

The future of family farming

Series of technical discussions

Family farming is the predominant form of agriculture in developed and developing countries. More than 90 per cent of the 600 million farms in the world are managed by individuals or families, relying mainly on family labour. According to estimates, family farmers occupy approximately 70 per cent to 80 per cent of global farmland and produce more than 80 per cent of food in terms of value. Small family farms of less than two hectares represent 84 per cent of all family farms and produce 36 per cent of food globally.

In the complex scenario of agrifood systems increasingly threatened by interconnected and mutually reinforcing challenges, small-scale family farmers continue to exist and to develop innovative, tailored and locally adapted coping strategies and solutions that can help in transitioning to more efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agrifood systems that leave no one behind.

On the occasion of the mid-term of the **UN Decade of Family Farming 2019 - 2028 (UNFFF)** The Joint Secretariat hosted by FAO (PSUF) is launching a collective exercise aiming at encouraging critical thinking, dialogues, exchange of views and experiences on the key themes affecting the future of family farming.

A series of technical discussions will bring together researchers, policymakers and family farmers to reflect on:

- The meaning of being a family farmer today;
- the major trends that are affecting family farming and the rural economy today and in the near future; and
- family farmers' contribution to the emergence of new transformation pathways I the rural-urban continuum.

The events also aim to promote multistakeholder partnerships and cooperation for the development and effective implementation of policies, strategies, programmes and investments in support of family farming.

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Discussion 1

Why is family farming persisting?

Hybrid event

23 January 2024

2 pm to 5 pm

FAO HQ, Malaysia Room

Despite numbers that show how family farmers are still the backbone of rural economies in most regions of the world, they are often confronted to multilayered and interconnected challenges that hamper their productive and transformative potential. However, the disappearance of family farmers appears both unrealistic and undesirable, given the productive, social, cultural and environmental functions that this production model provides, the actual and potential contributions it offers to rural development and poverty reduction, and the major trends that it affects within agrifood systems.

Guiding questions for the discussion:

- Is family farming destined to disappearance, as the modernization of production structures and increase of labour productivity would occur everywhere, in line with the pattern experienced in the richest countries?
- Can the canonical pathway of structural transformation (exit of workers from agriculture towards industry and services) be reframed to include alternatives which take into account the rural-urban continuum in its various declinations?
- How can family farmers be the foundation of viable agrifood systems that can offer new economic opportunities and attractive employment and effective rural services?

Format

- Hybrid event
- Venue: FAO HQ, Malaysia Room
- Online platform: Zoom
- Language interpretation: EN/FR/ES

Moderator: Guilherme Brady, Head of Family Farming Engagement, Parliamentary Networks and Communication for Development Initiatives Unit, FAO

14:00 – 14:10 Opening

H.E. Mario Arvelo, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic to the Rome-based agencies of the United Nations

Maurizio Martina, Deputy Director-General, FAO

14:10 – 14:15 Objectives and methodology

Guilherme Brady, Head of Family Farming Engagement, Parliamentary Networks and Communication for Development Initiatives Unit, FAO

14:15 – 14:35

Introduction

Are family farms disappearing? A global overview

Benjamin Davis, Director, Social Policies and Rural Institutions Division, FAO

Jean-Michel Sourisseau, Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement (CIRAD)

Marco Camagni, Lead Global Technical Specialist Rural Institutions, Sustainable Production, Markets and Institutions Division, IFAD (tbc)

14:35- 15:20

Roundtable:

The persistence of small-scale family farmers in the face of economic and structural transformation: regional perspectives.

Catia Griza, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)

Sara Alobo Loison (Independent Consultant/Researcher, Agricultural Economist)

Raimund Jehle, Regional Programme leader, FAO REU

15:20 – 15:30 Coffee break

15:30 – 16:10

The farmers' perspective:
Current and future challenges and opportunities for family farming

Morgan Ody, La Via Campesina (LVC)

Cheikh Mouhamady Cissokho, Réseau d'Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (ROPPA)

Lany Rebagay, Asian Farmers' Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA), World Rural Forum (WRF)

Evangelista Chekera, Zimbabwe Farmers Union Youth (ZFU), World farmers' Organisation (WFO)

16:10 – 16:45 Interactive discussion

16:50 –
17:00

Wrap up

Guilherme Brady, Head of Family Farming Engagement, Parliamentary Networks and Communication for Development Initiatives Unit, FAO

16:55 – 17:00

Closing

IFAD (speaker tbc)