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Editorial

Giuseppe Politi

PRESIDENT OF CONFEDERAZIONE ITALIANA AGRICOLTORI

THE CHALLENGE OF THE YOUNG

The future belongs to the young, and this also applies to the creation of a sustainable global economy: The agricultural sector is responsible for designing a new production system capable of feeding nine billion people whilst fully protecting natural resources. Who is going undertake the commitment redefined in Rio to assure "the right of everyone to have access to safe, adequate and nutritious food"? We run the risk that in future agriculture will be without farmers.

Consider the fact that in Europe, young farmers under the age of 35 account for 6 percent of the total amount of farmers, while older farmers make up 55 per cent of such total amount. The situation is alarming and irreversible, seriously deteriorating in the last decade. In Italy, the number of young people under 35 is lower than 3 percent. Despite these small numbers, businesses run by young farmers are still able to record the best results, not only in terms of productivity but also in terms of the ability to implement organizational and product innovation, also thanks to a high level of training.

Generational change is minimal and is almost always the result of the family business being inherited as opposed to the creation of new agricultural entrepreneurs. The new generation of young farmers have to deal with too many serious problems, ranging from the difficulties in gaining access to credit, investment costs and the bureaucratic problems connected with the start-up and management of the farm. In order generate turnover in the fields, the first barrier that needs to be eliminated is the difficulty in gaining access to the land. In addition, in Italy young farmers tend to work particularly in medium-large size and/or highly profitable farms active in the most attractive agricultural sectors in terms of economic opportunities and social prestige, such as the high quality wine and agro-tourism sectors. In contrast, in family farms that are modest in size and less profitable the young are driven to look for work outside the family business and the agricultural sector.

The President of the Italian Republic Giorgio Napolitano gave words of great encouragement at the opening of the World Farmers' Organisation Annual General Assembly on June 6th: Agriculture and land conservation are jobs for young people which require self-sacrifice, entrepreneurial skills, passion for the environment and capacity for innovation in safeguarding the quality of traditional food. Despite appearances, agriculture is a job for the future.

Agricultural policy-makers should make one of their priorities that of ensuring young entrepreneurs enter the agricultural sector. This issue needs to be the center of attention: A plan of action must be defined for young entrepreneurs in agriculture with a view to promoting generational change among farm owners and the creation of new businesses, enhancing the attractiveness and sustainability of agricultural activities and encouraging the setting up of young families in rural areas.

The lack of generational change in agriculture is connected to another worrying phenomenon: The progressive aging of the population in rural areas, which for more than a decade has been taking place in the EU: The number of over 65s is increasing and the number of children between the ages of 0 and 14 years is decreasing in all countries, but is particularly significant in Mediterranean Europe (Italy, France, Spain and Portugal) where the elderly exceed 20 percent of the rural population. These trends are a good indicator of how our rural areas are increasingly becoming less vital and less attractive for young families with children.

Working for the generational change and promoting the vitality of rural areas is one of the cornerstones on which the World Farmers' Organisation can intervene most effectively. With a view to the future, the WFO Statute has included among its primary objectives the encouragement of generational change in farms, which is considered, along with climate change, one of the upcoming challenges.

I truly believe that we are on track.

WORLD'S FARMERS' ORGANISATION

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On farm conservation: Reflections on the way forward

By Stefano Padulosi

Leader Marketing Diversity Group, Bioversity

Farmers are custodians of agricultural biodiversity and they are essential to its sustainable conservation and use. The process of on farm conservation has allowed farmers to have more options for food and income generation since the beginning of agriculture. This diversity allows farmers and society as a whole to meet market needs today and, in the future, develop varieties which are more resistant to pests and diseases and crops that are more resilient to abiotic stresses, as well as satisfy evolving social and cultural preferences (e.g. nutrition, taste, appearance, foods for special family, cultural or religious occasions). The stewardship role of farmers in maintaining crop diversity is thus crucial not just for the food security of our planet but also to safeguard people's livelihood.

In the 1940s, farmers' conservation efforts started to be complemented by another type of conservation, and namely ex situ conservation which is achieved through the surveying, collection and conservation of crop varieties in dedicated laboratories and rooms (called gene banks). The very first collection was established in St. Petersburg by the renowned Russian scientist Nicolai I. Vavilov, and today some 1,750 gene banks around the world continue that important mission. In total, these gene banks conserve some 1.7 million samples of agricultural crops and their wild relatives (though the latter are conserved in much smaller amounts). These samples, in the form of seeds, are maintained at low temperatures (from 50C in medium term or active collections to the -20 0C of the long Term or basic collections).

A more sophisticated method called in vitro conservation allows experts to also maintain vegetative parts of crop varieties in special laboratories. A special type of ex situ gene bank is the field gene bank, represented by experimental fields where plants are conserved instead of seeds which are difficult to conserve (also called recalcitrant seeds).

The ex situ conservation (particularly targeting seeds) allows storage of large amounts of species and varieties in one single place. This type of conservation makes a large diversity of material available to users (mostly breeders) and permits experts to better study plant genetic resources to enhance their use and thus people's lives. However, ex situ conservation is a highly static system and does not permit the evolution of crops under growing conditions (important for their environmental adaptation and development of resistance against pests and diseases), as in the case of on farm conservation. Furthermore, ex situ conservation cannot contribute to conserving indigenous knowledge associated with crop diversity. Maintaining this indigenous knowledge requires a living and highly dynamic human system to be maintained and valorized. Ex situ conservation also needs substantial financial resources to be able to run efficiently and reliably over the long term. For this reason, it is not surprising that most of the diversity maintained in gene banks belongs to major crops and a very limited portion of this material refers to

traditional crops, also known as neglected and underutilized species (NUS).

NUS crops include minor cereals (e.g. minor millets, fonio), pseudo-cereals (e.g. quinoa, cañahua, amaranth, buckwheat), pulses (e.g. lupin, bambara groundnut, grass pea), fruits (e.g. bush mango, moringa, marula), vegetables (e.g. jute, amaranth, spider plant), as well as many spices and medicinal plants. Since these species were not part of the Green Revolution agenda, their conservation, as well as research about their use and benefits, has been left behind. As a result, NUS crops have a reduced market value compared with commodity crops.

But there is hope on the horizon. Today, plenty of technological opportunities can be mobilized for the promotion and use of NUS to support crop selection, cultivation, value addition and marketing. Today, some are calling NUS a development opportunity for crops, underscoring the potential of these resources waiting to be harnessed and promoted to improve people's lives. How many NUS are cultivated around the world today? The answer is difficult as there has never been a proper estimate of these resources. Based on various studies dealing with ethno-botanic uses, it is safe to say that these species are in the order of hundreds in each region. However, the total number of NUS is probably more in the order of thousands per region if we also take into account the number of their varieties.



This amazing cornucopia of diversity is today maintained mainly by farmers and local community members and very marginally by scientists in *ex situ* gene banks.

How can we ensure the important conservation of these traditional crops? According to the 2010 FAO II State of the World Report on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (SWR II on PGRFA), loss of agrobiodiversity in the field is - despite considerable progress in *ex situ* conservation - continuing at a fast pace and is greatly affecting local crops and varieties. There are many causes behind this loss or *genetic erosion* as it is called, especially due to changes in agricultural practices, lifestyles, globalization trends and anthropogenic factors.

Given the current scenario and considering the limitations of *ex situ* conservation (the costs involved, the difficulties in conserving *recalcitrant* species etc.), the future of agrobiodiversity does rest indeed in the hands of farmers and all those other actors involved in their conservation through use. Greater support to farm conservation should, therefore, be a priority for Governments. But what exactly is support to on farm conservation?

First of all, there is a tremendous need to appraise the extent of agrobiodiversity at the farm level so as to provide a clearer picture of crops and varieties currently cultivated at the local level which do not appear in national statistics. We need to know more about their current distribution locally, their levels of use, contribution to local food systems, or income generation and other livelihood benefits.



This information will help to identify hot spot areas of diversity and develop well targeted interventions. More information is needed on the constraints faced by farmers in the cultivation of these resources as well as their processing (which is too often cumbersome or not economically attractive), and how to develop new markets or reinforce existing ones.

More research is needed to assess the status of custodian farmers away from a romanticised vision of their role: We need to appraise who custodian farmers are today, what is the institutional framework in which they operate, what are the constraints they face in their conservation work, how effective is their networking with other custodians or users, as well as how seed/biodiversity fairs can be better promoted as instruments to promote exchange of traditional crops and indigenous knowledge (which is even more strategic today as an instrument to reinforce crop diversification, which is so much advocated everywhere). We also need to research better the important role of women in conservation and this strategic contribution can be best recognized, valorized and promoted.

There are many additional questions we need to answer through research: How do we best combine and use the wisdom of indigenous knowledge on conservation and use of agrobiodiversity with the findings arising from scientific investigation? How can collective conservation efforts (such as community gene banks) become better linked to the work of custodian farmers and how can both these efforts be harmonized with the *ex situ* gene banks? How can innovative tools, such as community biodiversity registers, be deployed to support farmer-based documentation systems and make diversity management more effective for coping with climate change? How can the in-depth knowledge of farmers and community members be mobilized through community-based systems for monitoring the status of cultivated crops and varieties so as to prevent the loss of diversity on farms happening in the future? How can such a system be linked to novel approaches on the Red List of Cultivated Species which would be managed by communities as well?

Of course, many other interventions are also needed to improve the conservation and use of traditional crops.

Ensuring NUS are no longer neglected would require a change in the way we do research, moving away from the research silos approach. By embracing holistic, interdisciplinary and inter-sectorial interventions along the whole value chain of our traditional crops, we can make these resources economically competitive with commodity crops and thus worthy of being conserved by custodian farmers and other stakeholders who could benefit.

The on farm conservation of NUS is challenging as some argue that what is local has a local value and does not attract enough investments for developing their value chains. The counter-argument to that statement is that the global sustainability of our planet (in terms of food security, poverty elimination and improved livelihoods) relies in fact, on the contribution of small but equally important steps done at the local level which are consistent with local food systems, local markets, culture and people's identity. So, investing in local crops is strategic for the future of the whole world.



From a policy perspective, moving forward the agenda of on farm conservation is consistent with Article 8 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Article 5 of the International Treaty on PGRFA and Activity 2 of the FAO Global Plan of Action on PGRFA. In conclusion, we need to leave the naive perception that on farm conservation is a service provided by farmers and that as long as the farmers exist, agro-biodiversity will be always safeguarded. Farmers do need support for their conservation efforts.

As our agricultural systems become more competitive, their conservation efforts are becoming harder. A global platform for on farm conservation is also needed (similar to what already exists for *ex situ* conservation) and Bioversity is among the active players promoting this at international level. To learn more about Bioversity International, visit <http://www.bioversityinternational.org/>. contact Stefano Padulosi at s.padulosi@cgiar.org

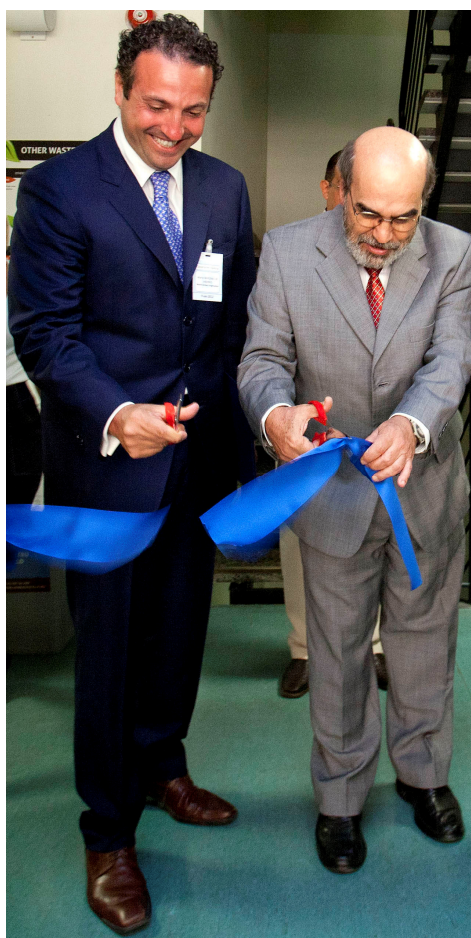
Partnership for Growth WFO and FAO are Strengthening Relations in the interest of farmers'

By Marco Marzano
Executive Director WFO



Cooperatives are a vital link in the chain that brings disparate farmers together. Giving them a collective voice and a platform from which their positions may be voiced will ensure that appropriate solutions are found for their concerns and questions.

Working with them and supporting them is the best and most effective way to reach millions of producers and bring their views to the table. The liaison office is an important and timely step in this direction.



The 1.5 billion farmers around the world that WFO represents are also important stakeholders in FAO. Their voice not only needs to be heard in WFO through their Producer organizations (POs) and cooperatives, but also in other forums and FAO is an important forum in this regard. A significant step in this direction was made recently when FAO inaugurated on July 9, 2012 a liaison office within the FAO headquarters in Rome with the objective of facilitating greater interaction between farmers and FAO.

WFO and FAO are together committed towards the common goal of a world free of hunger. This an inspiring goal which cannot be achieved without also making progress towards the alleviation of poverty, ensuring food security and creating sustainable employment.

The collective will of WFO and FAO working with each other in supporting and strengthening POs and cooperatives can serve to bring these goals closer and make their achievement a reality. Their collective strength can make the difference that is needed.

This Office will allow POs to have access to and be represented at technical committee meetings and discussions at FAO with a view to bringing farmers closer to the decision making process at FAO. Given that it is the international year of Cooperatives the opening of this office for the benefit of POs and cooperatives couldn't have come at a better time.



CASE STUDIES & BEST PRACTICES

Supporting the farmer's community in Argentina: How does AACREA work.

by **Ángel Martínez Gutiérrez**

Professor of Commercial Law. University of Jaén.

AACREA is a 50 years old non-profit organization formed by 2,000 businessmen and 250 technicians working in the agricultural sector in Argentina.

AACREA's mission is to promote the integral development of farm businesses, achieving sustainable and profitable businesses, testing and updating technology and transferring it to the community and thus contributing to the growth of the sector and the country.

The group methodology enables farmers to grow and acquire new abilities to improve their company's work process in response to technical, economic, management and human needs.

In CREA there are different and wide ranging types of enterprises from small to large scale farmers and 50% of them are family enterprises.

Thus, the CREA group is the starting point of a collaborative way for knowledge building.

•Analyze in-depth the production proposal and the running of each company's project.

•Work on the host company's project.

•Present results of experiences acquired on CREA farms.

•Compare each one's experience regarding a particular problem or topic.

•Enquire about new topics.

•Decide upon actions and work to be carried out by CREA.

Furthermore, agro-businessmen in AACREA become involved with community development aspects and participate actively in different educational and leadership programs in their communities. The whole activity enlarges networking not only on specific issues but also many other interests that agro-businessmen have.



Its main values are:

Group work methodology, knowledge sharing experiences, commitment with local community development, decision making through consensus and trust building.

Almost 42,000 people benefit from different programs and projects (training, social impact, local development programs and publications).

There are 216 CREA groups.

Each group meets monthly on a farm that belongs to one of the members. During the meeting, they not only visit the farm but also the host's company.

In this sense, the meeting is CREA's driving force. Work is carried out periodically to achieve the following objectives:

Thus, AACREA interacts with agribusiness professionals, Universities, and technical Agencies, as well as private and public Organizations in Argentina and overseas.

In the last ten years the growth of AACREA's members has been of around 100%. The areas that have increased most are northwestern and northeastern areas as well as and western part of Argentina.

AACREA generates a big amount of information because of the great data base that it manages. One of the main tasks is providing information about the activity to organizations, enterprises, congress members and the media.

In the last two years AACREA has generated four Global Investment Reports for different activities in the country:

Cattle breeding

<http://www.crea.org.ar/images/documentos/compromis/De la tierra al pais ganaderia Dic10.pdf>

Dairy

<http://www.crea.org.ar/images/documentos/compromis/De la tierra al pais lecheria jun11.pdf>

Agriculture

<http://www.crea.org.ar/images/documentos/compromis/De la tierra al pais agricola Sep10.pdf>

Regional economies

<http://www.crea.org.ar/images/documentos/compromis/De la tierra al pais plurianual es Dic11.pdf>

These reports and more information can be found at our website www.crea.org.ar



Neighbors help maintain small farmers' activities: The "Farm Table" Experience

"The Farm Table" is a collaborative network consisting of families and local farmers operating in the cities of Richmond, Chesterfield and Henrico (USA).

Through this project, a home and shop delivery system was created for local boxed fresh fruits and vegetables that were supplied directly by local farmers in the area and distributed to neighbors by mothers assigned to each neighborhood.



The Farm Table products come from small and medium farms located within a radius of 200 kilometers.

There are various types of boxes containing different varieties of fruits and vegetables (carrots, cucumbers, celery, peppers, tomatoes, squash, potatoes, etc) supplied according to the harvest season. The boxes, which are reused and recycled, are priced at \$27.25 each and are the equivalent approximately to the consumption of a family of four. Four boxes are delivered on a monthly basis (i.e. one per week).

Locally produced sauces, freshly baked bread and eggs may, among others, also be ordered along with the boxes.

The enrollment, payment and choice of boxes with the products are, along with the regularity of delivery, conducted on-line at the website www.thefarmtable.org. Each member has an individual account and billing is automatic and safe.

Members of The Farm Table acquire many benefits, including the acquisition of free boxes, classes and recipes, as well as wine tasting and local products, receiving the newsletter with events and news about agriculture, visits to local producers and the possibility of directly contacting the mother responsible for the distribution of the boxes in a given neighborhood in order to voice any concerns or complain of any errors.

The Partners Rick Grossberg and Duane Slyder started thinking about this project for about two years and a half ago. Today, after some initial difficulties, The Farm Table works with farmers and equipment dealers throughout the region in order to get fresh produce and deliver it to their customers.

The company, which operates in manner similar to that of a cooperative, began as a way to get fruits and vegetables grown locally throughout the area. Unlike cooperatives, however, users of The Farm Table are members as opposed to being owners of the company.



The Farm Table has grown considerably by adding members and expanding the concept to other cities, ensuring that food products are sold in markets outside the Richmond region and expanding opportunities and profits for small farmers, who - as their yields increase - became more profitable and competitive.

The second grocery store outside of Richmond will open on October 1, 2012 in the Washington area at the Ellwood Thompson Local Market. The 15,000 square foot store in Rockville Town Square in Montgomery County, MD. will be called Dawson's Market in honor of the Dawson family who were local farmers.

The business' growth is the result of the general public's continuing interest in healthy eating. With a view to managing this growth and maximizing it, the partners have created software that could help those who try starting similar businesses.

The consumers that are integral members of this network highlight the high quality of the fruits and vegetables offered and the possibility of obtaining fresh and healthy products directly from a farmer who is known to the consumer, in addition to the time saved and the benefit of reduced costs due to there being no intermediaries in the purchase.

Thus, the neighborhood helps to maintain alive the activity of small local farmers, consuming quality products which are fresh and respect and care for the planet.



FARMATORY

Calling for Young farmers to tell their story!

by Marina Cherbonnier
YPARD

The Young Professionals' Platform for Agricultural Research for Development (YPARD) was born from a small group of young people working in ARD who decided to take action after observing that an important policy debate was taking place in relation to agricultural research for development with very little involvement of young people. This was during the European Forum for Agricultural Research for Development (EFARD)'s meeting held in May 2005, in Zurich, Switzerland.

Since then YPARD has been officially launched and is now an international movement by Young Professionals FOR Young Professionals in agricultural-related areas, which operates as an on-line and on-the-ground network. We work for sustainably improved livelihoods worldwide, through dynamic agricultural research for development (ARD).

Germinated in a scientific context, YPARD has, however, widened the scope of its members: Agricultural research for development will only have a future by bringing together different stakeholders. Young farmers, in particular, must take part in debates and take action.

- There can indeed be no accurate research without on-the-ground investigations and interaction, while on-the-ground development must be boosted by the research's outcomes.

- Policy debates must take into account realities of young farmers in addressing their specific needs and leading to appropriate decision-making and actions



- There is no agricultural development without connections being made with the private and business sectors through agro-businesses, entrepreneurship and innovation, which are areas in which youth can excel.

- Promoting agriculture is critical to agricultural development, as interest by youth for agriculture is decreasing. One of the ways to make agriculture attractive is to provide role models to young people.

We believe in professional young people who are able to express their ideas and realise their full potential in a dynamic agricultural research development environment.

YPARD is, therefore, calling for young farmers to speak about their stories, challenges, solutions and needs!

- We invite you to share and ask information among YPARD members across disciplines, professions, ages and regions.

- We need you to get involved, express yourself and create synergies with the research community, private sector and policy-makers.

- We need your story in order to showcase agriculture as a career path! Join your voice! Join YPARD community! Tell us your story! You can visit YPARD's website

(<http://www.ypard.net/>),

register (<http://www.ypard.net/user/register>),

Send us your story at info@ypard.net. Your portrait will be showcased on our Young

Professionals' page!
(<http://www.ypard.net/showcase>).

Three generation of women leading an agriculture business: In Latina an example of female success.

by **Tiziana Lauretti**

Associazione Donne in Campo di Latina - Lazio's Region

The family-run farm *La Mia Terra di Lauretti Tiziana*, which is situated in the open countryside near the town of Pontinia in the province of Latina (LT) and is a few kilometers from the National Park of Circeo, produces fruit, and more specifically plums and strawberries which, in addition to being marketed as fresh produce, are also subsequently processed as succulent jelly.

It is a traditional farm, where the rural family business is central to promoting and developing the land as well as to producing only the best products. Such business has been passed down through three generations of women and is now a production reality in which experience, tradition and innovation coexist.

Tiziana Lauretti is one of Italy's women entrepreneurs who can boast the title of DeaTerra, a prestigious award that is given by ONILFA, the National Observatory on Women of the Ministry of Agriculture in order to help give many visibility and support for their farms.

A commitment to recovering and preserving traditions and traditional foods - such as bread baked in wood ovens, the cultivation of sorghum and other foodstuffs - gave rise to the will and the idea of opening a farm, inviting children and adults to a meeting between the country and the city and organizing a real *Farm School*, where the art of bread making is taught.

The farm was selected in January 2012 by the New York Times as an example of multifunctional (which was not only made in Italy) agriculture, with a touch more quality being added by the *female factor*.

The three female entrepreneurs, which run this *Italian Experience*, are Tiziana Lauretti, the current owner of the *La Mia Terra* farm. Her mother Iolanda Di Girolamo and 91 year old grandmother Maria Fia, who have successfully conducted the family business by diversifying their products over the years, commencing from the sale of fruit (especially plums and sweet Favette of Terracina, which are bright red strawberries), and extending it to the point of creating a farm that also has a swimming pool, where you can stay and be in contact with animals and buy agricultural products directly from the manufacturer.

The family business has, moreover, been received an award from the Lazio Regional Council on account of it being a company that has succeeded in winning the innovation challenge by focusing on the promotion of quality and by being a multifunctional business. The award was given to the company by the President of the Lazio Regional Council Mario Abbruzzese who said: *a company must set an example for many other small businesses in the agricultural world who every day engage in a sector which more than most is suffering the effects of the crisis.*

For the Association Women in Field of the Confederazione Italiana Agricoltori of Latina, the fact that the farm "La Mia Terra" of Tiziana Lauretti is part of our network is a source of pride. Tiziana is an entrepreneur who has been able to develop a farm that combines tradition and innovation, creating a real multifunctional farm.

Agriculture is more than ever an activity open to new ideas, favoring multifunctionality, which is a winning weapon for self-regeneration and which guarantees the survival of rural households in a territory that is too often considered marginal because it is not part of the current priorities of urban centers. Tiziana also was able to continue the farm work of previous generations, paying attention to the know-how acquired in the past and integrating it with new measures for sustainability.



NEWS&EVENTS

WFO at the WTO Public Forum, Geneva, September 24-26, 2012:

The World Trade Organization (WTO) Public Forum will take place from September 24 -26, 2012 in Geneva at the WTO headquarters.

Annually, the WTO Public Forum provides various stakeholders a platform to dialogue on a wide array of trade issues and to discuss ways to enhance the multilateral trading system. The 2012 Public Forum theme is: Is multilateralism in crisis?"

The WFO will conduct a lunch session on Tuesday, September 25, 2012 from 13:00 to 15:00 in meeting room S3. The session, is entitled Does the multilateral system address farmers' real concerns? and will bring together farm leaders from both importing and exporting countries, as well as policy makers and government officials involved in the Doha Round of agriculture negotiations.

The objective of the session is to explore what is needed to ensure the viability of tomorrow's farmers and to enable farmers to sustainably meet growing food demands. Panel members will share their perspectives on the core 21st century agriculture challenges that prevent full participation in the multilateral environment, as well as identify successful measures and programs from their respective countries or organizations.



A floor discussion is also planned. Additional information on the Public Forum and a complete program are available at: http://www.wto.org/english/forums_e/public_forum12_e/public_forum12_e.htm



International Food Prices

On 4th September, the three Rome-based UN organisations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and World Food Programme (WFP) issued a joint statement on international food prices, stating that the current situation in world food markets, characterized by sharp increases in maize, wheat and soybean prices, has raised fears of a repeat of the 2007-2008 world food crisis, but that swift, coordinated international action can stop this from happening.

The DG FAO José Graziano da Silva, the President of IFAD Kanayo F. Nwanze and the Executive Director of PMA, Ertharin Cousin stated that urgent action should be taken to make sure that these price shocks do not turn into catastrophe damage to tens of millions over the coming months. Two interconnected problems must be tackled: The immediate issue of high food prices, which can impact heavily on food import-dependent countries and on the poorest people, and the long-term issue of how we produce, trade and consume food in an age of increasing population, demand and climate change.

In responding to those challenges, they said we are better placed today than five years ago. We have developed new policies and new instruments, like the United Nations High-Level Task Force on Global Food Security and AMIS, the G20's Agricultural Markets Information System, which improves transparency in global markets. We also have the AMIS-related Rapid Response Forum, set up to facilitate coordinated policy responses by the major world producers and traders of key cereals and soybeans in the event of market upheavals.

The three organizations have learned that not everyone is affected in the same way: The urban and rural poor and people in food import-dependent countries are most vulnerable to international commodity price increases, when these are transmitted to local markets, because they spend the largest proportions of their incomes on food.

The representatives of the UN organizations said they have also learned that smallholder farmers, many of whom are also poor and food insecure, can be enabled to benefit from higher food prices and become part of the solution by reducing price spikes and improving overall food security.

They have thus adopted a twin-track approach which supports long-term investments in agriculture, notably smallholder agriculture, while ensuring that safety-nets are in place to help poor food consumers and producers avoid hunger, asset losses and poverty traps in the short run. Nowadays many countries have social protection systems including safety nets - such as assistance for smallholder farmers, nutritional support to mothers and children, and school meals - to ensure that their poorest citizens have enough to eat.

The latter need to be expanded significantly in poorer countries. Safety nets that are affordable, predictable and transparent are an absolute must if we are to safeguard against recurring price shocks and crises.

Small-scale food producers also need, however, to be better equipped to raise their productivity, increase their access to markets and reduce their exposure to risk. People also need decent jobs and incomes so that they can afford the food they need and escape from poverty.

Malawi's food safety threatened by contaminated groundnuts.

Africa once was an important exporter of raw peanuts. In the 1960s, the continent accounted for about 75% of the global trade. By 2005, that had figure had slumped to just 5%. Over the years competition from other parts of the world such as China and the Americas, for instance, has increased, as well as stricter food control from Europe being conducted.

As a matter of facts, Aflatoxins are a naturally occurring but highly toxic substance caused by fungi that grow on crops such as maize, paprika and peanuts commonly known as Africa's groundnuts. Twin, a fair trade NGO, says that 60% of groundnuts grown in Malawi are traded informally and consumed locally, and are not subject to any testing for aflatoxin.

Thus, Malawi, which once had significant groundnut exports (up to 40,000 metric tons a year), nowadays is dealing with volumes that have dropped severely following the implementation of rigorous food safety standards in Europe. Urgent action is needed.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2012/aug/10/malawi-food-safety-threatened-contaminated-groundnuts>



International Youth Day 2012: Asserting our will to strengthen partnership among Youth for agricultural development.

A joint statement for the International Youth Day, 12 August was made, together with the support of FAO, IFAD, WFP, CTA, by a group of youth networks involved in rural and agricultural development.



Building a Better World: Partnering with Youth, was the theme of the International Youth Day 2012 that took place on August the 12th. The event mainly focused on employment, entrepreneurship, political inclusion, youth leadership, information and communications technology, as well as science and education for youth in agriculture and rural development.



As a matter of fact, young people are primary stakeholders and leaders in the various communities, which are able to fully engage in decision-making and action. Joining forces is necessary to make the best of the respective expertise, avoid the duplication of efforts, expose youth to other disciplines and multi-disciplinary approaches, according to UN's call to celebrate youth by asserting the will to build stronger partnerships for youth empowerment.

<http://www.ypard.net/2012-august-10/international-youth-day-2012-asserting-our-will-strengthen-partnership-among-youth-ag>

The Role of Women in Agriculture

WFO is organizing in the framework of the International Food Week at FAO a workshop, to be held on 19th October, Rome, to discuss the Role of women in agriculture. Despite the fact that women make up over 75% of agricultural workers and livestock keepers in developing countries and are responsible for their families' food security, they face significant

difficulties in accessing natural resources, knowledge, services and markets, which hinder their productive capacity, even though this varies from country to country

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) estimates that if women had access to the same productive resources as men, they could increase their yield by 20% to 30%, which would, since women make up 43% of the world's farmers, increase total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5% to 4%, and reduce hunger globally by 12% to 17%.

Achieving gender equality and empowerment of women in agriculture is, therefore, crucial for agricultural development and food security.

During the two hours of the seminar, specialists and women farmers will be able to discuss how to close the gender gap for inclusive rural development, including the manner in which cooperatives and other collective actions may support women's work in agriculture.

The seminar will be held on 19th October, from 12:30 to 14:30 PM, in Malasya room, Building B, at FAO, Rome.



