



Joint statement for the ECOSOC side event on “Innovation Systems for Family Farming”

3 July 2013, Geneva

1. CGIAR, FAO, GFAR and IFAD, by convening this side event on “Innovation Systems for Family Farming” during the High-Level Segment of the ECOSOC Substantive Session 2013, wish to draw the attention of the ECOSOC members to the crucial importance of innovation in family farming and of agricultural innovation systems¹.
2. The demand for food is expected to increase by over 60 percent over the next 40 years, as the global population surpasses 9 billion and as increased income drives dietary pattern changes towards more livestock products. The agriculture sectors (including forestry and fisheries) are also expected to produce more non-food products, especially for energy (liquid biofuels, wood) and feed. At the same time, the natural resources upon which agriculture depends, land, water, soil and biodiversity, are threatened by environmental degradation, climate change, loss of ecosystem services and urbanization and industrial use. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated responses from the public, civil and private sectors that will need to be tailored to local environmental and social conditions and to different types of farmers.
3. Improving agriculture, while conserving and enhancing natural resources, will be essential for farmers to increase the provision of goods and services on a sustainable basis in the future. Agricultural growth requires continuous technological progress and organizational change, along with transition from non-balanced to more sustainable production practices, focusing on improved management of ecological processes. Crucial for meeting this challenge is a dynamic process of agricultural innovation through generation, access and use of knowledge. Examples of the kinds of agricultural innovations adopted by farmers range from: use of mobile phone technologies to facilitate their access to markets and rural advisory services; adoption of farming practices to better manage agro-ecosystems; use of new vaccines to prevent livestock and fish diseases. One of the conclusions of the UN Millennium Project was

¹ An agricultural innovation system is defined as “a system of individuals, organizations, and enterprises focused on bringing new products, processes and forms of organization into social and economic use to achieve food and nutrition security, economic development, and sustainable natural resource management” (FAO, 2012), <http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/an761e/an761e00.pdf>.

that science, technology and innovation underpin every one of the Millennium Development Goals². They will also continue to play a key role. Indeed, the report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel of eminent persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda³ specifically includes a target to "Promote collaboration on and access to science, technology, innovation, and development data" under the 12th and final example goal.

4. Central to achieving improved and sustainable agricultural productivity and viability will be family farming, defined as "a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family labour, including both women's and men's. The family and the farm are linked, co-evolve and combine economic, environmental, reproductive, social and cultural functions"⁴. Half a billion small family farms produce most of the food consumed in developing countries.
5. In consideration of the above, the UN General Assembly declared 2014 to be the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) with the objective of raising the profile of family farming and small holder farming by focusing world attention on their important role, in alleviating hunger and poverty, providing food and nutrition security, improving livelihoods, managing natural resources, protecting the environment, and allowing a sustainable development, in particular in rural areas.
6. According to the country and context, the level of productivity of family farms is often constrained by their access to markets, services and technologies, among others. The dynamics of rural transformation, including new input/output markets, and emerging value-chains, require poor men and women engaged in family farming to innovate to contribute to and make the best of these developments. Thus, family farms are key in innovation processes, and innovation is key to family farms, which calls for recognizing the diversity of family farms across the world and their different potentials for innovation.
7. In light of the above, CGIAR, FAO, GFAR and IFAD pledge to increase their joint efforts to boost the contribution of science, technology and innovation to enable family farmers to improve agricultural productivity and family farm incomes, while conserving and enhancing natural resources.
8. CGIAR, FAO, GFAR and IFAD urge the International Community to promote agricultural innovation systems that are responsive to the needs of family farmers⁵, calling in particular for:

² http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/reports/tf_science.htm

³ <http://www.post2015hlp.org/the-report/>

⁴ Document C 2013/35 to the 38th Session of the FAO Conference, 15-22 June 2013.

<http://www.fao.org/bodies/conf/c2013/en/>

⁵ as agreed among all stakeholders in the GCARD Roadmap (FAO, 2011) <http://www.egfar.org/documents/gcard-road-map-transforming-agricultural-research-development-systems-global-impact>

- Increased and sustained investments in agricultural science, technology and innovation targeted to address the needs of family farmers – now, increasingly in the face of adverse climate change;
- Inclusive agricultural science, technology and innovation policy development, directly involving family farmers and their organizations in strategic planning and priority setting;
- Improved governance, effectiveness and an explicit development orientation of agricultural innovation systems, in order to make them demand-driven systems that stimulate interaction and collective learning and result in innovation that is best suited to family farms and helps improve their incomes and nutritional status;
- Access to knowledge, technologies and services for both male and female family farmers, including disadvantaged people and indigenous communities;
- Expanded and better coordinated public-private, North-South, South-South and triangular partnerships to enhance the capacity of family farmers to innovate.