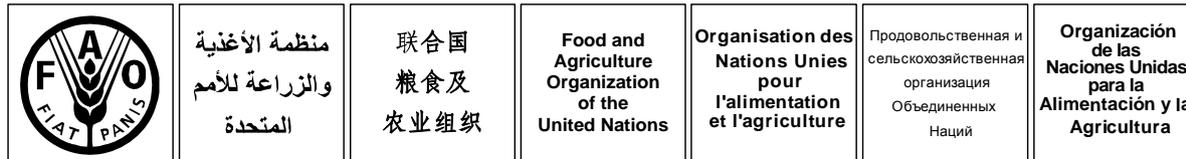


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FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean

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Repositioning Family Farming on the Latin American and Caribbean Agenda

Executive summary

- Latin America and the Caribbean has made significant progress in the struggle to eradicate hunger and poverty. Some countries have seen a reduction in inequalities in areas such as income distribution and access to basic services including health and education. This is largely due to the strong political commitment from many of the region's countries, which has been reflected in the development and implementation of various public policies that have had a huge positive impact on the most vulnerable families.
- Among the most striking of the region's many policy instruments are those that support family farming,¹ as they have revealed this sector's importance and potential in terms of: i) strengthening and boosting regional and territorial economies; ii) contributing to natural resource management (water, biodiversity and so on); iii) strengthening national food and nutritional security strategies with regard to food diversity and production; and iv) using territorial spaces in a balanced and sustainable way that helps to solve problems relating to overpopulation in large cities.
- With a view to reinforcing and demonstrating the importance of family farming, the UN has declared 2014 the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF). The goal of IYFF 2014 is to reposition family farming at the heart of national agendas and policies on crops, livestock, small-scale fishing, limited resources and forestry, in order to identify gaps and promote a shift towards more equitable, sustainable and balanced development.
- In accordance with these principles, at its 2nd Summit in Havana (2014) the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) declared its support for the IYFF (point 61 of the Declaration) and adopted the Caracas Action Plan for Social Development for the Eradication of Hunger (point 3 of the Declaration), which agrees on actions to benefit family

¹ The concept of family farming used in this document corresponds to the definition in the FAO Medium-Term Strategic Framework for Cooperation in Family Agriculture in Latin America and the Caribbean (2012–2015), which involves the equal inclusion of both genders. In this document, the term “family farmers” is understood to refer to both genders.

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farming and sustainable rural development – with a view to improving the living conditions of those involved. Furthermore, an Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group was set up in order to implement a regional integration agenda on rural development and family farming, with support from the FAO Regional Office.

Actions suggested by the Regional Conference

- Back and support the implementation of the 2014 CELAC Action Plan in its sections on family farming and food and nutritional security; and on the eradication of hunger and poverty;
- Ask FAO to create a South-South cooperation mechanism in the region to identify and make available to countries rural development strategies and policies, as well as rural development programmes with an emphasis on family farming and food and nutritional security.

Any questions about the content of this document should be sent to Mr. Tito Diaz, Secretary for LARC 33 Tito.Diaz@fao.org Tel. 56-2 2923-2250

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The aim of this document is to facilitate discussions during the 33rd session of the FAO Regional Conference, against a background of events during 2013, such as the first Regional Dialogue on Family Farming held in Santiago, Chile, in October. This report also considered and appreciated the various initiatives for political dialogue in the region, as well as the cumulative experience of social movements and governments around public policies on family farming. The report aims to provide elements of analysis on ongoing limitations for rural development, and state the main challenges and opportunities provided by the 2014 International Year of Family Farming.

II. OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN THE AGENDA OF FAMILY FARMING AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

2. The 2014 IYFF will definitely offer a major window of opportunity for discussing rural development and the contribution of family farming to the socio-economic development of Latin American and Caribbean countries. One reflection of this is the wealth of arguments used by the UN when it discussed and subsequently adopted 2014 as IYFF. Countries agreed that the aim of the Year is *“to raise the profile of family farming and smallholder farming by focusing world attention on its significant role in eradicating hunger and poverty, providing food security and nutrition, improving livelihoods, managing natural resources, protecting the environment, and achieving sustainable development, in particular in rural areas”*.

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 a more equal and balanced development. The 2014 IYFF will promote broad discussion and cooperation at the 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. Another important political forum for reflecting on this matter is CELAC (the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), which in Havana earlier this year made declarations in explicit support of the IYFF, and this was later confirmed by the Caracas Action Plan for Social Development for the Eradication of Hunger and Poverty.

5. The second section of the Plan deals exclusively with family farming, and states that it is a CELAC priority to *“Promote sustainable rural development and family farming with the aim of improving the living conditions of those who practice it through leveling productivity potential,*

greater opportunities for sustainable development of the agricultural activity, the improvement of the productive processes through direct technical assistance, access to tools and technologies to optimize work and the constant search of linkages with markets to insure fair revenues. Reduce the socioeconomic inequalities prevailing in the countries of the region, through regional cooperation, integration and the development of public policies facilitating access to land, inputs, water, scientific and technological developments, including social technologies, credits and insurance. Likewise promote procurement of family farming products as a relevant instrument to foster production and permanence of farmers, peasants, and the indigenous population in rural areas, equality and economic autonomy of rural women, and associations and cooperatives”.

6. More specifically, the Plan proposes to analyse the possibility of setting up a regional fund “as a means of generating rural employment and ensuring rational nutrition, determine the productive gaps present in the segments of family agriculture in member countries, in order to establish actions and programmes for its resolution in individual or collaborative manner among States and seek the best ways of supporting, by means of training activities, technical assistance and development of investments, that lead to the improvement of the productivity of farming in the region, incorporating technology and optimizing processes. Request the PTP to actively seek the venue and date of this meeting”.

7. The Plan also mentions the creation of an Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group coordinated by the CELAC PTP with the purpose of implementing, with the support of the FAO Regional Office, a regional integration agenda on rural development and family farming, and to explore options for cooperation and exchanging experiences among CELAC countries. The idea is to involve contributions of family farmers’ associations, and promote dialogue and cooperation regarding rural territorial development and family, peasant and indigenous agriculture through initiatives carried out by member States.

8. On the topic of family farming, it is vital for the 33rd session of the FAO Regional Conference to strengthen and promote dialogue in accordance with CELAC guidelines, with a focus on initiatives undertaken by member States and development agencies in the region.

III. THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY FARMING

9. *Family farming and the potential to meet world food demand:* there is now a broad consensus that this sector has the potential to increase food supply and improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations in rural areas. Family farmers produce almost 70% of the food in the basic basket of some of the region’s countries (FAO, 2012). For governments, this makes it a fundamental part of food and nutritional security and the eradication of hunger and malnutrition (particularly in the form of obesity). From an urban perspective and linked to the food and nutritional security agenda, many urban and peri-urban farming experiences are also an important part of food-production experiences in family farming (mainly in Cuba and the Plurinational State of Bolivia).

10. *The contribution of family farming to society and the development of public policies in the region:* family farming’s visibility and its potential to produce quality goods and services is reflected in its importance to the region’s sectoral GDP, rural job creation (employment), preservation of natural resources and biodiversity, its rich multiethnicity and its contribution to the eradication of rural poverty.

11. *Public institutions focused on the development of family farming:* the region currently has a wealth of public policy instruments that have been discussed in various forums for political dialogue. Many have been tested and implemented by governments, while others have been adapted and appropriated by the region’s family farming organizations. Most countries have implemented rural development policies and programmes to promote production and social development that have improved access to public policies and had an impact on the income and living standards of family farmers. Having said that, rural development institutions should be scaled up, widen their coverage to

encompass a more cross-cutting vision, adapt and enhance public-private coordination² (governance) to improve policies in the sector.

12. *Family farming as a potential provider of healthy and nutritional food:* In parallel, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) is drawing attention to the widespread persistence and/or increase of various forms of malnutrition and non-communicable diet-related diseases (such as obesity and diabetes) among children, young people and adults. This calls for a coherent and integrated response, which in turn requires bringing together the agendas of family farming, food security, protection of natural and cultural/ancestral resources (such as the use of quinoa, for instance), human health care and nutrition. In the broader context (farming, livestock, fishing and aquaculture), family farming is a source of healthy, nutritious, largely unprocessed, fresh food, with the relevant implications on the eating habits of the population.

13. *Contribution to sustainable development:* the ancestral production practices of family farming provide the key to developing sustainable agroproduction systems such as strategies to protect soil, biodiversity and germplasms in situ.

IV. CHALLENGES FOR FAMILY FARMING IN THE REGION

14. *Improving and broadening the understanding of family farming:* although family farming is broad and heterogeneous, most of its problems and opportunities are shared and cut across the various regions of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). There is a widely shared holistic vision of family farming as not merely defined by its agroproduction features but as a way of life that respects the environment, protects biodiversity, supports cultural traditions, promotes territorial development, contributes to sustainable production and generates health benefits. This sectoral view is vital in defining budgets and targeting public policies, as a systemic vision improves understanding of the sector's reach in society, as well as its contribution to food and nutritional security in the region. It also makes it possible to involve actors that represent diversity in the rural world of Latin America and the Caribbean: peasants, indigenous peoples, Afrodescendants, fisher folk, livestock keepers and gatherers.

15. *Intersectoral cooperation and coordination to increase impact in the field:* family farming development requires the introduction of public policies and programmes that go beyond the scope of agricultural institutions. A multisectoral rural development strategy must also include infrastructure investment (roads, irrigation, electricity, telecommunications and so on), service development with suitable availability of essential public goods (such as schools, hospitals, housing and sanitation) and social protection and development programmes. Horizontal policy coordination and intersectoral cooperation for the development of family farming could improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the projects of various sectors that influence rural development. Key elements of national strategies to strengthen family farming should tackle farmers' access to information and ICTs (information and communications technologies), as well as improving their organizational and technical capacities in sustainable production practices, for instance.

16. *Participation of family farmers and their organizations is key to developing and stepping up public policies in most countries:* many family farmers have some link to a community or territorial organization, and in some cases to trade associations. Collective action is vital to help overcome representation and governance issues, as well as to help encourage an increase in production volumes, add value to production, bring down transaction costs and improve access to markets and financing.

17. *Access to natural resources is a priority for family farmers:* family farmers face restrictions when it comes to developing their production and keeping their land, mainly due to the limited availability of and access to land and water. This problem is largely attributable to the high concentration of ownership and exercise of rights over registered properties in the region. Furthermore, many family farmers are located in marginal areas with low-productivity, degraded land and no irrigation technology. Besides this, land and water use for purposes other than agriculture has

² "Public" refers to actors of the Executive and Legislature. "Private" refers to the family farmers themselves, as well as representative organizations, NGOs, academia, business and others.

had a negative impact on the availability, access and quality of such resources. Tackling the challenge of water access is key if family farmers are to reduce the potentially negative effects of drought on their yield and lives.

18. *Financing for family farming in the region*: notwithstanding the various initiatives of financial services for family farmers, there are asymmetries that make it difficult for family farmers to access public and private banking services to finance their production. Funding sources available for family farming in the region are insufficient and lack variety, and they often operate in regulatory frameworks that do not respond to the needs of family farmers. New financing instruments are required to meet the specific needs of family farmers, with regulations that facilitate their use and supplementary tools such as insurance, price guarantees and rural outreach.

19. *Public policies for rural youth*: just as important as policies on access to finance are the public policies that need to be boosted to enable young people in rural areas to design processes for building their future based on their identity and economic autonomy. There is a need for comprehensive rural development strategies that improve the socio-economic and cultural conditions and the well-being of rural families, such that young people can fully develop their expectations of rural life. One of the ultimate aims of drawing the State's attention to this age group will be to reverse the steady process of ageing and/or decline in the rural population that has been under way in many of the region's countries for several decades.

20. *Public policies for women family farmers*: in most of the region's countries, women family farmers face restrictions in accessing production resources and improving their socio-economic situation. This results in higher poverty rates among households headed by women. The challenge is to design and implement public policies to strengthen women's financial autonomy, as well as continuing with public and private campaigns to raise awareness of the implications of failing to enforce the basic human rights of rural women.

V. FORUMS FOR DIALOGUE, POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE REGION

21. *MERCOSUR Specialized Meeting on Family Farming (REAF)*: this forum for family farming organizations and governments of MERCOSUR member and associate countries arose as a result of the political importance and socio-economic dimension of family farming in the trade bloc. Its aims are to strengthen public policies for family farming in MERCOSUR and to promote trade in family farming produce, with a view to reducing market-generated asymmetries and promoting rural development in the region. Its methodology, based on political dialogue, has achieved concrete results in terms of countries' public policies, including: i) introduction of criteria for defining family farming in the region; ii) creation of the MERCOSUR Family Farming Fund; iii) guidelines for gender equality in family farming public policies (2008); iv) Regional rural youth training programme; v) Regional programme for public gender equity policies; and vi) Regional programme on public procurement policies relating to family farming.

22. *Central American Agricultural Council (CAC)*: body of the Central American Integration System (SICA), made up of Central American Ministers of Agriculture. Since the 10th Summit of Presidents of the region, held in El Salvador in July 1991, CAC has been recognized as the ideal institution to link the agricultural sector with other bodies of Central American integration (SICA, 2014). One of its main tools for discussing actions on improving the conditions of family farming and rural territories is the 2010 - 2030 Central American Strategy for Territorial Rural Development (ECADERT), which was mandated by Heads of State in the SICA framework. Actions relating to family farming in ECADERT are now implemented by the Regional advocacy group for family farming and territorial development, which coordinates actions with the Inter-agency group on family farming and territorial development (in the ECADERT regional technical support platform) (ECADERT, 2014).

23. *The Alliance for Food Sovereignty of the Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean*: this is a forum facilitating dialogue and policy coordination for peasant, family farmer, urban agriculture, pastoralist, indigenous, small-scale fishery, rural worker, agro-ecological peasant, women, youth, environmental, consumer and other organizations and movements involved in the struggle for food sovereignty. There are now approximately 16 Latin American and Caribbean regional and sub-regional networks arising from the need for stronger regional representation on behalf of diverse stakeholders within the rural sector, as well as the need to promote the same message throughout the entire Latin American and Caribbean area: the need to safeguard the food sovereignty of peoples. The Alliance currently participates as a group in such sub-regional, regional and worldwide fora as the Committee on World Food Security.

VI. FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION ON POLICIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILY FARMING IN THE REGION

24. *Registers of family farming*: there is insufficient quantitative information on family farming in the region, and efforts should be made to consolidate such data, so that they can become a key instrument for public-policy design and implementation. The creation of National Registers of Family Farming with the same criteria in all countries will make it possible to measure this group's contribution to the region, as well as facilitating the formulation and targeting of specific programmes and policies for this sector.

25. *Facilitating and promoting the participation of family farmers in policymaking*: developing the sector requires the participation of farmers, small-scale family livestock keepers, fisher folk, fish farmers and foresters and their organizations throughout the public-policy cycle (problem conceptualization, agenda placement, solution design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation). Various mechanisms should be explored to facilitate ongoing political dialogue among governments, members of the legislature and family farming organizations that yields tangible results.

26. *Public procurement policies and family farming*: the aim is to strengthen family farming by promoting access to food for vulnerable populations and boosting local development. Furthermore, this type of policy facilitates the development and implementation of food distribution strategies (basic baskets, emergency programmes and so on). Another major opportunity is offered by the potential links between family farming and school feeding programmes.

27. *Raising the profile of family farming*: this involves acknowledging and publicising the potential of family farming to raise awareness of the benefits of family food production. Tried and tested mechanisms in the region include events such as consumer and/or technology fairs; creation of national IYFF support committees; and the strengthening of national information systems (censuses) with a particular focus on family farming.

28. *Public agricultural policies that facilitate comprehensive rural development dynamics*: this involves policies for finance, insurance (climate and price), technical assistance and rural outreach, price-guarantee systems, market-access facilitation and strengthening and promotion of cooperatives and associations.

29. *Promoting the economic organizations of family farmers*: for farmers, the advantages of collective and community work result in various benefits in terms of production, cost reduction and market access. Governments need to generate public policies and promote legal and regulatory frameworks that promote and boost the formation of organizations and strengthen existing ones. The aim should be to encourage the formation of rural organizations, provide training programmes for rural leaders and promote the exchange of international experiences (South-South cooperation) among farmer organizations.

30. *Strengthening access to production resources and improving access to land, water and seeds*: low quality and availability of good land and water resources undermines family farming production systems, thereby compromising the sustainability of the sector. Countries should therefore step up the implementation of programmes to improve access to land, water and irrigation technologies and techniques. These should be supplemented by the use of alternative water-harvesting and soil-

conservation technologies. The State should provide a framework for public policies and for the participation of family farming organizations in the design and implementation of integrated national strategies relating to appropriate use of resources through the planning of resource management.

VII. Guidance sought

The Regional Conference is invited to:

- As part of the CELAC 2014 Action Plan, ratify the CELAC request for FAO to support implementation of the regional integration agenda on rural development and family farming.
- Recognize the wealth of initiatives in the form of policies and programmes developed by various countries and regions, as well as the public policy dialogue, as mechanisms that facilitate the ongoing strengthening of family farming and the generation of new instruments for its development.
- Agree to the creation of an instrument to facilitate South-South cooperation through FAO, for the exchange of national success stories on the topics covered in this document (with particular emphasis on public policies targeting women and young people).
- Support the creation of National Committees to promote the IYFF by encouraging the emergence of national dialogue forums around a specific agenda of actions to benefit family farming.

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