Contributing to a global research agenda

Agropolis International, CGIAR, GFAR, WRF

Table of contents

• Better understanding the coexistence of the different forms of farming ........................................ 2
• Changing the visions of assessed and measured “performances” ...................................................... 3
• Developing new sustainable farming practices .................................................................................. 3
• Supporting family farming by upgrading research practices and governance ................................ 4
• Meeting the data and information needs .......................................................................................... 4
• Informing policies for appropriate decisions .................................................................................... 4


This document was produced as a result of the “International Encounters on Family Farming and Research” held in Montpellier, June 1-3, 2014. The conference brought together family farmers, policy makers, the private sector, as well as teachers and researchers.

Research agendas relating to family farming and the challenges it faces in the context of global change were discussed. Addresses by policymakers such as the Ministers of Agriculture of France and Senegal (Stéphane Le Foll and Papa Seck), the European Commissioner-Deputy Director General of Agriculture and rural development (Monique Pariat) or IFAD President (Kanayo Nwanze) and by farmer representatives (WFO, La Via Campesina, WRF) were followed by lectures (Hans Herren, Gordon Conway, Marcela Villarreal, Marion Guillou, Robin Bourgeois) and discussions held in seven working groups (themes and details are available on the Encounters website).

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The aim of the International Encounters was to share information and insights on the state of family farming and its challenges. The method consisted in consulting family farmers, policy makers, the private sector, educators and researchers from the whole world to discuss the challenges facing family farming as a way of life providing employment and income generated and off-farm activities in all areas. Family farming activities must be at the heart of the territories to which they contribute. It is thus necessary that family farmers support research in return. For research to effectively support family farming, it is necessary that family farmers support research in return. Technical innovation is an usual area of agricultural research, normally without family farmers being involved in the discussion. Research programs must help ensure that the specific situation of people, particularly women and youth, is taken into account, and that the contribution of family farmers is recognized.

In order to evaluate the scientific knowledge and top the general knowledge that derives from old and new information on the data and information needs of agricultural activities and their relationship with economic, environmental, etc.). Specifically, there is a strong demand for building comprehensive information networks representing family farms, scientiffic networks and not-for-profit, particularly small and medium-sized family farms. The steering of living programs (linking environmental services, food security, carbon sequestration) must notably be consistent with environmental service requirements for example. These systems must naturally be based on an optimal use of ICTs in open data arrangements.

Meeting the data and information needs

All agricultural research approaches, whether participatory or not, need to be based on a minimum of information on production structure, working processes and the social and cultural context of the territories. This information is necessary to inform policies and strategies that break with all asymmetries that different stakeholders, who very often bear the brunt of the consequences within which agricultural activities are performed, are taking into account. In particular, it is necessary that family farmers are fully taken into account their proposals and contributions in order to develop new metrics and reporting criteria and, as a result, develop new metrics and reporting criteria.

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