



19/02/14

Press Release

FARMERS FROM ACROSS THE WORLD UNITE TO UNDERLINE VITAL ROLE OF FAMILY FARMS FOR FOOD, FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, FOR GROWTH AND JOBS

Farmers from across the world united in Brussels today to underline the crucial role of family farms in ensuring good quality food for consumers, growth and jobs. They are the backbone of rural areas. They outlined key measures needed to ensure family farms have a viable and competitive future. This is more important than ever in a world of increasing uncertainty, market volatility and rising global food demand.

The move came at a high-level event “North-South Family Farming. How to Respond to the same Challenges?” organised by Copa-Cogeca and the World Farmers Organisations in Brussels. The event included panel sessions on the role of family farming in tackling specific challenges facing the agriculture sector as well as on what policy tools are needed. High-level speakers participated in the event including FAO Ambassador for the International Year of Family Farms (IYFF) Gerd Sonnleitner, Upa President Lorenzo Ramos, Boerenbond President Mr Vanthemsche as well as key representatives from Africa and the EU Commission.

Copa-Cogeca and the World Farmers Organisation (WFO) want to ensure that family farms – big or small, intensive or extensive - have a competitive future and quality of life comparable to other sectors which young people want to be a part of.

Speaking at the event, Copa-Cogeca Secretary-General Pekka Pesonen said “Family farms account for a major part of the millions of people employed in the worlds agriculture sector. They are a key driver for growth and jobs in rural areas across the world, providing a wide, diverse array of good quality food produced in a sustainable way to meet the demands of millions of consumers, at the same time as caring for the environment. Family farms are the way forward. With demand expected to rise by 60% by 2050, investment in the sector must be stepped up”.

Marco Marzano, Executive Director WFO said "Farmers from all over the world should join forces in order to develop sustainable strategies based on an exchange of experience and knowledge. At the same time, they need framework conditions. The model of Family Farming provides the necessary flexibility and resilience to respond to global challenges in agriculture and rural development".

To ensure generation renewal in the future, family farms – in all their forms - must be an economically viable and profitable activity. To meet increasing challenges like high input costs, extreme market turbulence and variable weather conditions challenges, Copa-Cogeca and the WFO urge governments and heads of state from all over the world to ensure that:

- A reliable political framework is established which ensures family farms have access to land and natural resources, property rights and so on;
- investment in the sector is increased significantly and farmer-led research and innovation encouraged with knowledge transferred to farmers;
- the right conditions are put in place to set up producer organisations like agri-cooperatives to enable farmers to join forces to market their produce; add value to produce to get a higher return and better manage the extreme market volatility;
- farmers are given sufficient training and education, including practical on-farm education, to give them a competitive future;
- the irreplaceable contribution of women to family farms is acknowledged across the world;
- young farmers are given support as they face difficulties when setting up;
- unfair and abusive practices in the food chain are tackled so that farmers have a better chance to generate income from the market;
- family farms have access to internet and other social infrastructures, in line with the rest of society;
- family farmers are active farmers and family owned enterprises, irrespective of size

The United Nations International Year of Family Farming in 2014 focuses world attention on the role of family farms in alleviating hunger and poverty, providing food security and improving livelihoods, whilst protecting the environment and biodiversity. It is crucial to have a dynamic, modern, resilient agriculture in the future which gives family farms a viable future.

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