and food cooperatives ensuring that their role is recognized and remain on the international agenda. Agricultural and food cooperatives represent a significant portion of the global cooperative sector in developed and developing countries. These can take a variety of forms, from small, grassroots associations to unions, federations and chambers of agriculture. They include all types of collective actions following the principles of cooperatives, including groups of agricultural producers, forest users, livestock raisers and fisher folks. They are able to provide a range of services to their members, particularly access to productive inputs, output markets, information and communication. They also allow their members to obtain access to and management of natural resources, and enable their members to have a voice in the decision-making processes that influence policies. However, cooperatives are able to thrive and act as a vehicle for inclusion and market integration for their members only if they are empowered and have an appropriate *enabling environment*. In other words, they need favourable conditions, including sound policies, economic incentives, a conducive regulatory and legal framework as well as participatory frameworks that enable them to consult and engage in dialogue with various stakeholders, particularly decision-makers. All these conditions are necessary for the establishment, development and sustainability of cooperatives. Throughout the IYC, FAO closely collaborated with the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC), the inter-agency Coordinating Committee responsible for assisting the United Nations (UN) in planning and implementing the UN IYC 2012. COPAC (established since 1971) is made up of the cooperative movement together with producer organizations and the United Nations and its specialized agencies. COPAC members include the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), the World Farmers Organization (WFO), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO).
4. Shortly after his entry into office early last year, the Director-General of FAO, Mr José Graziano da Silva, reaffirmed the organization’s commitment to strengthening partnerships with agricultural cooperatives and producer organizations. FAO called the world’s attention by proclaiming ‘*Agricultural cooperatives - key to feeding the world*’ as the theme of the 2012 WFD, which was observed in over 150 countries. FAO’s contributions to the implementation of the IYC includes four areas of intervention: i) awareness-raising, communications and advocacy, ii) knowledge generation, sharing and dissemination and iii) strategic multi-stakeholder partnerships at country-level to support capacities of cooperatives and producer organizations.
5. FAO formed a working group with the Rome-based agencies that jointly agreed on key messages and organized high level events to promote the role of agricultural cooperatives and producer organizations in socio-economic development and food security. Multiple units in FAO

headquarters and decentralized offices were mobilized to celebrate the IYC. The Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (ESW), the Office of Communication, Partnerships and Advocacy (OCP) and members of the Inter-Departmental Working Group (IDWG) on Institutions Building, constituted by representatives of relevant divisions and units have joint forces to harness the knowledge and expertise of the Organization for the implementation of the IYC activities.

6. The following activities took place throughout the year:

A. Awareness-raising, communications and advocacy

7. The FAO Director-General nominated two **FAO Goodwill Special Ambassadors for Cooperatives**: Ms Elisabeth Atangana, a farmer leader from Cameroon, and Mr Roberto Rodrigues, a former International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) President and farmer leader from Brazil. The two Ambassadors and the Director-General, as well as many senior staff, advocated for agricultural and rural cooperatives during the IYC-related events all over the world, including those led by UNDESA in New York and Ethiopia, by the ICA in Quebec and Manchester, and by the Plunkett Foundation in Dunsany.

8. The FAO Director-General met with several Heads of State, and Ministers to share FAO's vision on the importance of agricultural cooperatives and producer organizations as an effective way to achieve food security and reduce hunger in the world.

9. The **WFD** on the theme of "*Agricultural Cooperatives: key to feeding the world*" was observed at FAO Headquarters and in all FAO country offices as part of the World Food Week activities. Other events took place during the 39th Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). The WFD theme inspired a wide variety of events and activities in FAO Member Countries, which benefited from the support of FAO Representations and other decentralized offices. Focal points were established in various institutions in cases where there was no FAO office.

10. Reports received from FAO offices worldwide indicate that some 98 countries held WFD observances or marked the occasion in other ways. At least 13 countries organized a "Hunger Run" or similar race or walk. Numerous events benefited from the active participation and presence of FAO goodwill ambassadors and other personalities lending their support to the Organization. These were attended by representatives of national and local government, UN agencies, the donor community, international and local non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, the private sector, schools and universities with substantive media coverage at national and international levels. The Outreach and Advocacy Branch of the Office of Communication, Partnerships and Advocacy prepared a detailed report of activities in the different regions which can be found on the FAO website link: <http://www.fao.org/getinvolved/worldfoodday/worldwideevents/en/>

11. FAO partnered with the United Nations Women's Guild in Rome, Italy, to conduct the first annual international **WFD Poster Contest**, in which children and young people designed posters highlighting the role of cooperatives in improving food security and contributing to the eradication of hunger. The contest received 3,621 posters from 72 different countries. Communication materials were developed including an FAO video film clip, brochures, posters and flyers, including television spots to increase awareness and to showcase the role of agricultural cooperatives during the WFD Ceremonies at headquarters and worldwide. The WFD events enjoyed broad international media coverage and many were web streamed. Websites were also updated to cover events and interviews with cooperative representatives, farmers and cooperative experts. Monitoring of print and online media recorded a total of 2,326 mentions of WFD in association with FAO for the languages searched (English, French, Spanish, Italian and German) on 1-18 October. The total number of stories mentioning WFD celebrations which were not organized by FAO was of 3,908. This brings the total for all stories mentioning WFD (with and without FAO mention) to 5,995. The worldwide community radio network of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) provided coverage of the WFD with radio programs broadcast through local community radio stations and live-streamed on the AMARC WFD 2012 (web page: <http://www2.amarc.org/?q=wfd2012>).

12. The UN Secretary-General, the Presidents of the UN General Assembly and of ECOSOC, and the FAO Director-General issued their statements during WFD. A high level event was held in New York during the closing ceremony of the IYC on 19-20 November with the participation of key member governments, the head of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), leaders of cooperatives and wider UN community. The UN and FAO jointly organized a dedicated portion during the event to convey WFD messages. The WFD video feature was screened and WFD materials were distributed to participants.

13. A Joint FAO-COPAC side-event was held during the 39th Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on Wednesday 17 October entitled “*Enabling Agricultural Cooperatives: paradigm shift for economic and social inclusion.*” More than 80 CFS participants attended this successful joint side event. Participants discussed and raised the issue of enabling agricultural cooperatives as a key issues for the success of thriving cooperative enterprises. Participants came up with key recommendations for FAO’s future work programme including the need to carry out a *stocktaking exercise* and documenting needs and practices, as well as lessons learned, for engaging in effective partnerships with cooperatives and producer organizations. The development of strategic multi-stakeholder partnerships at the global, regional and national levels was also one of the key recommendations from this event.

14. The Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition conducted an **On-line policy dialogue** discussion on the topic of “*Enabling rural cooperatives and producer organizations to thrive as sustainable business enterprises*” (<http://www.fao.org/fsnforum>) from 12 July to 6 August 2012. The discussions and debates were facilitated by two FAO Retiree experts on cooperatives and producer organizations. There were a total of 54 contributions shared among participants from 25 countries. The contributors were from Africa (43%) followed by Europe (28%), Asia (17%), Latin America and the Caribbean (6%) and by North America and Southeast Pacific (respectively 4% and 2 %). The outcome of the Forum also provided key recommendations for FAO’s future work on cooperatives. The full text of all contributions can be found at: http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/sites/default/files/file/82_cooperatives/PROCEEDINGS_82_Rural_cooperatives.doc

15. ICA, ILO and FAO, jointly with UNDESA contributed to the success of the IYC launch by the UN General Assembly, the UN ECOSOC Ministerial Breakfast, and to the Global Forum and Workshop on Cooperatives. The outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development – Rio+20, acknowledges the contribution of cooperatives to social inclusion, poverty reduction, agricultural development and job creation. Throughout the Year, FAO staff supported and participated in major IYC events around the world. FAO organized several major high level events during FAO governing bodies and technical committee meetings that provided key recommendations to FAO’s future work programme and activities. The list of global events organized by FAO and/or jointly organized with partners, and major participation is included in Annex 1.

B. Knowledge generation, sharing and dissemination

16. A Joint FAO-IFAD publication on “Good Practices in Building Innovative Rural Institutions to Increase Food Security” was released, and a joint FAO-IFAD-WFP Flyer, including the IYC 2012 key messages on “Agricultural cooperatives: paving the way for food security and rural development”, was developed and widely disseminated.

17. **Thematic briefs on agricultural cooperatives** were developed by FAO, in collaboration with the Rome-based agencies, on youth, fisheries, forestry, gender, market linkages, the agri-business model and food losses. (See website link: <http://www.fao.org/partnerships/fao-partnerships/producer-organizations-and-cooperatives/en/>).

18. A new “**Learning Module on Organizational Analysis and Development**” has been developed to ensure a more corporate systematic approach to supporting cooperatives and producer organizations and to showcase FAO’s experience in these areas. The Learning Module showcases FAO’s experience and institutional memory on integrated approaches and tools and methodology from

the past two decades carried out by FAO technical staff. It serves as a tool to support practitioners to better engage with producer organizations and cooperatives at the global, regional and country levels.

19. A joint FAO-World Bank study on the “Review of World Bank Investments in Building the Capacity of Rural Producer Organizations (RPOs) from 2004 to 2010” was published to analyze the trends in investments in developing the capacities of RPOs.

20. FAO Annual Report of Activities in Support of Producer Organizations and Cooperatives has been completed.

21. A new **integrated methodology entitled “CoOPequity”** is being developed at country level, to improve rural men and women’s food security through gender-equitable, well governed and efficient cooperatives and producer organizations.

22. FAO’s long standing project, **Dimitra**, a gender sensitive and participatory information and communication methodology, is being upscaled as a social mobilization tool to improve the participation of women and men within producer organizations and cooperatives, including in leadership roles. (See website link: <http://www.fao.org/dimitra/en/>)

C. Strategic Multi-stakeholder Partnerships at country level to support capacities of cooperatives and producer organizations

23. A key part of the IYC and beyond implementation plan is the development of **Peer-to-Peer multi-stakeholder based Partnership initiatives** among federated producer organizations and cooperatives, as a means of knowledge exchange and support to the capacities of cooperatives and producer organizations to become efficient service providers, self-reliant and economically viable, and to achieve sustainable governance.

D. Conclusion

24. Throughout the IYC, FAO took advantage of the opportunity offered by the UN General Assembly to call the world’s attention by proclaiming ‘*Agricultural cooperatives - key to feeding the world*’ as the theme of the 2012 WFD. There is now further recognition that the cooperative enterprise model proved to be resistant to shocks and crisis, and can contribute to improve food security and reduce poverty. The joint actions undertaken by COPAC members throughout the Year will be brought up to the UN in finalizing the Draft International Plan of Action on Cooperatives for 2012 and Beyond, for its submission to the General Assembly in October 2013. Beyond 2012, FAO will continue to promote the crucial role of agricultural cooperatives and producer organizations, and to strengthen their capacity to better perform and become more equitable and efficient through effective multi-stakeholder partnerships.

ANNEX 1

**List of Global Events organized by FAO
and/or jointly organized with partners, and major participation**

Dates of Events	Organizing host partners	Venue	Title/Activity
31 October 2011	Joint FAO, IFAD and WFP (Rome-based Agency (RBA) Event at the United Nations General Assembly	New York	The official launch of the International Year of Cooperatives 2012 (IYC)
15 February 2012	Joint RBA side event organized at IFAD Farmers Youth Forum	Rome	The role of agricultural cooperatives
27 February - 9 March 2012	Joint RBA, UN Women, ILO and others Event at UN Fifty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)	New York	The role of women in agricultural cooperatives
29 May 2012	FAO-organized Side Event during the FAO Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP)	Rome	Working Together for the 2012 International Year of Cooperatives
06 June 2012	Joint FAO-WFO joint session to celebrate the IYC during the World Farmers Forum General Assembly	Rome	– The Enabling Environment for Pos and Cooperatives
06 June 2012	UN Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) and Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) Event	New York	Presentation on Cooperatives and the Role of Information and Communication Technology
11-15 June 2012	FAO Council	Rome	Agenda Item 18. 2. Briefing to the Council members on the International Year of Cooperatives (2012)
05 July 2012	UN ECOSOC High-Level Segment of 2012 Session Ministerial Breakfast, Division for Social Policy and Development in UNDESA in collaboration with FAO and ILO	New York	Promoting Productive Capacity for Sustainable Livelihood: the Role of Cooperatives
07 July 2012	United Nations and ICA	Global	18th UN International Day of Co-operatives
09 July 2012	FAO celebration of the International Day of Cooperatives	Rome	Inauguration of the Director-General Special physical space dedicated for Civil Society and producer organizations
09 July 2012	Joint Side Event of FAO and IFAD at the Committee on Fisheries (COFI)	Rome	Cooperatives in small-scale fisheries: enabling successes through community empowerment

4-6 September 2012	UN DESA Global Forum on Cooperatives	Addis Ababa	Ambassador Atangana Presentation at the Global Forum on Cooperatives on the role of agricultural cooperatives and producer organizations
17 October 2012	Joint FAO-COPAC Side Event at the 38th Committee on Food Security	Rome	Enabling Agricultural Cooperatives: A paradigm shift for economic and social inclusion
31 October 2012	World Co-operative Forum organized by International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)	Manchester	FAO Director-General attendance and keynote speech
19-20 November 2012	UN DESA	New York	FAO presentation and participation at the IYC closing ceremony