

Farming Systems and Poverty: Making a Difference 18th Symposium and Global Learning Opportunity

Rome, Italy

12-16 September 2005

International Farming Systems Association (IFSA)

with FAO and IFAD

Second Announcement and Initial Call for Practices, Policies and Panels

WHO is the Global Learning Opportunity FOR?

The Global Learning Opportunity (GLO) of the International Farming Systems Association (IFSA) will be held in Rome, Italy, during 12-16 September 2005. The GLO will bring together development practitioners, educators, researchers, representatives of the farmer and producers organizations, civil society organizations, private business and bilateral and multilateral organizations and development agencies.

The purpose is to discuss, analyze and propose more effective government policies, development pathways and strategies and field practices, building on the IFSA inputs to the ECOSOC Summit on Integrated Rural Development, in order to capture promising opportunities to attain the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those related to rural poverty, food security, gender equity and environment sustainability. Through sharing relevant experiences, success stories and constraints, participants will focus on advancing development priorities and policies, mobilizing resources and forming alliances and partnerships, all of which can lead to making a difference to the lives of smallholder farmers.

WHAT is the Format of the Global Learning Opportunity?

The GLO will be a highly participatory and interactive event building on a harvest of good practices and policies rooted in successful field experience. The event will consist of:

- * presentations, dialogues and brainstorming through multi-stakeholder thematic round tables and panels
- * interactive poster sessions
- * open space workshops
- * tools bazaars
- * opportunities to initiate alliances and partnerships.

HOW do you express your Interest to Contribute a Panel, Paper or Practice?

Send a title, authors and affiliations and a three-line summary of the round table, panel, open space workshop, tool, poster or other event being proposed to Farming-Systems@fao.org by January 31, 2005

IMPORTANT DATES:

January 31, 2005

Titles and summaries of events due

March 30, 2005

Draft papers and event outlines due

May 15, 2005

Reviews of draft papers and event outlines

June 30, 2005

Final papers and event outlines due

WHAT are the THEMES?

Overall challenge theme -- Farming systems and poverty: making a difference

"Farming systems and poverty: making a difference" combines the IFSA mandate with the title of the influential FAO-World Bank publication on "Farming Systems and Poverty: Farmers' Livelihoods in a Changing World", and reflects priority issues for major stakeholders. Some major thrusts for the Symposium could be: mainstreaming of good practices, including the differentiation of knowledge and responses by different farming systems; partnership strengthening, including opportunities for creating new partnerships during the Symposium; and mobilizing resources for sustainable agricultural and rural development (SARD), including local, national and international investments. Other key contributions of the GLO would include: improved CSO interaction with S&T community on SARD; greater contact lists for regional information exchange; enhanced local knowledge swapping, knowledge pooling and lesson learning; and local peer-to-peer communication for innovation and learning at national and local grassroots levels; and further collaboration between CSO, IGO, private sector and Governments.

The themes add value to ongoing dialogue and emerging issues on the effectiveness of development approaches and provide platforms and options for launching field-level actions.

Theme 1 -- Food, Agriculture and Rural Development Policies in a Globalizing World

Innovations in policy are a priority concern for many stakeholders in the context of globalization, structural adjustment, decentralization and privatization processes which have contributed to the reduction or even withdrawal of Government support from the agricultural and rural sector and the collapse of services to farmers. Farming systems practitioners can report impacts on smallholders, exciting R&D work in the field, debate good practice and the 'State-of-the-Art', and demonstrate contributions to the World Food Summit and Millennium Development Goals.

Theme 2 - Trade and Market Linkages

From the pervasive impacts of increasing trade liberalization on farmers and consumers, lessons can be drawn and ways forward identified. One core element of this theme is farmer-market linkages within the overall context of growing concentration of agro-industry. A richer understanding is needed of the complexity of supermarkets and market chains for small producers and urban consumers; the impacts of pro-poor global trade agreements; the growth of local, organic and fair trade food systems; the effects on food safety and quality; and the markets for seeds and other farm inputs. The synthesis of field experience on impacts on smallholder farming families, the rural poor, or the landless poor (what works; what does not work) would contribute to the identification of appropriate targeted policy responses (above).

Theme 3 -- Knowing and Learning Processes

Understanding how rural people learn and share experiences, in what context and learning infrastructure and with which tools has replaced the paternalistic client-orientation of rural development during the 1970s-1980s. One challenge is to strengthen entrepreneurial capacity for peer-to-peer knowing and learning for better decision making in poor farm households in complex systems, based on experiences with local multi-stakeholder collaborative learning at the field level in SARD, NRM, marketing, demand-driven advisory and research services.

Theme 4 -- Development Strategies, Pathways and Synergies

Based on the characterization of farming systems and an understanding of their dynamics, differentiated context-specific development pathways can be identified around which multi-stakeholder alliances and public-private partnerships (e.g., CSO, inter-governmental organizations, governments, private sector, etc) could coalesce. A challenge is to foster and mainstream such targeted partnerships with guidelines, regulations and investment practices. Such alliances are required for managing ecosystems and landscapes from farms to catchments, intensification strategies, environmental services, land care, conservation of the natural resource base and biodiversity, livelihoods diversification, conservation agriculture, eco-agriculture, urban agriculture, and linking mitigation, risk and response for vulnerable systems and populations, including HIV-AIDS.

Who is IFSA?

The International Farming Systems Association (IFSA) is a non-profit professional association of more than twenty years, built on the challenge 'to give voice to small farmers'. IFSA comprises active regional associations or groups of professionals in Australia & the Pacific, Africa-East & Southern, Africa-West, Asia, Europe, Latin America, North Africa & Middle East and North America. Their memberships represent bio-physical and social science disciplines and include agricultural policy makers, researchers, extension workers and farmers.

The IFSA mandate is: "To move beyond doing good research to making a difference to the lives of small farmers' and the rural poor." Our common vision is to see smallholder 'multiple services' farming systems as a basis for SARD. Our analysis indicates that such forms of agriculture can provide much needed solutions to societies concerns for the safety and quality of the food they eat, environmental pollution and natural resource degradation that agriculture causes, and reduction of rural poverty and food insecurity. The Association has strong links with CSOs, including those associated with SARD and farmer/producer associations.

WHO to contact for further INFORMATION:

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We will be sending important information on the conference venue, accommodation and registration in the next announcement. We look forward to your participation in the IFSA 18th Symposium and Global Learning Opportunity.

Environmental & Human Systems Management

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