

Document: EB 2018/124/R.40  
Agenda: 11  
Date: 14 August 2018  
Distribution: Public  
Original: English

E



Investing in rural people

## IFAD and the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028)

### Note to Executive Board representatives

#### Focal points:

#### Technical questions:

Ashwani K. Muthoo  
Director  
Global Engagement and Multilateral Relations Division  
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2053  
e-mail: a.muthoo@ifad.org

Torben Nilsson  
Senior Global Engagement Specialist  
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2447  
e-mail: t.nilsson@ifad.org

#### Dispatch of documentation:

Deirdre McGrenra  
Chief  
Governing Bodies  
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2374  
e-mail: gb@ifad.org

Executive Board — 124<sup>th</sup> Session  
Rome, 11-13 September 2018

---

For: Review

## Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms	ii
I. Introduction	1
II. Background	1
III. Family farming in the context of the 2030 Agenda and IFAD	2
IV. Objective of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming	2
V. Development of an action plan and a governance structure	3
VI. Launch of the Decade of Family Farming	4
VII. Funding	4
VIII. Reporting	4

Annex: United Nations General Assembly resolution 72/239

## Abbreviations and acronyms

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IYFF	International Year of Family Farming
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

# IFAD and the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028)

## I. Introduction

1. The purpose of this document is to brief the IFAD Executive Board on the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028) and to seek its feedback at an early stage in the process of developing an action plan for the implementation of the Decade, the establishment of an international steering committee, the preparation of the corresponding reports and other related tasks.

## II. Background

2. The International Year of Family Farming. The year 2014 was declared the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF). IFAD actively supported both the process leading up to that declaration and the actual implementation of IYFF, which was successful in raising global awareness of the important role played by family farming in food security, nutrition and rural development. The document entitled *Legacy of IYFF 2014 and the Way Forward*<sup>1</sup> covers the main results of the IYFF and calls for actions to be taken to implement the recommendations resulting from the broad policy consultations held during the IYFF. By dedicating the year 2014 to family farming, the United Nations repositioned family farming at the centre of agricultural, environmental and social policies and helped to identify both needs and opportunities for strengthening political commitments to family farming at the national, regional and global levels.
3. The adoption of a United Nations resolution. On 20 December 2017, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 72/239, by which it declared 2019-2028 to be the Decade of Family Farming. (See the annex for the full text of the resolution.)
4. The resolution was adopted unanimously following a successful campaign which was led by the Government of Costa Rica and the World Rural Forum and actively supported by IFAD, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and a range of other partners. The fact that the resolution was endorsed by 104 Member States attests to the importance of family farming in the promotion of sustainable and inclusive rural transformation and the achievement of the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
5. The United Nations resolution explicitly calls upon FAO and IFAD to lead the implementation of the Decade, in collaboration with other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, including by identifying and developing possible activities and programmes, within their mandates and existing resources and through voluntary contributions, as appropriate.
6. The role of family farming. In 2014 the United Nations acknowledged that family farming is the predominant form of food and agricultural production in both developed and developing countries. Family farmers, including fishers and pastoralists from every region and biome of the world, produce over 80 per cent of the world's food in value terms.<sup>2</sup> More than 90 per cent of all farms in the world (over 500 million farms) are managed by a family and rely primarily on family labour, and 84 per cent of all farms are small farms (less than 2 hectares).<sup>3</sup>
7. Family farming and smallholder agriculture. Although there are several country-specific definitions of family farming, the concept is primarily understood as referring to the type of management or

<sup>1</sup> See [IYFF Legacy and Way Forward Document](#).

<sup>2</sup> See [FAO \(2014\), The State of Food and Agriculture: Innovation in family farming](#).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

ownership of the farm and the type of labour employed on it. The working definition of family farming agreed upon by the International Steering Committee of the IYFF states that: "The family and the farm are linked, co-evolve and combine economic, environmental, reproductive, social and cultural functions."<sup>4</sup> Along the same lines, the High-level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition<sup>5</sup> describes smallholder agriculture as agriculture that "is practised by families using only or mostly family labour and deriving from that work a large but variable share of their income, in kind or in cash". This type of agriculture includes crop-farming, animal husbandry, forestry and artisanal fisheries. The holdings are run by family groups, a large proportion of which are headed by women, and women play important roles in such farms' production, processing and marketing activities. Country-specific variations and classifications based solely on farm size can be misleading. Generally speaking, the term "family farming" is commonly used in the Americas and in West Africa, while reference to smallholder agriculture (or farming) is more common in Asia. In practice, and in most countries, the concepts of family farming and smallholder agriculture largely overlap.

### III. Family farming in the context of the 2030 Agenda and IFAD

8. Smallholder agriculture and the 2030 Agenda. The importance of smallholder agriculture for sustainable development is acknowledged in the 2030 Agenda, most notably in SDG 2.3: "By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and nonfarm employment." Along the same lines, the Ministerial Declaration of the 2018 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development states that: "Ending hunger and achieving food security is fundamental for sustainable development."<sup>6</sup>
9. Smallholder agriculture is at the core of IFAD's mandate. The Agreement Establishing IFAD recognizes that the Fund should focus on food production in developing countries and improve the nutritional level of the poorest populations. The IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025 emphasizes that IFAD will invest in rural people and enable inclusive and sustainable rural transformation, notably through growth led by smallholder agriculture. More recently, in the context of the Eleventh Replenishment of IFAD's resources, Member States recognized that IFAD has an important role to play in promoting smallholder agriculture, achieving food security and raising income and nutritional levels. Against this backdrop and thanks to its 40 years of experience and its track record in this field, IFAD is well positioned, along with FAO and other partners, to carry forward the implementation of the Decade of Family Farming.

### IV. Objective of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming

10. The Decade is intended to focus the efforts of the international community – including governments (both national and local), parliamentarians, international organizations, specialized agencies and other competent bodies of the United Nations, international financial institutions and other international mechanisms, regional bodies, academia, research institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector – on strengthening the position of family farming in economic, environmental and social policies at all levels, thereby contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

---

<sup>4</sup> See the [IYFF+10 website](#).

<sup>5</sup> See High-level Panel of Experts (2013), [Investing in Smallholder Agriculture for Food Security](#).

<sup>6</sup> See the [Ministerial Declaration of the High-level Political Forum 2018](#).

11. The following specific objectives for the Decade are currently being discussed among key partners and will be presented to its international steering committee for consideration before the end of the year:
- (a) Attain a better understanding and raise public awareness of the needs and constraints relating to family farming and its fundamental role in feeding humankind, creating jobs, conserving historical, cultural and natural heritage, halting the loss of biodiversity, driving innovation, promoting peace and combating climate change. Review and reflect on the status of family-based agriculture, fisheries and forestry as it relates to food security, sustainability and equitable sustainable development;
  - (b) Improve the policy and legal frameworks for agriculture and rural development and support the formulation of policies conducive to sustainable family farming at the local, national, regional and global levels that take into account the context-specific farm profiles and positions existing within different food systems;
  - (c) Catalyse and facilitate the alignment of the ongoing efforts of multiple actors from all sectors at the global, regional, national and local levels; strengthen cooperation among them in order to foster family farming and to eradicate rural poverty, with particular reference to North-South, South-South, triangular and farmer-to-farmer cooperation; and encourage their coordinated engagement in resource mobilization;
  - (d) Promote collective actions and strengthen producers' organizations, farmers' associations and agricultural cooperatives in order to foster the social and economic empowerment of family farmers and enhance their entrepreneurial and negotiating capacities;
  - (e) Safeguard the future of family farming through the promotion of young people's access to rural development policies and programmes, infrastructure, and public goods and services in order to encourage them to remain in the countryside and to become agents of sustainable rural development;
  - (f) Promote affirmative action and instruments for achieving gender equality in food systems and agricultural production and for empowering women by providing increased access to information, productive and financial resources (especially land), social protection policies and other assets.

## V. Development of an action plan and a governance structure

12. Collaboration among Rome-based agencies. As mentioned above, the United Nations resolution on the Decade of Family Farming calls for FAO and IFAD to lead the implementation of the Decade. Therefore, in the broader spirit of further strengthening collaboration among the Rome-based agencies, IFAD and FAO are working very closely<sup>7</sup> and consulting extensively with the Member States and non-state actors that took part in the campaign for the Decade of Family Farming in order to determine the best way forward.
13. Development of an action plan. There is broad agreement among the main partners that a coherent action plan is needed to guide the implementation of the Decade. The plan may also serve as a basis for identifying key activities, mobilizing voluntary contributions, assigning roles and responsibilities, defining indicators of success, monitoring progress and reporting to relevant constituencies. Discussions

---

<sup>7</sup> The Global Engagement and Multilateral Relations Division of IFAD and the Partnerships and South-South Cooperation Division of FAO have been designated as the organizational focal points for the United Nations Decade of Family Farming.

are under way on the contents and structure of the plan, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2018.

14. Establishing an international steering committee. In order to ensure an inclusive and structured approach to the Decade of Family Farming, consultations are currently under way with a view to constituting an international steering committee for the Decade of Family Farming.
15. Although the terms of reference and governance structure of the steering committee are still being conceptualized, the broad purpose of the committee will be to participate in the development and implementation of the Decade, monitor the corresponding activities and provide guidance for any adjustments needed along the way. FAO and IFAD will jointly serve as the secretariat of the steering committee.
16. The committee's members will include representatives from FAO and IFAD, from a regionally representative group of Member States and from global and regional farmers' organizations. The World Food Programme will also be invited to join. In order to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the committee's work, it will have a maximum of approximately 20 members.

## VI. Launch of the Decade of Family Farming

17. In order to formally launch the Decade, FAO and IFAD are jointly planning, together with other partners, to hold a high-level conference in Rome on the Decade of Family Farming in the early part of 2019.
18. This conference will build on related processes, including the outcomes of the International Symposium on Agricultural Innovation for Family Farming, which is to be held in November 2018.

## VII. Funding

19. The funding requirements for the implementation of the Decade will be determined once the specific activities and timelines comprising the action plan have been fully developed. Funding will also be required in order to enable the steering committee to serve as the overarching governance mechanism for the Decade.
20. In the meantime and as noted in the United Nations resolution, voluntary contributions to support the implementation of the Decade are welcome. IFAD looks forward to receiving voluntary contributions in the form of supplementary funds which may then be earmarked for specific activities included in the action plan.
21. In addition, some activities could be funded with IFAD grant resources in the event that the activities are in line with the policy on grant financing and the corresponding strategic priorities. IFAD will also allocate in-kind resources in the form of staff time and a limited amount of funds from administrative budgets (e.g. for essential staff travel and for the organization of the international conference to be held in early 2019).

## VIII. Reporting

22. As required under the United Nations resolution, IFAD and FAO will submit a joint report on a biennial basis to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in order to inform the General Assembly about the progress made during the Decade of Family Farming. The first report will be submitted in 2020 and will focus on the priorities for the first biennium and actions carried out in 2019-2020.
23. FAO and IFAD will also keep their governing bodies informed of progress on a periodic basis and seek their guidance on the way forward. It is proposed that a progress report be presented to the IFAD Executive Board and the FAO Council on an annual basis as from 2019.

24. In line with the objectives of the Decade, Member States will be invited to report to the international steering committee on the progress of activities undertaken within the framework of the Decade as a means of fostering joint analysis and knowledge-sharing. The reports on countries' achievements and actions will be reflected in the regular reports issued by the secretariat.



Seventy-second session  
Agenda item 25

## Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2017

[on the report of the Second Committee (A/72/426)]

72/239.

### United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028)

The General Assembly,

Recognizing the success of the International Year of Family Farming, declared by the General Assembly in its resolution 66/222 of 22 December 2011 and implemented in 2014, which raised the profile of the role of family farming, pastoralism and smallholder farming in contributing to the achievement of food security and improved nutrition,

Welcoming the fact that many countries have made significant progress in developing public policies in favour of family farming, including the formation of national committees for family farming, and making financial inclusion policies for smallholder farmers, such as small-scale credit loans, and recognizing the role that family farms play in improving nutrition and ensuring global food security, eradicating poverty, ending hunger, conserving biodiversity, achieving environmental sustainability and helping to address migration,

Recalling the creation of the Family Farming Knowledge Platform, and recognizing that sharing knowledge and data contributes to policy dialogue and policymaking to address the specific needs of family farms,

Recognizing the important role of science, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship in supporting smallholders, including pastoralists and family farmers, in particular women and youth in rural areas, and in that regard highlighting the importance of innovation-driven development and support to mass entrepreneurship and innovation, and welcoming new sustainable agricultural technologies that can contribute to the transition of smallholders from subsistence farming to innovative, commercial production, helping them to increase their own food security and nutrition, generate marketable surpluses and add value to their production,

Recognizing also the close links between family farming, the promotion and conservation of historical, cultural and natural heritage, traditional customs and culture, halting the loss of biodiversity and the improvement of the living conditions of people living in rural areas,

Stressing the role of different forest types, including boreal, temperate and tropical, in supporting family farming,

Reaffirming the importance of sustainable fisheries and aquaculture farms for food security and nutrition,

Noting the convening of the thirty-first session of the Regional Conference for Europe of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Voronezh, Russian Federation, in May 2018, with a focus on agricultural, food security and nutrition issues, including their links with climate change,

Mindful of the guidelines for international decades in economic and social fields set out in Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/84 of 24 May 1989,

Reaffirming its resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", in which it adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets, its commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030, its recognition that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, its commitment to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — in a balanced and integrated manner, and to building upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business,

Reaffirming also its resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, supports and complements it, helps to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and actions, and reaffirms the strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity,

Welcoming the Paris Agreement<sup>8</sup> and its early entry into force, encouraging all its parties to fully implement the Agreement, and parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change<sup>9</sup> that have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, where appropriate, as soon as possible,

Recalling the proclamation of 2016–2025 as the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition,<sup>10</sup> based on the Rome Declaration on Nutrition<sup>11</sup> and the Framework for Action,<sup>12</sup>

Recalling also that nearly 80 per cent of the extreme poor live in rural areas and work in agriculture, and that devoting resources to the development of rural areas and sustainable agriculture and supporting smallholder farmers,

---

<sup>8</sup> Adopted under the UNFCCC in FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1, decision 1/CP.21.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

<sup>10</sup> Resolution 70/259.

<sup>11</sup> World Health Organization, document EB/136/8, annex I.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, annex II.

especially women farmers, is key to ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions, by, inter alia, improving the welfare of farmers,

Recognizing that 815 million people throughout the world still suffer from hunger and that the prevalence of other forms of malnutrition is still considerable in some regions of the world, and stressing the important role of family farms in the production of more than 80 per cent of the world's food in terms of value,

Stressing that a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system will promote agriculture, family farming and rural development in developing countries and contribute to world food security and nutrition, and urging the adoption of national, regional and international strategies to promote the inclusive participation of farmers, especially small-scale and family farmers, including women, in community, national, regional and international markets,

Reaffirming that the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, reaffirming also the critical role and contribution of rural women, including smallholders and women farmers, indigenous women and women in local communities, and their traditional knowledge in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty, and in this regard stressing the importance of reviewing agricultural policies and strategies to ensure that the critical role of women in food security and nutrition is recognized and addressed as an integral part of both short- and long-term responses to food insecurity, malnutrition, potential excessive price volatility and food crises in developing countries,

Stressing the need to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and acknowledging that policies and programmes that promote innovation on family farms must go hand in hand with policies promoting overall rural development, so as to offer additional or alternative employment and income-generating opportunities in rural areas,

Recognizing the positive impacts of collaboration among family farmers through farmer-to-farmer cooperation as essential to the creation of environments conducive to supporting the exchange of experience and knowledge to scale up relevant, cost-effective, traditional and innovative solutions towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,

Conscious that climate change represents an urgent and potentially irreversible threat to human societies and the planet, that it is seriously affecting agriculture throughout the world and that supporting family farming could contribute to combating climate change as well as to increasing the ability to adapt to its adverse impacts and

foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development in a manner that does not threaten food production,

Recalling the need to strengthen our efforts to enhance food security and nutrition and to focus on smallholders and women farmers, as well as on agricultural cooperatives and farmers' networks, and the need to encourage countries to revitalize global partnerships,

Recognizing the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation in promoting family farming and addressing the problem of food insecurity through the exchange of knowledge, experience and good practices, innovative policies, know-how and resources,

1. Decides to proclaim 2019–2028 the United Nations Decade of Family Farming, within existing structures and available resources;

2. Encourages all States to develop, improve and implement public policies on family farming and share their experiences and best practices of family farming with other States;

3. Calls upon the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development to lead the implementation of the Decade, in collaboration with other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, including by identifying and developing possible activities and programmes, within their mandates and existing resources and through voluntary contributions, as appropriate;

4. Invites Governments and other relevant stakeholders, including international and regional organizations, civil society, the private sector and academia, to actively support the implementation of the Decade, including through voluntary contributions, as appropriate;

5. Invites the Secretary-General to inform the General Assembly about the implementation of the Decade on the basis of the biennial reports compiled jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

74th plenary meeting  
20 December 2017