

# The Farmers' Forum

In conjunction with the forty-third  
session of IFAD's Governing Council

**6-11 February 2020**



# The Seventh Global Meeting of the Farmers' Forum

## What is the Farmers' Forum?

The Farmers' Forum (FAFO) is an ongoing, bottom-up process of consultation and dialogue between organizations of small-scale farmers and rural producers (collectively known as farmers' organizations), IFAD and governments, focused on agricultural and rural development and poverty reduction. The Forum is rooted in concrete partnerships and collaboration at the country and regional levels. It was established in 2005 to provide orientation to IFAD operations and to jointly identify opportunities for partnerships in IFAD's country programmes and investment projects. Since then, six global meetings have been held at two-year intervals in conjunction with the IFAD Governing Council.

## The 2020 Farmers' Forum: a new context

At the sixth global meeting in 2016, important changes in the organization and governance of the process were agreed. These include two new international organizations (the Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers Organisations and the World Farmers' Organisation) joining the Steering Committee and the **decentralization of the FAFO process** in order to strengthen the Forum's country-level impact. The FAFO is now organized on a four-year cycle, with global meetings being held every four years and regional consultations organized in between these meetings. This change was in line with IFAD's **reform agenda** and its process of decentralization, which aim to increase IFAD's country presence and to strengthen both partnerships with national stakeholders and the results and impact of operations.

The first cycle of **regional FAFOs** took place between 2017 and 2019 in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America, with the participation of more than 200 leaders of farmers' organizations, representing millions of small-scale farmers, artisanal fishers and pastoralists, and over 400 IFAD staff, government officials and managers of IFAD-supported projects. One of the main outputs of these regional consultations is a set of Action Plans that include recommendations by countries to strengthen collaboration between farmers' organizations and IFAD in the context of project design and implementation and in-country policy engagement.

The seventh global meeting of the Farmers' Forum takes place at a time of significant change and evolution so it is an unmissable occasion to frame the discussions and the future of the partnership. In fact, it is taking place just a few days before the opening of the **Consultation on the Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD12)**, which is critical for strengthening the capacity of IFAD to better support its members and partners and to step up its contribution to achieving the SDGs. This process also provides a platform for collective reflection on IFAD policy and strategic priorities.

This edition of the global FAFO is also taking place in the first year of the **United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028)**, which puts family farming at the centre of the international agenda. The Decade constitutes a unique opportunity to work on multi-dimensional issues that are of concern to family farmers, positioning them as key agents of change in achieving the SDGs.



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## Climate change in the spotlight

As outlined in the Strategic Framework 2016-2025, IFAD's interventions focus on three strategic objectives, one of which is to "strengthen the environmental sustainability and climate resilience of poor rural people's economic activities". Climate change is one of the key underlying causes of food insecurity. Special focus is placed on climate mitigation, addressing the interlinkages between environmental sustainability, climate, fragility, nutrition and social inclusion, particularly that of women and youth, in line with IFAD's integrated approach for mainstreaming issues. In this regard, **agroecology** is a climate-change mitigation approach to connect traditional and scientific knowledge in order to produce food in a sustainable way. Family farmers are important holders of agroecological knowledge and, therefore, key to implementing agroecology on the ground.

In 2021, a **Food Systems Summit** will be convened with the aim of maximizing the benefits of a food systems approach across the 2030 Agenda and meeting the challenges of climate change. The Summit will enable cross-learning and the sharing of experiences. It will also provide an opportunity for global public mobilization and commitments to make food systems inclusive, productive, resilient and sustainable.

It is in this particular context that the seventh global meeting of the Farmers' Forum will explore new avenues for partnerships between farmers' organizations and development stakeholders and a renewed commitment to work together.

## Who will be attending?

Representatives of farmers' organizations attending the global meeting of the Forum are nominated by its **Steering Committee**. This year's meeting, to be held in Rome on 6, 7, 10 and 11 February, brings together around 90 farmers' leaders, representing millions of small-scale farmers and rural producers from all over the world, to interact with IFAD staff and 20 partner observers (including the Agence Française de Développement, AgriCord, the European Commission, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the World Rural Forum).

## Overview of the agenda

On Thursday 6 February, the President of IFAD, Gilbert Houngbo, will open the Forum together with the members of the Steering Committee. IFAD will then present its analysis of evolving partnerships with farmers' organizations from the *Partnership in Progress Report 2016-2019*. During the **regional working group sessions**, collaboration at country and regional levels will be discussed. On the second day, **five thematic working groups** will address the following issues: climate change and the transition to agroecology; the United Nations Decade of Family Farming and the engagement of farmers' organizations in the preparation of the Food Systems Summit; women's leadership; youth in agriculture; and new instruments for IFAD12. A Synthesis of Deliberations and Recommendations will be agreed by participants and discussed with IFAD senior management.

A number of parallel side events will take place on 10 and 11 February to allow further discussion of topics emerging during the thematic working groups and regional meetings.

The formal closing session of the Forum will be held in the afternoon of Monday 10 February and is open to IFAD's Executive Board representatives and Governors. The Synthesis of Deliberations of the Forum will be delivered to the Governing Council on Tuesday 11 February.

# The “Farmers’ Forum Consensus”<sup>1</sup> of 2005

The participants share IFAD’s fundamental objective of overcoming rural poverty through the economic, social and political empowerment of rural poor people themselves and their organizations.

They agree with and support the overall project of creating a Farmers’ Forum for consultations and dialogue on ways to “enable the rural poor to overcome poverty” and on IFAD operations.

## The Farmers’ Forum is:

- an ongoing, bottom-up process – not a periodic event – spanning IFAD-supported operations on the ground and policy dialogue
- a tripartite process involving farmers’ organizations, governments and IFAD
- a space for consultation and dialogue focused on rural poverty reduction and the centrality of smallholders and family farming development in this process<sup>2</sup>
- an instrument for accountability of development effectiveness, in particular in the area of empowerment of rural poor people and their organizations
- an interface between pro-poor rural development interventions and the process of enhancing the capacity of farmers’ and rural producers’ organizations (including organizations of artisanal fishers, pastoralists and landless rural workers<sup>3</sup>).

## The Farmers’ Forum:

- is guided by the principles of inclusiveness, pluralism, openness and flexibility
- is built on existing forums where possible, avoiding duplication in these cases
- respects existing organizations and creates new spaces where needed

- The Farmers’ Forum joint dialogue platform is steered – at global and regional levels – by joint and inclusive steering committees of representative membership-driven producers’ organizations and IFAD. Steering committees have a clear mandate, rules of procedures and a code of conduct. The Farmers’ Forum process also includes autonomous spaces for consultation and preparation among producers’ organizations before meeting with IFAD.<sup>4</sup>

## Conditions

- The Forum process starts with national-level consultations that feed into regional or sub-regional meetings. These meetings shape the content of, and participation in, the Farmers’ Forum at the IFAD Governing Council.
- The Forum process should feed into IFAD’s governing bodies.
- The Forum’s success depends on IFAD’s capacity to enhance country-level consultation with farmers’ organizations and contribute to their capacity-building needs.
- Participants recommend, in particular, institutionalizing engagement with farmers’ organizations in key IFAD operational processes (projects, and country and regional strategies).

## Current members of the Farmers’ Forum Steering Committee

- Asian Farmers’ Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA)
- Coordination of Family Farms of MERCOSUR (COPROFAM)
- Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmers Organisations (INOFO)
- La Via Campesina (LVC)
- PanAfrican Farmers Organization (PAFO)
- Réseaux des Organisations Paysannes et Producteurs Agricoles de l’Afrique de l’Ouest (ROPPA)
- World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF)
- World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)
- World Farmers’ Organisation (WFO)
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

1 From the concluding statement of the workshop “Towards a Farmers’ Forum at IFAD’s Governing Council”. Rome, February 2005, endorsed by IFAD and 34 representatives of farmers’ organizations from all continents, including the International Federation of Agricultural Producers, La Via Campesina and Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et Producteurs Agricoles de l’Afrique de l’ouest.

2 The second part of this defining point on “the centrality of smallholder and family farming development in this process” was added by decision of the FAFO Steering Committee in February 2016 at the sixth global meeting of the FAFO.

3 Initial reference to indigenous peoples in this list was withdrawn in February 2016 following the creation of the Indigenous Peoples Forum at IFAD in 2012.

4 This entire paragraph was added by decision of the FAFO Steering Committee in February 2016 at the sixth global meeting of the FAFO.