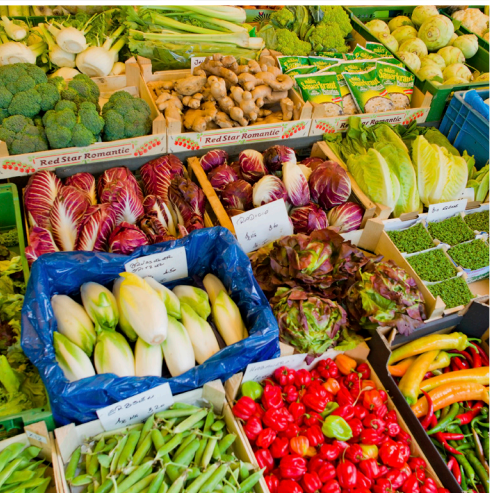


**Reflections and considerations on the construction of a renewed public policy agenda for family farming in the Americas**



**IICA**





# **Reflections and considerations on the construction of a renewed public policy agenda for family farming in the Americas<sup>1</sup>**

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*Adrián Zapata (Guatemala), Alberto Broch (Brazil), Alberto Ramírez (Chile), Álvaro Acevedo (Colombia), Álvaro Ramos (Uruguay), Ángel Coto (El Salvador), Arilson Favareto (Brazil), Byron Garóz (Guatemala), Carlos Mermot (Uruguay), Carolina Trivelli (Peru), Catia Grisa (Brazil), Cesar Sotomayor (Peru), Curt Delice (Suriname), Darío Monterroso (Guatemala), Diego Montenegro (Bolivia), Fernando López (Uruguay), Hero Pérez (Dominican Republic), Humberto Oliveira (Brazil), Ileana Gómez (El Salvador), Inola Mapp (Panama), Juan Antonio Rodríguez (Costa Rica), Karen Rodríguez (Costa Rica), Lautaro Viscay (Argentina), María Febres (Peru), Mario Bonilla (Colombia), Miriam Suyuc (Guatemala), Oscar Osorio (Chile), Santiago Vélez (Bolivia).*



## 1. Introduction

The concept of family farming refers to a segment of rural production whose capabilities help countries achieve higher levels of development. The sector consists of around 60 million farmers who work 17 million production units<sup>2</sup> and make a significant contribution to the well-being of rural life, the revitalization of local economies, food security across the Americas, and environmental conservation, among others.

Since the concept of family farming emerged and its potential was acknowledged, public policymakers have made efforts to devise policies aimed at boosting its capabilities and consolidating it as a key player in national rural development. With sectoral, differentiated and intersectoral policies for this category of producers now having been implemented for more than twenty years, some stakeholders, especially in the academy, have begun to study the performance of public policies, recognizing both the positive results achieved, and their limitations.

Under its Territorial Development and Family Farming Program, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) is now involved in these efforts, broadening the inputs used to gain a better understanding of the current situation and functioning of policies for the sector. It is also promoting technical and political dialogues aimed at improving the relevance and effectiveness of the

implementation of public and private resources in support of family farming, in a volatile international context with rapidly evolving technological innovations.

In 2022, the Institute conducted research based on primary and secondary information aimed at identifying guidelines for developing a renewed agenda of public policies for family farming, based on the current policy situation, the characteristics and potential of this category of producers, and the global context that affects it. Drawing on the research findings, IICA proposed adjustments and innovations designed to maximize family farming's contributions to the sustainable development of our societies.

The Institute also organized a series of dialogues with leaders of regional and national family farming organizations, academics, and public policymakers, during which groups of participants met with IICA specialists for focused discussions on the policy situation in the different countries.

This document, which is a synthesis of the research carried out, is being made available to government institutions, social organizations, research centers, cooperation agencies and individuals involved in family farming, as input for reflection on the actions needed to improve the effectiveness of public policies in this area.

The proposed introduction of a renewed public policy agenda for family farming is in no way meant to call into



2. ECLAC; FAO; IICA. 2014. Outlook for agriculture and rural development in the Americas: A Perspective on Latin America and the Caribbean. San Jose, Costa Rica, IICA. 230 pp.



question the important advances achieved with the policies currently in place, which were undoubtedly implemented following a process of dialogue and analysis of the needs of family farming at a specific moment in time.

The need to renew the policy agenda, or adapt public policy instruments, is basically a response to the environmental, social, technological, economic and political changes that have occurred in recent decades in rural territories, leading to the consolidation of interdependent processes whose problems can no longer be solved from the sectoral and agricultural perspectives alone. Therefore, it is necessary to understand current policies and build on the progress and results achieved through them, as well as the lessons learned from their implementation.

Furthermore, given the gradual dissemination of the concept of family farming across the Americas and the different way in which it was assimilated in each country, it is difficult to identify innovative policies that could potentially be applied by all nations. The issues raised in this document are based on the interpretation of the visions and experiences of the people interviewed, and those reflected in the sources of secondary information, which, although applicable only to some countries, serve as a useful point of reference with regard to the performance of the institutions and public policies for family farming implemented up to now to improve them.

This document is divided into three sections. The first describes the context with which family farming and its public policies interact, highlighting the progress made and the limitations faced over the last 20 years, and inviting reflection on the relevance of a renewed agenda or a new generation of public policies for the sector. The second part presents a series of guidelines or orientations for the design of a renewed agenda, or the strengthening of the current one. Lastly, the third section outlines initial actions for promoting dialogue and charting the path towards the renewal or strengthening of the agenda.

## 2. Context and evolution of public policies for family farming

The role of agriculture and rural territories in development processes is recognized as an issue of strategic importance in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030) and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



In response to this challenge, in its 2022-2026 Medium Term Plan the Institute emphasizes the need to:

*Provide tools and inputs that contribute to the development of a new generation of public policies that recognize agriculture's contribution to agrifood systems and to resolving the climate crisis, and that address the issues of science and innovation, bringing agricultural producers of all conditions and sizes to the forefront<sup>3</sup>.*

Parallel to these efforts, and as part of the Institute's strategy of strengthening its role as a conduit for sharing knowledge and capabilities among the countries of the Americas and between this continent and the rest of the world, IICA has also been positioning itself as a hemispheric platform for promoting collective actions on issues of common interest to the countries. The Hemispheric Partnership for Food Security and Sustainable Development is perhaps the most important effort in this area, as it is designed to promote a new generation of public policies,

3. IICA (Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, Costa Rica). 2022. Medium Term Plan for the Period 2022-2026. San Jose, Costa Rica. 54 pp.



capabilities and actions for more resilient and sustainable agriculture and agri-food systems.

Public policies and institutional modernization are of great importance to IICA, which recognizes that they are key instruments for integrating and promoting capabilities and, as such, should be reviewed and adapted to the contexts and development trends of the countries, to ensure that national and international resources are used effectively.

The need to renew public policies is also evident given the deterioration observed in the conditions and quality of life in the rural areas of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) in recent years. The indicators for poverty, food insecurity, and malnutrition have worsened. According to estimates for LAC, 48.2 million people were living in extreme poverty in 2019, while in 2021 some 93.5 million faced severe food insecurity and around 56.5 million were malnourished<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, the risks associated with severe climate and health crises, and the humanitarian crises triggered by them, have increased significantly. To all this must be added a lower quality of life caused by citizen insecurity, organized crime and the production and trafficking of illicit substances, as well as the worsening of the impact

of climate change on agriculture and rural territories and the continuation of the process of ecosystem and agrobiodiversity degradation<sup>5</sup>.

Furthermore, the changes in the focus and policies of governments, as well as the fiscal and financial problems faced by most countries in the region (made significantly worse by the consequences of the severe acute respiratory syndrome pandemic caused by a coronavirus [COVID-19]), have exacerbated the difficulties faced by family farmers in accessing public and private infrastructure, goods and services<sup>6</sup>, as well as the persistence of rural hunger and poverty in LAC countries, making the need to review and introduce adjustments to current public policies even more important.

So far in the 21st century, the focus of public policies for the development of rural territories and family farming in our region has varied during three distinct periods:

- From 2000 to 2004. A period marked by major global and hemispheric crises in economic, financial, commercial, social, and political-institutional affairs. During those years, the focus of public policies and insti-

4. Diaz-Bonilla, Eugenio. 2023. ¿Qué es seguridad alimentaria y nutricional y cómo medirla? San Jose Costa Rica. IICA. 106 pp.

5. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the impacts on rural livelihoods and food security, particularly for small and medium-sized farmers and indigenous peoples, are projected to worsen, including an overall reduction of agricultural production, suitable farming area and water availability. Projected yield reductions for 2050 in the Central American region are as follows: beans 19%, maize 4-21%, rice 23%, with seasonal droughts projected to lengthen, intensify and increase in frequency. Small fisheries and farming of seafood will be affected as El Niño-Southern Oscillation events become more frequent and intense, and ocean warming, and acidification continues (medium confidence).

6. An Institute survey, conducted in 2021, of the situation of family farming in the hemisphere during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the inability of public policies to tackle the health emergency, especially in terms of programs aimed at providing public productive infrastructure, goods and services in rural areas, such as credit, financing, technical assistance and rural extension and, more specifically, differentiated public policies focused on family farming. The survey also underscored the change in political priorities to benefit other sectors most affected by the pandemic and the elimination of a number of programs and policies in support of family farming.



tutions reflected a continuation (with some nuances) of the policies applied during the 1990s.

- From 2004 to 2014. This ten-year period saw a sustained increase in the price of agricultural commodities, as well as moments of volatility and the financial crisis of 2008. It was a time of growth for exporters of food, goods and services, such as tourism, and, therefore, a period in which the fiscal situation of governments was relatively comfortable. There was also a positive flow of capital and foreign direct investment in the region. In the vast majority of countries, public policies were clearly redistributive, since the income generated was invested in improving the living conditions of the rural population, tapping into family farming as an engine for growth as it benefited from the markets (new consumers and people emerging from poverty) and public policies (investments, technical assistance, subsidies, financing and the promotion of value added).
- From 2014 to 2022. During this period, new fiscal and financial crises occurred, government financial resources and investments were limited, public spending and strategies were cut severely, and rural development policies ceased to be a priority. From 2020 until practically the end of 2022, this situation worsened to an extreme degree due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the repercussions of which are still being felt.

Since 2004, family farming has been recognized as a clearly identifiable socioeconomic and productive sector of the rural population, capable of organizing the factors of production with which it interacts directly (family and hired labor, natural resources such as soil, water and biomass, and capital and access to financing) under different paradigms from those of the agribusiness sector.

This acknowledgement, which laid the foundations for the renewal of public policies for agriculture, paved the way for the formulation of differentiated policies for this segment of producers as operators of distinctive production systems with specific needs, whose instruments should be designed and applied taking into account the geographical context and ecosystems where the production units are located.

Along the same lines, a number of countries promoted the formulation of differentiated policies for family farming, while at the same time creating the conditions needed to achieve better integration and closer coordination among the different institutional, social and economic actors. Latin American academic institutions, as sources of ideas and dialogue, played an important role in disseminating these policies across the continent, with the support of political institutions devoted to the coordination of efforts at the regional level, such as the Specialized Meeting on Family Farming (REAF), the Andean Community (CAN)



and the Central American Agricultural Council, as well as international cooperation institutions, including the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and IICA.

Thus, the concept of family farming, and its related regulations, institutions and differentiated policies, have spread progressively across the continent over a twenty-year period, first in the countries of the Southern Region, where the concept originated in Latin America, and later in the Andean and Mesoamerican countries. Its dissemination among the Caribbean countries is still ongoing.

The introduction of these differentiated policies was a landmark moment in family farming, since significant progress was achieved compared to the policies applied previously, which distinguished between the various types of rural producers in only a limited fashion. Their implementation made it possible to highlight the role of family farming and enhance its contributions to rural territories and countries in general.

Thanks to the dissemination of the concept throughout the Americas, a wide variety of institutions, policies and

instruments for family farming now exists. As the sector operates in changing, diverse contexts, the situation, progress and limitations of these public policies also vary, and are specific to each country.

Some of the advances made with these differentiated policies are worth highlighting:

- The recognition of family farming as a key social actor for the harmonious, inclusive development of rural territories, whose characteristics distinguish it from the agribusiness sector.
- The acceptance of its heterogeneity, reflected in the diversity of this segment of producers and its multi-functional capabilities: as well as producing food, the sector contributes to national rural development. These two aspects were a key factor in the promotion of differentiated, intersectoral public policies for family farming aimed not only at recognizing their differences, but also at tapping their potential.
- The raising of the sector's profile, as attention has been drawn to its contributions to the economy, food security, ecosystem sustainability, culture, etc., which has also helped promote differentiated and intersectoral policies.





- The creation of a wide range of new institutional structures, from vice-ministries, undersecretariats, institutional directorates and coordinating committees, to programs and projects, accompanied by the corresponding reclassification of public managers and their technical teams.
- The creation of diverse spaces and governance mechanisms, with the participation of different social and economic actors and family farming organizations, enabled this category of rural producers to take part in the management of public policies.
- Its function as an effective response to the needs of the various family production units (access to land and land tenure, credit, generation of appropriate technologies, technical assistance and rural extension, agricultural insurance against weather-, health- and market-related events, adding of value through processing and agro-industrialization, marketing, public food purchases, access to housing, ecosystem services, etc.), as well as more general needs of society, such as those related to food and nutrition security, territorial rural development, economic diversification through activities such as rural tourism, etc.



- Finally, the recognition of family farming as a solution to the problems of the rural milieu, instead of part of them. Despite their heterogeneity, family farmers are not synonymous with underdevelopment and poverty, since, given the right combination of differentiated and intersectoral policies, they are capable of sustaining their family units and contributing to the development of rural areas and countries.

Implementation of these policies has also had to contend with certain limiting factors:

- The partial appropriation of the concept of family farming, since, although it has been integrated into the regulatory frameworks, institutions and public policies, the same cannot be said of the support instruments. Agricultural initiatives are often still implemented with limited recognition of the value that family farming can add to the rural milieu if it has strong links with other sectors.
- The sectoral organization of ministries of agriculture into divisions dealing with subsectors, products, and actors is necessary, but insufficient. Family farming also requires the simultaneous, pertinent participation of other public institutions to complement and ensure that the State's actions are consistent.
- Poor coordination of public policies, since, generally speaking, during the period in question policies were implemented largely in isolation from one another, which is a reflection of institutions that have difficulty achieving intersectoral and crosscutting actions.
- A number of countries designed specific regulatory and institutional frameworks for family farming, but in some cases clearly lacked the financial or technical resources needed to implement their policies, which require other actions besides agricultural ones. In general terms, although the institutions involved developed frameworks aligned with the conceptual guidelines, their effectiveness was limited due to lack of institutional coordination, instruments, and budgetary resources, and the specific skills required to support family farming.
- The hierarchical level of the new institutions or committees charged with promoting family farming has not been the most suitable for performing the role of coordinating institutions called for in the case of differentiated and intersectoral policies, which is why some



countries have rarely achieved the systemic efforts that family farming programs require.

- In some cases, these limitations were made more serious by changes of government and in priorities. Nearly all the countries not only enjoyed periods in which there was strong support for family farming with the involvement of the governments of the day, which meant that the conditions for implementing their public policies were favorable, but also periods during which governments placed emphasis on other development strategies.
- Despite such limitations, implementation of the policies led to effective coordination with various sectors, but mostly with those linked to the production of food by family farmers. The agencies involved included those responsible for policies and initiatives related to food security, school meals, malnutrition in children, etc.; and, less often, others focused on climate change, the energy crisis, digitalization, culture, education, etc.
  - The aim is to address the heterogeneity of family farming through policies for productive inclusion designed to enable farmers to participate better in economic activities, combined with social protection policies for the poorest and most disadvantaged. Emphasis has been placed on the latter, however, with little consideration given to the need for both types of policies to foster the transition of actors lagging behind towards profitable and sustainable agriculture.
  - The various efforts made in terms of institutional arrangements, policies, programs and projects speci-

fically designed for family farming should be complemented not only with an efficient, transparent information system to facilitate the monitoring of such initiatives, but also with evaluations of their impact, the effectiveness of institutional action, and the relevance of their institutional arrangements.

The current public policy agenda for family farming has been in place for more than twenty years, but it is time to renew it, given the limitations faced in its implementation, the environmental, social and economic transformations affecting agriculture, and the dynamics of the development of rural territories.

Furthermore, the agenda should be promoted in line with the evolution of the international agenda and the global commitments that the States have assumed in relation to sustainable human development, as set out in:

- The SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, with which family farming is related and in which it is playing an important role due to its contributions to food security, the revitalization of the rural economy, environmental sustainability, etc.
- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and successive UN conferences on the subject, especially the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties, held in November 2022.
- The United Nations Food Systems Summit, held in September 2021.
- The United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019-2028), which recognizes the important role that family farmers play in eradicating hunger, building a global food future, ensuring food security, improving livelihoods, and achieving more efficient natural resource management, environmental protection, and the sustainable development of rural areas.
- The Partnership for Food Security in the Americas (June 2022), launched by the Institute's Executive Committee, which has called for the strengthening of collective actions in the hemisphere to combat food insecurity and ensure sustainable development.

In these agreements, family farming has an important role as a provider of quality, healthy, and nutritious food, as a set of diversified family units engaged in clean production that sustain the most fragile ecosystems and help reduce the factors that cause climate change, or as the subject



of policies designed to make them more competitive and counter discrimination in favor of large economic clusters.

At this point, the analysis of the performance of public policies for family farming and the lessons learned suggest that, in order to promote a renewed agenda, it will be necessary to review the concepts and guidelines on which policies are based. They should be addressed from a systemic and multidimensional perspective and underpinned with institutional arrangements that facilitate inter-institutional and intersectoral action. This, in turn, calls for the teams of technical personnel to be equipped with new expertise, family farmers and their organizations to be involved in the design, application and evaluation of policy instruments, and a long-term vision to be adopted consistent with the challenges facing family farming and rural territories.

This renewed agenda is a paradigm shift –a move away from a continued emphasis on the soundness and importance of traditional sectoral policies–, with the design, management and application of new policy instruments adopting a systemic approach based on the family production systems of each production unit and of other, similar units.

It is worth mentioning that this is not a break with current policies. Management of the lines of action of differentiated public policies for family farming put in place in the last 20 years should be consolidated, broadened, deepened and improved. It is not a question of starting over, but of ensuring that the new designs link macroeconomic, sectoral, differentiated, intersectoral, social protection and productive inclusion policies with environmental, cultural and capacity building policies, among others.

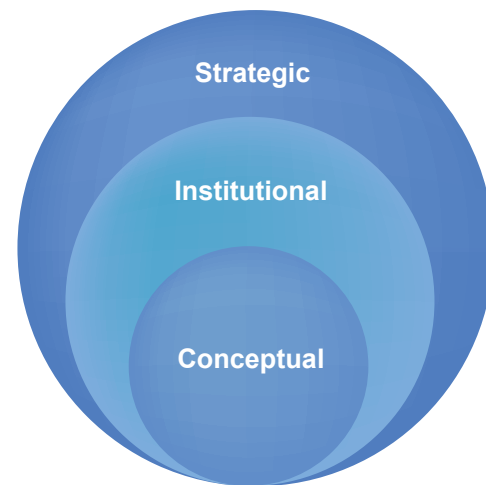
### 3. Guidelines for the construction of a renewed agenda

The construction and implementation of this agenda should be the fruit of technical and political discussions in which public and private actors negotiate and agree upon the guiding principles and operational aspects. These discussions should include reflection and the identification of actions in relation to the various elements of political activities, such as the actors and their interests, the spaces and processes for decision-making, the organization and rules of operation of public and private institutions, as well as the policies that are being promoted on behalf of family farming. This will require the creation of various spaces for political dialogue, which should be formally establi-

shed, operate on a continuous basis, and be equipped with prior information, clear working methods, and guarantees regarding compliance with the agreements and recommendations that emerge.

To contribute to this debate, a series of guidelines are presented below to orient the design of the renewed agenda, aimed at defining strategies that include a set of complementary policies.

#### Guidelines for the construction of a renewed public policy agenda for family farming



These guidelines are based on a recognition of the heterogeneity and multifunctionality of family farming, as well as its potential to help: 1) maintain ecosystems and conserve native species of flora and fauna; 2) revitalize economies by creating new jobs, generating higher family income, and adding value to agricultural products; 3) boost the supply of healthy, nutritious food; 4) strengthen the population's rootedness in rural territories and networks and capabilities for collective action; and 5) make more use of waste, effluents and by-products to generate new inputs and transform the energy matrix, etc.

The guidelines fall into three categories (conceptual, institutional and strategic), which are interrelated components of an organizational development process applied to public institutions and policies for family farming. The effectiveness of each category will depend on the previous ones. This means that the impact of the actions promoted by the strategic guidelines will be limited unless they are implemented by institutions operating in accordance with

the conceptual guidelines that define family farming. The guidelines are presented below.

### Conceptual guidelines

These refer to the theoretical approaches that underpin the activities and policies of the institutions involved. It is important that they be taken into consideration, as they are the basis for the design of the institutions and their work strategies, policies and operational instruments. However, despite usually being the starting point for the delivery of development services, they are not always internalized adequately. As a result, the scope of the concepts is often minimized because they are not properly understood, or there are insufficient institutional capabilities to implement them.

#### Conceptual guidelines

- Systemic vision
- FF concept
- Territorial FF systems
- Multifunctionality
- Heterogeneity

- Systemic vision for sustainable development: multidimensionality. A renewed public policy agenda for family farming should be based on a systemic vision of development that recognizes the multidimensionality of, and interrelationships among, the different elements that make up agriculture and the sector's link with others that affect its performance, including rural and urban spaces and global food production systems. This conceptual base should target the development of family farming in balance with its surroundings, in order to improve its productivity and competitiveness; promote the sustainability of production units and the ecosystems of which they form part; ensure equitable access to assets and the equitable distribution of wealth,

as well as access to public goods and services essential for human, social, and productive development; and facilitate participation in the design of public policies and in other pertinent matters.

- Scope of the family farming concept. A core element in the elaboration of this public policy agenda is an understanding of the concept of family farming and the potential it holds for development strategies, as well as the value that this frame of reference adds to earlier conceptualizations, such as those of small-scale producers and peasant farmers, among others. Some relevant aspects of this concept are the incorporation of the family unit as a focus of attention, an approach that views it as a territorial production system, where other forms of agricultural production are combined in a particular way, along with production factors such as land, labor and financial resources. The approach should also recognize the heterogeneity of family farming and the fact that it is not synonymous with poverty, as the correct combination and application of differentiated and intersectoral policies can stimulate its multifunctional capabilities and enhance its contributions to the rural milieu.
- Territorial systems of family farming. This type of agriculture should be thought of as a set of systems made up of family producers, their organizations, cooperative enterprises, support institutions and other local actors linked to them within a specific territory. Their characteristics are determined by the social, economic, environmental and cultural factors of the territories where they are located. These systems are heterogeneous not only because there is a wide variety of them in the Americas, but also because each system is made up of different types of family farming. They interact with an external system: the territory, made up of public and private actors, nature, urbanized centers and markets. Therefore, a systemic vision of family farming is a valuable tool to guide the elaboration of a renewed public policy agenda, since it affords a better understanding of the elements that make up family farming and affect it, their interrelationships, and their visions, capabilities, needs, etc.
- Multifunctionality of family farming. This refers to its ability to make a number of different contributions to the external system with which it interacts, i.e., to the territory where it interacts. In addition to food production, which is perhaps its most important function, family farming makes environmental contributions



(climate change mitigation and adaptation measures and the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity), economic contributions (job creation and income generation, the revitalization of local economies and the population's rootedness in the territory) and socio-cultural contributions (reduction of poverty and inequalities, construction of networks that strengthen social cohesion and the attachment of value to traditional knowledge and the artistic-cultural heritage). Multifunctionality is an important concept for the design of public policies and institutional architectures for family farming because coordination and cooperation among institutions and actors from various sectors are necessary to take advantage of its capabilities.

- Heterogeneity of family farming. The term heterogeneity, as already mentioned, refers to the diversity of the different family farming systems established in the hemisphere and to the diversity that exists within each of them. This concept is important to guide public policies, since there is no one-size-fits-all public policy for every type of family farming; each one requires a set of specific public policies, and understanding this fact is the starting point for designing them.

### Institutional guidelines

The purpose of this set of guidelines is to build governance that facilitates the design and implementation of policies and their instruments. The institutions responsible for differentiated public policies for family farming should be capable of aligning their proposals and agreeing concrete actions, creating the conditions for more participation and



better coordination among the actors, with a more active involvement of family farmers, so as to pinpoint their needs and enhance their capabilities and complementarities. This calls for adjustments to the public institutional structure and its links with private actors for the implementation of policies to overcome weaknesses such as the way in which the institutions operate within their respective sectors (watertight compartments), centralized public policymaking, and the partial scope of policies and the limited role of private actors in their design and implementation.

## Institutional guidelines

- Integrated visions
- Coordinated institutional designs
- Public-private partnerships
- Capabilities of FFO
- Capabilities of other inst.
- Culture of policy management
- Hemispheric spaces

- Integrated visions. These visions, which are the basis of the strategies shared by multiple actors, are the first requirement to ensure the adequate design and implementation of public policies for family farming, taking into account its heterogeneity and multifunctional capabilities. The most important visions that have to be integrated are as follows: a) the productive and competitive vision of family production units and their participation in agri-food systems; b) the social approach, based on the creation of opportunities for the population to access public services and goods that ensure their social well-being and their inclusion, as well as food and nutritional security; and c) areas of general interest, such as the environment, biodiversity, climate change, and economic development opportunities.
- Coordinated institutional designs. Public institutions require arrangements to address the limitations of actions at the sectoral level, which have historically been the norm; while necessary, they

have been insufficient to tackle the challenges of family farming. The new institutional designs, or the adjustments to existing ones, should ensure decentralized, deconcentrated management and, at the same time, close coordination between institutions to achieve the effective integration of the visions of the institutions involved. They should improve governance in the management of public policies, allowing the participation of the various relevant government sectors and, in particular, of family farming organizations. In addition, their hierarchical positions should be such as to allow them to coordinate the capabilities and resources needed to implement the policies.

- Complementarity and public-private partnerships. Although the State plays a key part in spearheading development processes and regulating economic, social and environmental relations, it can facilitate the development of public policies for family farming by promoting the complementary role of the public and private sectors in their design and implementation. This calls for the elaboration of regulations, institutional designs and public policies that envisage the incorporation of private actors (producers' organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations, corporations,

universities, research centers, cooperation agencies, etc.) into the public sphere. The private sector has the capacity to broaden the scope of government services, since its presence at the local level is greater, and it has better resource management and service delivery mechanisms. It can also be an important partner for complementary investments in development projects for family farming.

- Family farming's capabilities for managing public policies. Policies for family farming mainly target farmers' organizations, which also play an important role in their design and implementation. Organizations should have the characteristics and capabilities they need to do so, as well as national, regional or local spaces for dialogue that can serve as a platform for the governance of public policies for family farming, with a hierarchical level that allows them to harness the capabilities and resources required to implement their decisions. Representatives of family farming should also be trained to ensure they are well acquainted with the public policy management process and their country's public policies, so their participation is informed and proactive. Finally, their role as leaders and interlocutors of family farming will need to be strengthened, equipping them







with the technical expertise and financial resources required to perform this role effectively and maintain their position of leadership and convening power.

- The capabilities of other institutions. The above actions should be complemented with efforts to help strengthen other institutions working in rural areas, not only so they take part in the design of public policies, but also to enable them to support implementation of the policies adopted. Local governments are particularly important, given their multisectoral coverage and as they have a mandate to coordinate the development of their regions, which includes capacity building for their technical teams and the provision of financial resources to invest in infrastructure, equipment and the delivery of services. In addition, the participation of non-governmental bodies (foundations, associations, social organizations, family farmers' enterprises and cooperatives, etc.) should be promoted, given their ability to complement State services, taking advantage of their presence in the territories, as well as their governance and financial management structures.
- An institutional culture for public policy management. The foundations of an institutional culture of public policy management should be laid by strengthening ins-

titutional capabilities and the skills and attitudes of the actors involved, especially civil servants at the local level, where economic and financial resources and technical capabilities are scarcer. There must be a collective commitment to contributing to the development of family farming and the wider community, creating an environment for transparent action and opportunities for growth, encouraging the participation of all stakeholders, stimulating leadership and collective action, and promoting, among other aspects, accountability and social auditing.

- Spaces for hemispheric integration. As already mentioned, the renewed public policy agenda for family farming is closely related to the international agenda. Furthermore, over the last 18 years it has been shown that regional integration mechanisms have been especially useful for improving the quality of policies and the design of their instruments, the sharing of experiences, and collective capacity building. Therefore, the new generation of policies should also energize the spaces for integration among countries, such as the Executive Secretariat of the Central American Agricultural Council, linked to the Central American Integration System; the REAF, which belongs to the Southern Common Market; and the CAN and the Caribbean Community,



as platforms for debate and the implementation of regional proposals. The result of the active participation of these entities should be the establishment of regional priorities that address the countries' common problems, which will facilitate collective actions and the sustainability of policies over time. The challenge lies in reaching agreements and defining priorities that are representative of all sectors linked to family farming, and implementing the agreements adopted through duly harmonized national policies. In addition, focusing on efforts at the regional level will foster dialogue and actions at the hemispheric level.

### Strategic guidelines

The strategic guidelines, keyed to the international and national contexts and the development priorities of each country, should be used as input for the design of long-term strategies, in harmony with development trends and the scale of the changes that family farming and the rural milieu require.

- International development framework. This framework is needed to align family farming policies with the aims and goals established in the international commitments approved at the UN level, in particular, the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Decade of Family Farming. This will help position family farming as an important element in the political development agenda, due to its strategic importance in tackling the challenges affecting our countries, such

as the impacts of climate change, the transition of the energy and technology matrix, the economic revitalization of rural territories, the closing of the gap in regional and social inequalities, the reduction of hunger and malnutrition, and the eradication of poverty.

- Macroeconomic policies. The alignment of macroeconomic policies with family farming policies will help create a context in which regulations and stimuli will have a positive effect and enable countries to tap the potential of family farming and maximize its contributions to rural territories. Macroeconomic policies (exchange rate, monetary and, especially, fiscal policies), together with sectoral policies such as those used to promote industrialization, production and foreign trade, among others, should support and bolster the positioning of family farming within the economy and society, creating the conditions for this majority segment of the rural population to occupy a central place in the development model of each country.
- Integration into agri-food systems. The international agenda already includes efforts to strengthen these systems to meet the global demand for food (in both quantitative and qualitative terms), facilitate access at reasonable prices, and help achieve greater inclusion of family farming and equity in the distribution of the benefits that the systems generate. Therefore, the integration of family farming production units into local and global agri-food systems is another issue that public policies for family farming should take into account.



- Social, economic and political inclusion. Any renewed agenda of public policies for family farming should recognize the existence of factors that generate the exclusion of many sectors of family farming, and result in asymmetries in access to assets and services, especially for women, young people, and Afro-descendant and ancestral populations in rural areas. The question of rights should be one of the strategic underpinnings of family farming policies, in order to prioritize actions that reduce exclusion and drive the social-economic and political-organizational inclusion of family farmers.
  - Long-term vision. Public policies for family farming should promote long-term planning processes in which all the actors are involved, and dialogue and agreements between the parties will be essential for the sustainability of those processes over time. The design and implementation of plans should also be aligned with the guidelines of the United Nations Decade of Family Farming, as a way of coordinating stakeholders, policies and capabilities and thereby making progress with the priorities defined in the UN SDGs.
  - Rural development planning based on family farming. Furthermore, the plans adopted should include a recognition of family farming as one of the pivotal elements of rural development, in order to tap its multifunctional capabilities for promoting actions that improve competitiveness, sustainability, equity and inclusion. The plans should be developed at the local, regional and national levels so they are aligned with policies and initiatives of other sectors.
  - Cities as development and innovation hubs. Overcoming the dichotomous relationship between rural and urban spaces will allow countries to take better advantage of the capabilities of family farming. To that end, policies and plans on the subject should take into account the potential of cities, particularly medium-sized ones, as population centers with social and economic influence in the rural areas that surround them. The cities in question should also be recognized as forming part of the territories to which they provide public and private services, jobs, markets and consumers, production assets, connectivity and communication, and innovations, among others. This role is becoming even more important with the introduction of digital technologies, as cities are best equipped to support their introduction and dissemination in rural society.
  - Geographic scales of planning. Public policies for family farming will be more relevant and effective if they focus on geographic scales that group family production units together and link them with the surrounding area, that is, with territories, watersheds, landscapes, productive clusters, food systems etc. Promoting associative enterprises and collective action among family farmers will make them more competitive. It will also foster coordination of the sectoral actions of which most public policies consist, as well as coordination between levels of planning and budgeting at the national, regional, state and provincial levels, etc., depending on the specific situation in each country.
  - Monitoring and evaluation. Implementing a system with methodologies and tools that take the multifunctionality of family farming into account to gauge the results and evaluate the impacts of public policies will provide information for adjusting future policies and strategies.
- The aspects mentioned above are based on an analysis of the advances and weaknesses identified in the current generation of public policies for family farming. As already noted, this is not intended to be an exhaustive list or a methodological guide to orient the design of policies, but rather a first contribution for reflection and dialogue on elements to be considered in strengthening current public policies or planning new ones.
- Although many aspects are in need of improvement, one key element is undoubtedly the need to recognize that family farming is a complex system and, as such, should be addressed on an intersectoral basis, with the participation of public institutions in different sectors, in coordination with family farming organizations and other institutions that impact rural areas. Therefore, one of the key challenges in achieving a renewed public policy agenda for family farming concerns the implementation of mechanisms that facilitate the close coordination of its policies and the collaborative efforts of its actors and institutions.
- The conceptual, institutional, and strategic guidelines proposed are intended to support the improvement of such coordination and cooperation. Their correct application would lead to the formulation of public policies for family farming that are more focused on the sector's heterogeneity and take advantage of its multifunctional capabilities. These guidelines can lead to progress in a number of possible areas because, among other things, they make it possible:





To address the heterogeneity of the rural milieu in a comprehensive manner and thus help reduce asymmetries and inequities through better coordination of productive inclusion and social protection policies. The various types of family farming have reached different levels of development in the territories, which is why they require different support instruments and maturation times. The coordination of the two policies will allow countries to better address grey areas and implement instruments more effectively, thus enabling the most underdeveloped segments of family farming to achieve higher levels of development and “leave no one behind,” as asserted in the SDGs.

- To take advantage of family farming’s multifunctional capabilities and its contributions to competitiveness, sustainability and the inclusion of territories, through better coordination with sectoral and intersectoral policies. Some of the most important sectoral policies are those aimed at addressing emerging issues that mark trends and affect countries in various ways, including the fight against climate change, the transition of the energy matrix, and digital transformation. Of particular importance is coordination with the policies to combat climate change and the attainment of the goals set for specific contributions at the national level. Policies that are closely coordinated with those of other sectors, targeted at issues such as territorial development, food





security, malnutrition in children, the transformation of food systems, economic development, etc., can boost family farming policies, since the actions called for in them are designed to involve various governmental and non-governmental sectors. Moreover, giving family farming an active, leading role in such policies can increase their impact, because the sector can function as a catalyst in rural territories. And lastly,

- To establish a renewed agenda of public policies for family farming whose conceptual, institutional and strategic elements are aligned. It will be a useful, effective tool for integrating and strengthening support services, and tackling the main challenges identified by societies, including the transformation of food systems and

the attainment of the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

#### **4. By way of conclusion: the next steps to be undertaken**

The transition towards a renewed public policy agenda for family farming is a challenge for a number of actors. Just as the emergence and consolidation of the current policies required a critical mass of people to advance the positioning and dissemination of the concept, as well as institutions and policies to promote it, the first step to move this agenda forward should be the establishment of a partnership to serve as a force for change, capable of fostering adjustments to current public policies and the design of their institutions.

The task of this partnership, which should be composed of representatives of family farming organizations, academia and government institutions and international cooperation agencies, will be to promote the renewed agenda of public policies for family farming through research and technical-political dialogue, and to convince policymakers of the need to evaluate and adopt recommendations designed to make their policies more effective. The regional integration mechanisms of public institutions and family farming organizations should be given the role of catalysts in support of the partnership.

To raise the partnership's profile and demonstrate its usefulness, its members should focus their efforts on analyzing and learning about public policies for family farming, identifying and systematizing successful experiences and innovations related to the proposed guidelines, and promoting the evaluation of relevant cases, in order to extract lessons and make recommendations for future policies and institutional designs. This task should be complemented with the dissemination of the lessons learned and, hopefully, with efforts to enhance the technical expertise of the different actors.

Furthermore, to facilitate the implementation of this renewed agenda and the support for the countries, the partnership could promote mutual learning, through the sharing of experiences among the countries. The wealth of experience acquired, and lessons learned over the years, as well as the expertise of the countries' technical personnel, will undoubtedly be one of the main inputs for the construction of the renewed agenda of public policies for family farming.





IICA has the opportunity to play a leading role in the transition towards this renewed policy agenda. First, it will have to align its internal capabilities with the proposal, involving its other technical cooperation programs and promoting the inclusion of the issues involved in their planning and scheduling activities. That will facilitate the coordination of institutional capabilities and the creation of synergies around family farming.

Two of the Institute's most recent initiatives that will be useful for its positioning in the design of the renewed policy agenda are the Observatory of Public Policies for Agrifood Systems (OPSAa) and the Hemispheric Partnership for Food Security and Sustainable Development.

The OPSAa can support the broadening and deepening of agreements with governments, organizations and regional integration mechanisms, social organiza-

tions of family farmers and academic centers to carry out systematic monitoring and analysis of the state of public policies for family farming and, based on the results, generate prospective scenarios that would make it possible to recommend concrete actions for the future development and modernization of agriculture and rural territories.

The Hemispheric Partnership will allow IICA to align the partnerships it has established with respect to the renewed policy agenda. Dialogue and coordinated action with these strategic partners will enable them to position themselves as drivers of collective action at the inter-American level, and facilitators of the processes of identifying, designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating public policies for family farming and their coordination with the contemporary global agenda.







INTER-AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR COOPERATION ON AGRICULTURE  
Headquarters / P.O. Box 55-2200 San Jose, Vazquez de Coronado,  
San Isidro 11101, Costa Rica. Phone: (+506) 2216-0222 / Fax: (+506) 2216-0233  
Email: [iicahq@iica.int](mailto:iicahq@iica.int) / [www.iica.int](http://www.iica.int)