

THE CHALLENGES OF AGRICULTURE IN THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FAMILY FARMING

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The United Nations, since 1959, established several annual events, which aim to arouse the interest of society to certain global aspects that should merit attention. The first International Year was dedicated to the "Refugee" (World Refugee Year) by the UN General Assembly, which is the international institution stating years. In 2011, the General Assembly of the United Nations invited the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) to facilitate the implementation in 2014 of the "International Year of Family Farming" (IYFF) in collaboration with various non-governmental, government and international stakeholders.

Additionally, as usual, there were simultaneously held other "Years", in this case referring to the "Solidarity with the Palestinian People", "Small Island developing States" and "Crystallography".

The UN, in the IYFF, aims to increase the visibility of family farming-small scale, locally and globally, based upon the important role of this agricultural practice in eradicating hunger and poverty, food security, management of natural resources and environmental protection to achieve sustainable development, especially in rural areas.

Conceptually, the UN defines Family Farming as: "... all family-based farming and is related to several areas of rural development. Family farming is a way of classifying the agriculture, forestry, fisheries, aquaculture production and livestock managed and operated by a family and they mainly depend on family labour, including both women and men". Moreover, business choices made by independent farming families, when confronting the need to diversify away from traditional agricultural activities by starting farm-based tourism businesses also should be considered (Di Domenico and Miller, 2012).

The key objectives of the IYFF are:

1. Support the development of policies conducive to sustainable family farming by encouraging governments to establish the enabling environment (conducive policies, adequate legislation, participatory planning for a policy dialogue, investments) for the sustainable development of family farming.
2. Increase knowledge, communication and public awareness.

3. Attain better understanding of family farming needs, potential and constraints and ensure technical support.
4. Create synergies for sustainability.

These objectives should be achieved through three global lines of action:

1. Promotion of dialogue in policy decision-making processes.
2. Identification, documentation and sharing lessons learned and successful experiences of existing pro-family farming policies at national and/or other levels to capitalize relevant knowledge on family farming.
3. Communication, advocacy and outreach.

The main question arising from the UN declaration is: how important family farming is? (FAO, 2014). As an example, in Galicia (NW Spain), agriculture is fully present in the daily life of the region, not just in rural areas; because even on the periphery of cities abound small orchards and farms that provide food and other goods to families. The Galician Institute of Statistics registered in 2009 about 80000 farms (IGE, 2010), mostly family-type small scale, but it significantly contributing to family and regional economy. Globally, it is estimated that there are over 500 million small-scale family farms, representing 85 % of the total in Asia, 62% in Africa, 83% in Central and North America, 68% in Europe and 18% in South America (McDonald 2014, Velasco Arranz, 2014).

These figures indicate the relevance of these farms, especially in times of scarcity, which allowed families to survive in many parts of the planet. Therefore, family farming, which is ultimately an agricultural small-scale production, is linked inseparably to food, local, regional and even global security; therefore, it represents an opportunity to boost the local economy, especially when combined with active policies to social protection and welfare of society, especially in rural and suburban areas.

References

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