



Frame of reference

Family farming in the Americas:

Guiding principles and concepts
of IICA's technical cooperation



Productivity and sustainability of
family agriculture for food
security and the rural economy



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Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), 2017



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Acronyms

CAC	Central American Agricultural Council
CAN	Andean Community
CIRAD	Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (France)
ECADERT	Central American Strategy for Rural Area-based Development
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
FF	Family Farming
FonTC	Technical Cooperation Fund (IICA)
GMC	Common Market Group (MERCOSUR)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IICA	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
IYFF	International Year of Family Farming
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MDA	Ministry of Agrarian Development (Brazil)
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
MTP	Medium-term Plan (IICA)
PIAF	Flagship project “Productivity and sustainability of family farming for food security and the rural economy” (IICA)
PRONAF	National Program to Strengthen Family Farming (Brazil)
REAF	Specialized Meeting on Family Farming
RIMISP	Latin American Center for Rural Development
SAF	Family Farming Secretariat (Brazil)
SE-CAC	Executive Secretariat of the Central American Agricultural Council

Summary

Family farming (FF), a social category made up of individuals living in the rural milieu who work the land for productive and reproductive purposes, mainly with other family members, has assumed considerable importance as a social entity in a number of countries.

Brazil was the first Latin American country to enact a law on FF, which included a definition of the term “family farmer.” That definition was as follows: “any person who carries out activities in the rural milieu and meets all the following requirements: (i) is not in possession, in any capacity, of an area larger than 4 fiscal modules¹; (ii) most of the work is performed by members of the family; (iii) most of the family’s income originates from economic activities related to the establishment or enterprise; and (iv) the establishment or enterprise is run by the farmer and his/her family” (Office of the President of the Republic, Brazil 2006).

Several definitions of FF are currently in use, however, including the one developed by the Specialized Meeting on Family Farming (REAF), adopted via Resolution 25/07 of the Common Market Group (GMC); another set out in the 2010-2030 Central American Strategy for Rural Area-based Development (ECADERT); and a third proposed by the Andean Community (CAN 2011). A number of countries have also adopted an official definition in which they recognize FF as a social category that is the subject of public policies with differentiated measures.



The year 2014 was a milestone in the positioning of FF at the global level, with the United Nations General Assembly (UN 2011) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO 2013) declaring it the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF). The aim in doing so was to draw attention to FF’s actual and potential contributions to global food production.

According to ECLAC et al. (2014), in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) there are around 16.5 million family farms worked by approximately 60 million people. Some 56% of those farms are to be found in South America and 35% in Mexico and the Central American countries.

In this context, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) recognizes that FF is a type of production that plays a major role in supplying food for our societies, optimizes the work of

1. Unit of measurement expressed in hectares for fiscal and agrarian reform purposes, which varies in each region of Brazil. The size of the fiscal module ranges from 5 to 110 hectares, depending on the Brazilian municipal district concerned.

families in the rural milieu, drives local and territorial economies, and contributes to the management of the environment and biodiversity. IICA also regards FF as a repository of some of the important cultural traditions of the peoples of our diverse continent, and as a key element in the integrated and sustainable development of nations.

In recent years, FF has become a focus of public policies in the Americas, with the countries beginning to recognize, in one way or another, the contribution that FF can make to different facets of society (e.g., social, economic and environmental affairs), and the need to strengthen and consolidate the subsector.

The current dynamic, complex national and international scenario presents FF with a number of issues and challenges, however. These include the need to be competitive despite having to contend with unstable

agricultural prices, solve problems related to land tenure, overhaul unsustainable production systems characterized by low productivity and a lack of productive and technological innovation, increase the supply of food, eliminate generation and gender gaps, and increase the participation of FF in the dynamics and management of territories.

In recent years, IICA's response to the situation has been to carry out actions at the national regional and inter-American levels aimed at promoting recognition of the importance of FF, and creating an enabling environment for the development of strategies that will strengthen the subsector and better equip it to tackle the challenges and problems.

With a view to promoting the sustainable development of FF and increasing its contribution to food and nutrition security and the rural economy, IICA made the



productivity and sustainability of FF one of the main crosscutting strategic emphases of its technical cooperation in its Medium-term Plan (MTP) for 2014-2018.

In so doing, it identified the following as common characteristics of FF, although the importance of each one varies from country to country:

- The family is directly responsible for production and the management of agricultural activities in the productive unit.
- Family farmers live on, or close to, rural property, regardless of the type of tenure involved.
- Family members are directly and heavily involved in the productive and management activities carried out on the farm, in many cases with no outside assistance—i.e., given the limited amount of productive and financial resources at their disposal, family members perform all (or nearly all) of the production work.
- Mainly during the busiest periods (planting and harvesting seasons), the family labor force is complemented with casual workers.
- Family income is comprised of a combination of income from agricultural activities, family agro-industries and other, non-agricultural activities.
- The activity is by nature multifunctional.

The flagship projects are the main instruments that IICA uses to carry out a set of coordinated, interrelated technical

cooperation actions designed to achieve concrete results in support of FF at the country level, with a view to promoting the Institute's innovative capacity, the effective and transparent use of its resources, and the delivery of concrete results to its member countries.

The four flagship projects are: i) Productivity and sustainability of family farming for food security and the rural economy; ii) Inclusion in agriculture and rural territories; iii) Competitiveness and sustainability of agricultural chains for food security and economic development; and, (iv) Resilience and integrated risk management in agriculture. In addition to the strategic issues addressed by the flagship projects, IICA carries out agricultural health and food safety actions.

To promote the sustainable development of FF and increase its contribution to food and nutrition security and the rural economy, the Institute's technical cooperation related to FF is prioritized under the flagship project "Productivity and sustainability of family farming for food security and the rural economy."

The lines of action under which IICA carries out its FF activities are:

- Differentiated public policies and strategies for FF and institution building
- Capacity building
- Management and use of knowledge
- Productive innovation and rural extension
- Consensus building and linking of actors

Foreword

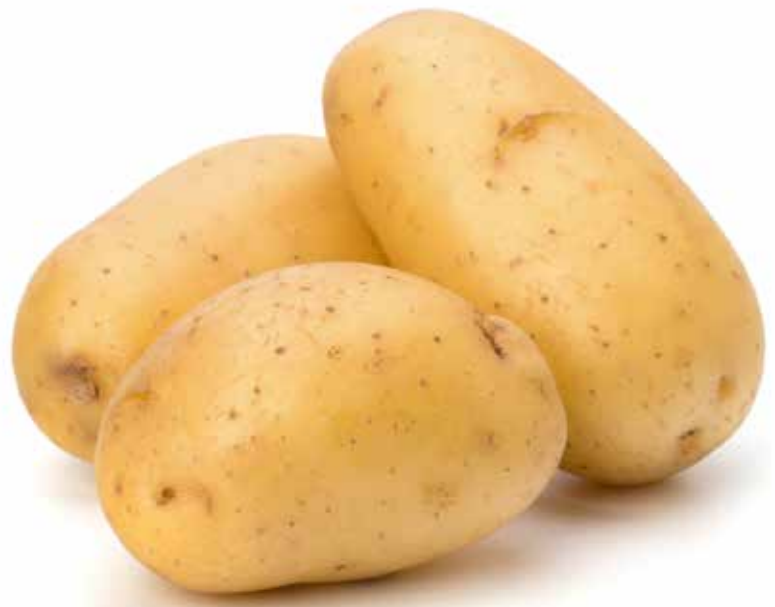
As the agency of the Inter-American System specializing in agriculture, the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) decided to make family farming (FF) one of the strategic emphases of its technical cooperation in its 2014-2018 Medium-term Plan (MTP), recognizing FF's strategic importance for the integrated and sustainable development of rural territories and the achievement of food and nutrition security in IICA's member countries.

This document is a guide to the technical cooperation that the Institute offers to its member countries for the development of FF. It was prepared under the aegis of the flagship project "Productivity and sustainability of family farming for food security and the rural economy" (PIAF), drawing on IICA's technical expertise on that strategic subject.

The document outlines the background to the Institute's work in the area of FF; provides an overview of FF's historical development, importance, challenges, public policies and concepts; and describes the characteristics of the subsector in the different countries of the Americas. It also presents the Institute's areas of emphasis on the issue, and the lines of action aimed at the development of FF, underpinned by a results-based technical cooperation strategy.

The approaches proposed are based on the Institute's conviction that its policies and instruments can meet the FF needs of each of its member countries, adapted to their specific requirements, conditions, and principles.

The document takes into account the relationships between rurality, territory and FF in order to provide an innovative frame of reference for addressing the major issues related to the productivity and sustainability of FF, and devising new and differentiated public policies for the development of FF in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).



Introduction

Family farming (FF) is a socio-productive category that plays a key role in achieving food security and rural development. Some 80% of productive units in LAC fall into the FF category and, with more than 60 million people working on them, they are the main source of agricultural employment. As many as 16.5 million farms in the region belong to family farmers, 56% of them in South America and 35% in Mexico and the Central American countries.

Family farmers produce most of the food included in the family shopping baskets of countries in the region. Furthermore, since many different activities are usually performed on family farms, the subsector plays a key role in ensuring the sustainability of the environment and the conservation of biodiversity. In other words, FF involves a wide variety of activities and performs many functions.

The FF carried out within a territory not only makes important economic and productive contributions; it also fulfills an integrated set of spatial, environmental, social, political-institutional and cultural functions that are essential for the workings and development of society. This is because everything that takes place in rural areas is closely linked to the population and dynamics of urban areas. The rural dwellers who live and engage in production in a given territory have a vitally important relationship with the environment and the surrounding area.

Therefore, the specific characteristics and needs of FF and the surrounding area or

territory have to be taken into account in endeavoring to understand this socio-productive category. The higher profile that FF has achieved in recent years as a focus of public policies has contributed to a great understanding of the subsector, but policies should strengthen and consolidate FF and boost the role it plays in food security strategies, climate change adaptation and mitigation, sustainable natural resource management, landscape maintenance, the preservation and enrichment of cultures, and local governance.

In order to construct differentiated, innovative public policies for FF in particular, and for rural well-being in general, it is necessary to establish a relationship between three contemporary concepts used by IICA: rurality, territory, and family farming. FF plays a decisive role in the construction of rural spaces, while the natural and socioeconomic characteristics of each territory imbue the FF that takes place there with specific features. Understanding this relationship is important for the development of strategies that will bring about changes in the living conditions of rural populations.

This document is based on a contemporary vision of rurality, and a multifunctional and multidimensional approach to FF that reaffirms the subsector's strategic importance in national sustainable development plans, with a view to strengthening the contribution of agriculture to economic growth, the development of territories, rural well-being, and food security.

The evolution of the concept of family farming in Latin America

Schneider and Escher (2012), cited in IFAD and RIMISP (2014), point to the nonexistence of family farmers as a social category in Latin America before the 1990s, since the terms usually used to describe them were, “campesino” and “smallholder.” Use of the term “family farming” in Latin America probably began in Brazil, as a result of the struggles of the union movement for differentiated policies in the early 1990s, and gradually replaced the others, mainly in the southern region of the continent.

Brazil was the first Latin American country to enact a law on FF, which included a definition of the term “family farmer.” That definition was as follows: “any person who carries out activities in the rural milieu and meets all the following requirements: (i) is not in possession, in any capacity, of an area larger than 4 fiscal modules ; (ii) most of the work is performed by family members; (iii) most of the family’s income originates from economic activities related to the establishment or enterprise; and (iv) the establishment or enterprise is run by

Box 1. Definition of family farming

The definition of family farming (FF) varies according to the criteria and perspective of those defining it. Essentially, there are three ways to define family farming.

The first is by making use of a theoretical frame of reference. This calls for a particular epistemological and analytical perspective as a starting point for building the concepts to represent heuristically what is to be included in or excluded from the definition adopted.

The second possibility is to use normative definitions developed on the basis of references that use some kind of classification or empirical criterion, such as the availability of land, income level or degree of specialization. The creation of a standard or rule to be used as a definition leads to some degree of arbitrariness or discrimination, since the selection criteria by definition reduce diversity and/or heterogeneity in order to achieve the greatest possible homogeneity for study.

The third way of defining family farming is political, as a result of accepting, importing and using a definition that comes from a social construction. This occurs when a definition created by people on a commonsense basis comes to be used by a specific group, movement or organization attributing a meaning to it to define political action. In this sense, the political definition of FF is a category constructed by those who make up this group or collective and feel they are represented by its proposals and ideas, which give meaning and significance to their social identity. There are currently several groups and social movements, rural unions in particular, laying claim to the “family farmer” identity.

Source: IFAD and RIMISP 2014.



the farmer and his/her family.” (Office of the President of the Republic, Brazil 2006). As a precursor to the legal framework, it should be noted that the Brazilian government, through the Family Farming Secretariat (SAF) of the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA), has been operating the National Program to Strengthen Family Farming (PRONAF) continuously since 1995.

With respect to the efforts to establish a definition of FF, it is worth mentioning those of the Specialized Meeting on Family Farming (REAF) of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) since the turn of the century, aimed at positioning family farming as a subject of public policies in the economic bloc’s member countries. In the countries concerned, this effort has facilitated the conceptualization of this social category in public and private sector dialogues with the participation of representatives of FF, and the validation of the subsector among institutional decision-makers.

In Resolution 25/07 of the Common Market Group (GMC), which contains the “Guidelines for the Recognition and Identification of Family Farming in MERCOSUR,” the REAF defines FF as “establishments that meet, at least, all of the following criteria: i) most of the work on the rural property is performed by family members, with limited use of hired labor; ii) the family is directly responsible for production and the management of agricultural activities, and lives either on the rural establishment or close by; and, iii) the productive resources used are compatible with the family’s working capacity, the activity carried out, and the technology employed, in accordance with the situation in each country.” (GMC 2007).

In the Central American Strategy for Rural Area-based Development 2010-2030 (ECADERT), the concept of “family

farming” refers to “units of production and consumption based primarily on family labor,” and it is noted that campesino family farming, in particular, “prioritizes the satisfaction of the family’s needs, but participates in the various markets of products, inputs, land, work, loans, and services. It also constitutes a livelihood with its own cultural specificity” (SE-CAC et al. 2010:35).

The Andean Community (CAN 2011) proposes the concept of “agro-ecological campesino family farming,” thought of as agriculture that typically entails the use of mainly family labor; depends heavily on the goods and services provided by the natural (ecological) environment and its own agro-ecosystem; carries out small-scale, highly diversified production; develops and uses its own technologies adapted to the ecological, social, and cultural conditions; fosters social justice and equity; and is immersed in the development dynamics of its community and region.

In many LAC countries, it has been shown that it is difficult to have a definitive concept of FF or adopt a term that identifies it; however, on analyzing the characteristics that the countries attribute to family farmers, campesinos, and smallholders, it is clear that they have at least one thing in common: “they all live in rural areas and work the land mostly with their family.”

Most institutional documents and technical studies present concepts adopted for FF that are normative in nature and not consistent with a specific conceptual category or sociological type, or clear economic variables (Schneider and Niederle 2008). The concept is usually contrasted, on the one hand, with commercial agriculture or “agribusiness” and, on the other, with poor subsistence producers, who in some countries are recognized as campesinos (Miranda 2013).

The year 2014 was a milestone in the positioning of FF at the global level, with the United Nations General Assembly (UN 2011) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO 2013) declaring it the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF). The aim in doing so was to show, both to society and public and private institutions, FF's actual and potential contributions to global food production.

In the context of the IYFF, FAO (2015b) developed the following concept of FF: "Family farming (which includes all family-based agricultural activities) is a means of

organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family and predominantly reliant on family labour, including both women's and men's. The family and the farm are linked, co-evolve and combine economic, environmental, social, and cultural functions."

Most authors, such as Chiriboga (2002), Acosta and Rodríguez (2006), Schejtman (2008), and Berdegúe and Fuentebela (2011) are agreed that Latin American FF can be classified into the three types presented in the following table.

Table 1. Typology of family farming in Latin America

"Subsistence," "undercapitalized," or "peripheral" family farming, comprised of farms on which production is primarily for personal consumption, integration into the commercial economy is limited, and resources like land, technology and monetary income are insufficient to guarantee the reproduction of the families concerned.

"Specialized," "intermediary," or "in transition" family farming, which refers to farms with some access to productive resources, whose production is used both for personal consumption and for sale, but which need to adopt strategies to ensure their sustainability.

"Surplus," "commercial," "capitalized," or "consolidated" family farming, which means farms on which production is intended mainly for the market, where a large amount of productive resources and consumer goods are available, sufficient to guarantee the reproduction of the family and the production of surpluses that allow them to increase the scale of the operation and accumulate further resources.

Source: Prepared based on data from FAO and the IDB 2007.

IICA recognizes that FF is a form of production that plays a major role in supplying food for our societies, optimizes the work of families in the rural milieu, drives local and territorial economies, and contributes to management of the environment and biodiversity. The Institute also regards FF as a repository of

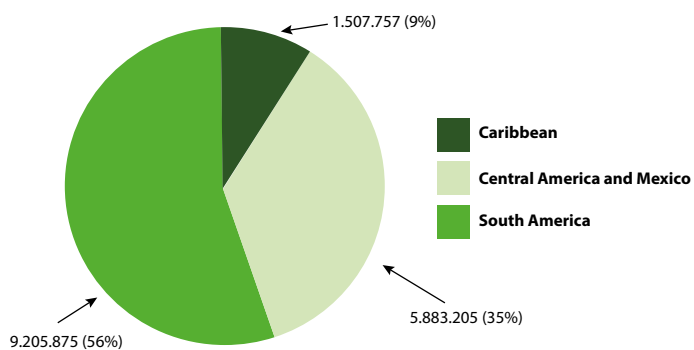
part of the important cultural traditions of the peoples of our diverse continent, and as a key element in the integrated and sustainable development of nations. FF is by nature multifunctional, as it performs different roles at the territorial level, and is therefore multidimensional as well.

The importance of family farming

As a result of various actions, especially by social organizations, the issue of FF, of great strategic importance, has moved to the top of LAC's rural agenda. Numerous social and international organizations (those involved in the World Rural Forum in particular) and governments have followed up on the agreements reached under the aegis of the IYFF. This higher profile of FF has given rise to proactive efforts to strengthen the subsector and make it more viable.

According to ECLAC et al. (2014), in LAC there are around 16.5 million family farms (see Figure 1), on which roughly 60 million people work. Some 56% of those farms are to be found in South America and 35% in Mexico and the Central American countries.

Figure 1. Family farms in Latin America and the Caribbean



Source: Prepared based on data from ECLAC et al. 2014 y Salcedo et al. 2014.

Approximately three fourths of the people living in extreme poverty are to be found in rural areas of developing countries; therefore, most of the rural poor depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Nonetheless, FF is not a synonym for poverty. Depending on their asset base, access to markets and services, and other factors, small farms can be highly efficient in generating sufficient levels of production and income (IFAD 2015).

Many small family farms are seizing the opportunity to become vibrant enterprises that cater to new, dynamic markets, capitalize on the advantages afforded them by their size and use of family labor, and achieve efficiencies of scale through collective action. Other small farms, however, have become too small and too poorly linked to markets or too poorly organized to be economically viable (IFAD 2015).

Despite the obstacles it faces in accessing productive assets, financing, technology, and markets, the FF subsector is a major supplier of commonly consumed and staple foods in Latin America and the Caribbean. Figure 2, on page 18, summarizes the main data available on FF's contribution in the region.

FF contributes not only to the availability of food and to the supply of fresh produce, raw materials and inputs, but also to the adding and retention of value at the local level through rural agro-industries. The latter include craft cheese makers, units

that produce confectionery, enterprises that produce flours and starches from grains and tubers and byproducts of fiber crops, and many others. Large numbers of young people and women are involved in such agro-industries, which employ a range of organizational, production and marketing strategies. Most of these agro-industries are ancestral activities whose level of development varies, while others are the result of programs implemented by governments or nongovernmental organizations, and are at different stages of consolidation.

Also worthy of note are the various types of rural tourism that have proliferated in many countries of the Americas in recent years. Agrotourism, as well as capitalizing on the natural attractions of agriculture (landscape and agricultural and agro-industrial practices), harnesses the value of other resources present in the territory and its rural culture (gastronomy, craft production, local fairs, etc.). This encourages people to visit rural areas with several objectives in mind (educational, recreational, etc.), thus stimulating complementary services such as transportation, accommodation, food, etc. (Morán *et al.* 2011).



One type of agrotourism linked to FF that has experienced strong growth in recent years are tours related to different products, such as coffee in Colombia, Venezuela, and Costa Rica and other Central American countries; craft cheeses in several Andean and Central American countries; maté, grapes and wines in Argentina; pisco in Peru; and tequila in Mexico, to name but a few.

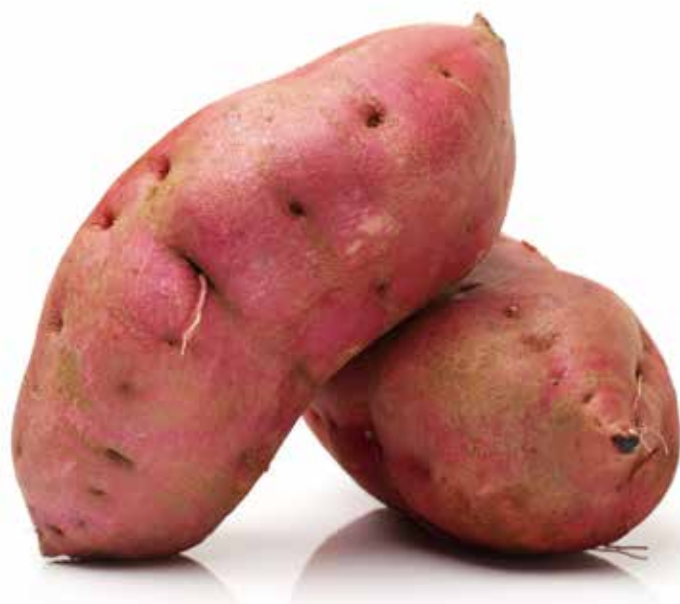
Practicing several different productive activities tends to maximize the use of family labor and natural resources. FF based on multiple productive activities, e.g., crop-livestock or agrosilvopastoral systems, encourages more efficient use of the labor force and land.

In addition to the important contribution it makes to production, food and the wider economy, FF has the potential to make a major contribution to sound natural resource management; the preservation of agro-biodiversity and the environment; the supply of environmental services; regard for cultural identities; the right occupancy of the territory; and local governance.

The role of FF in natural resource management is especially important in the case of water, since most smallholder production systems are dependent on rainwater and the productivity of rainfed agriculture is usually less than that of irrigated agriculture (Beekman et al. 2014). Therefore, correct management of water, be it for human consumption, use in complementary economic activities or food production, is essential if FF is to be more productive, competitive and sustainable.

Sound water management calls for the use of good practices not only for capturing and storing water and for irrigation and drainage on the productive unit, but also at the micro-watershed and territorial levels, including the impact of capturing water and the runoff resulting from its use.

The management of FF production systems includes the management of rich agrobiodiversity, especially important in the mega-diverse countries of the Americas, which includes a large number of species and varieties used not only for food but also for medicines, housing and power generation. These resources are not only quite valuable for people today, but also vital to guaranteeing a sustainable base for future generations. In addition, their importance goes beyond the local level,





with recent developments in biotechnology and the challenges posed by climate change making them a global asset. The care and protection of such resources, as well as the ancestral knowledge that has made it possible to reproduce them and identify their uses and benefits, should be one of the highest priorities of policies designed to support the development of FF.

In addition, the different practices and knowledge handed down through generations of family farmers make possible

the continuation of farming traditions, and other traditions that form part of the cultural identities of LAC countries.

The way in which FF is organized varies depending on the region, human groups, objectives, and actions involved. Built around the family as it is, FF serves as the cornerstone of social cohesion and the governance of territories, as well as being a crucial element in matching the supply of goods and services to the demand. This is reflected in the existence of rural communities in the Andes with their own authorities and mechanisms for representation, coordination, monitoring, and control; groups of water users, some dating back centuries; and various kinds of cooperatives and associations with memberships running into the thousands of family farmers.

Cooperatives are the most popular type of organization among farmers operating on a business footing, although the failure to work consistently as a group or in an organized way continues to limit their capacity to provide the volumes, quality, delivery times, and prices that markets seek. However, in recent years, associative enterprises have developed different mechanisms (contracts, strategic partnerships, and territorial groupings, among others) for linking FF with other actors in the chain. This has demonstrated FF's ability to adapt to economic, social, and institutional changes and assume commercial, climate-related, political and other risks.

Public policies in support of family farming: evolution, current situation and outlook

For a number of years, FF was a specific focus of public policies, especially those implemented during the agrarian reform processes of the 1960s and 1970s. It received less attention when trade liberalization and economic opening policies were introduced, however. Then, from around the turn of the 21st century onwards, FF once again began to benefit from programs designed to compensate for market failures, and by the mid-2010s had returned to prominence. An IFAD and RIMISP study (2014) has suggested the following as the reasons why FF is now back on multinational and national development agendas in the Americas: a) the continued existence of rural poverty in LAC; b) FF's potential to contribute to efforts to address two major global trends—the expected growth in the world's population over the next 30 years, and climate change; c) the increasing importance attached to the territorial approach in analyses of rurality; and, d) the proactive stance adopted by actors and social movements during the IYFF.

As a result, in recent years FF has achieved a high profile in public policies in the Americas, but with significant differences between countries and a variety of concrete actions. Clearly, the countries have begun to recognize the potential benefits of including FF in strategies targeted at food security, climate change adaptation and mitigation, sustainable natural resource management, landscape maintenance, the preservation and enrichment of cultures, and local governance; and the need to strengthen and

consolidate the subsector. At the same time, it is recognized that rural development actions are evolving toward a new way of approaching and tackling the problems of FF.

In most LAC countries, many public policies have targeted “subsistence,” “undercapitalized or “peripheral” FF with strategies based on poverty reduction, social programs, and the development of rural territories. Such policies are important for addressing equity and social development issues, but cannot, in and of themselves, solve the food and nutrition security problem. Furthermore, state structures still exist within which a number of uncoordinated, autonomous sectoral agencies and programs undertake fragmented efforts whose impact is small and which use traditional institutional frameworks that are ill equipped to meet the operational requirements of the new policy instruments.

Another group of public policies has targeted “surplus,” “commercial,” “capitalized” or “consolidated” FF, with lines of support for marketing and exports, and integration into food chains, based on sectoral approaches. They are also important policies for economic development, but cannot, on their own, resolve the problem of food and nutrition security.

The “specialized”, “intermediate” or “in transition” segment of FF has received insufficient attention in public policies in

The contribution made by family farming in Latin America and the Caribbean

More than **16.5** million productive units
80% of all productive units
30% - 40% of regional agricultural GDP

57% - 77% of agricultural employment
60 million people involved
27% - 67% of all foods in the family shopping basket

Mexico

4.3 million family productive units

70% of rural employment
65.5% of corn, 14.3% of beans,
6.6% of sorghum



Central America

36%-76% of rural employment

2.4 million family productive units
Important crops: corn, beans and rice



Colombia

1.8 million family farmers

90% of all farmers, they supply
80% of the food



Peru

They supply 80% of all food

2.2 million family farmers,
FF employs 3 million people
79% of agricultural EAP



Ecuador

82% of sheep meat

88% of productive units
76% of soft corn, 64% of potatoes,
49% of rice, 42% of milk, 46% of hard
corn, 71% of beans, 71% of pork,
73% of free-range eggs



Chile

25-30% of sectoral GDP

300,000 family farmers, 85% of all farms, 1.2 million
people supply 45% of vegetables, 43% of corn,
wheat and rice, 40% of beef and dairy products



Bolivia

70% of the family shopping basket

93% of country's farms, producing 70%
of all corn and rice, and nearly
all potatoes and cassava





In the Caribbean

For the local market family farmers produce vegetables, fruits (mangoes, pineapple, plantains, and citrus fruits), roots and tubers (cassava, yam, taro and sweet potato) and cucurbitaceae (pumpkins). For export, they produce bananas, sugarcane, cacao, rice and coffee.



Venezuela

370,000 family farms

Includes urban and peri-urban agriculture
FF accounts for 40% of agricultural GDP, 25% of fresh produce, 17% of beef products, sugarcane, corn, rice and oilseeds

Brazil

84.4% of productive units

38% of gross value of production
87% of cassava, 70% of beans, 46% of corn, 38% of coffee, 34% of rice, 21% of wheat, 16% of soybean, 58% of milk, 50% of milk, 50% of poultry meat, 59% of pork and 30% of beef



Paraguay

100% of cassava, peanuts and vegetables

250,000 productive units, 93% of bananas, 94% of beans and 97% of tomatoes and melon



Uruguay

57% of stock raising

23,102 family farmers, average of 3.12 people per productive unit. Breakdown of FF: dairy farming (13%), poultry/pigs (2%), horticulture (17%), fruit growing (4%) and grains (3%)



Argentina

Two thirds of productive units

They account for 19.3% of gross value of production





LAC. Differentiated policies are required to focus on family farms of this kind, to improve not only their assets, resources, and capitalization, but also the context in which they operate. This group of policies is important to tackle both the problem of food and nutrition security and the challenge of rural development.

Redoubled efforts are needed to devise and manage public policies in support of FF that focus on two elements: institutional and program issues.

- a. In the institutional sphere, the countries need to focus more on actions at the territorial level; assess the importance of family farmers' engagement in multiple activities; promote the development and consolidation of spaces that facilitate multisectoral and interinstitutional action; and intensify the participation of social actors in the construction of policies that reflect their diversity and actual situation.
- b. The program issues that need to be addressed include proposals and responses to aspects of land tenure and governance; access to, and the sustainable management of, natural resources and seeds; links to, and permanent integration into, markets of products; the supply of technical and financial services; associative enterprises; the empowerment of women; institutional generational change; productivity and competitiveness; resilience to climate change; risk management; and innovation. All these need to be addressed from a broad perspective, taking into account ancestral knowledge and the sharing of knowledge.

Challenges and problems faced by family farming in the Americas

LAC agriculture presently operates against a complex backdrop of unstable prices of agricultural products and inputs, competition with other productive sectors for the use of natural resources, growing demand for food and, in some countries, a heavy dependence on food imports, as the first three factors mentioned make it difficult to meet the domestic demand (ECLAC *et al.* 2014).

In the above scenario, the varying nature of land tenure and size of family productive

units mean that certain important aspects and trends have to be taken into account in developing policies and policy instruments, respecting the legal, social, ideological, and political principles of the countries. Addressing land tenure issues (legal ownership, land markets and other related matters) in public policies remains a constant challenge for countries in the Americas.

FF is responsible for most of the food produced in both developed and developing



countries. This makes the development of viable models for the consolidation of FF essential, to achieve the sustainable development of production systems, guarantee food and nutrition security, improve livelihoods, and encourage sustainable natural resource management.

In this context, FF is the economic activity with the greatest potential to help the region overcome the difficulties it currently faces. As its development would automatically translate into an increase in the supply of food and a fall in rates of unemployment, poverty and malnutrition among LAC's most vulnerable rural dwellers (ECLAC et al. 2014), actions should be implemented to develop it in the short term.

Given its importance for the countries' food security and rural economies, FF should play a key role in value chains whose consumers recognize the differentiated quality offered by the subsector. For the

same reason, it should be anchored in territories that foster supplies of such products and make it possible to overcome the traditional constraints of FF in regard to matters such as productivity, volume, delivery, and permanence, not only for reasons directly related to production, but also because of aspects of the environment in which FF operates. The latter include the agro-ecological conditions, vulnerability to climate change, infrastructure, communications, access to natural resources and production services, the education and services available, security, and the sociocultural and economic conditions, among others.

Furthermore, FF's power to negotiate in the markets where it sells its products needs to be strengthened, to enable it to operate in value chains, via short supply chains or productive links, under better and more balanced conditions. Achieving this calls for a combination of actions, such as the promotion and consolidation of associative processes, the development of business skills, and the delivery of technical assistance and financial services tailored to the characteristics of FF.

Age group and gender gaps that affect access to, and the use and control of, resources and participation in decision-making prevent women and young people from reaping the full benefits of the profits and opportunities offered by this form of agriculture and way of life.



Generational renewal in FF is minimal. Young people² are not sufficiently motivated to carry on the work of their parents, preferring to migrate to urban areas that offer them opportunities more in keeping with their vision of development and progress. New generations also find opportunities that come closer to meeting their expectations and matching their capabilities, such as off-farm work in the same territory that adds value to primary production; activities in the areas of marketing and transportation; agrotourism services; and the use of information and communication technologies to facilitate access to markets.

Gender approaches applied to FF should promote the leadership of women, affording them access to decision-making positions. More training and information actions and programs are also needed to equip women for such positions, and thereby generate a culture that modifies sociocultural practices that are deeply rooted in the home and across society and impede the effective and integrated development of rural women. In the area of production resources—specifically, credit, technology, land, and paid employment—, it is necessary to facilitate opportunities for rural women through improved access to investment, and to identify the best strategies and policies for overcoming the obstacles to access and thus promote the development of rural women and young people, key players in sustainable rural development.

Technological and institutional innovation in FF poses a special challenge on account of the characteristics of FF itself. It calls for the development of a supply of research and extension services with a systemic and multidisciplinary approach. This, in turn, makes it essential to implement participatory strategies and mechanisms that will facilitate the use of ancestral knowledge and the sharing of knowledge in order to tap market opportunities, tackle climate threats and preserve agro-biodiversity by means of sustainability strategies.

Efforts are needed to promote the development and implementation of strategies and mechanisms for climate change adaptation and risk management, including early warning systems keyed to the conditions of FF. Particular consideration should be given to the valuing of ancestral knowledge, the care and protection of agro-biodiversity, and the prevention of, and response to, phenomena such as droughts, floods, hurricanes, landslides and heat waves, among others, and their effect in triggering outbreaks of pests and diseases and declines in agricultural yields.

The generation and dissemination of information is an important tool for demonstrating the importance of FF, analyzing the scale of the challenges it faces and the steps needed to strengthen and position it, as described in the preceding paragraphs, and supporting the design and adoption of public policies to boost the subsector.

2. Some 30.9 million (19.6%) of all young people in Latin America live in rural areas (based on figures for the 11 countries with data through 2012, expanded by ECLAC/CELADE projections, cited in Dirven 2015).

IICA's contributions to tackle the issues and challenges facing family farming

Background

In recent years, IICA has implemented a series of actions that have positioned it on the issue of the productivity and sustainability of FF. One of the most important actions was its participation in the implementation of three international events on FF to mark the IYFF, in order to discuss important aspects of the subject and propose actions that could be translated into public policies. The events in question were: a) the Meeting on Family Farming for Central America and the Dominican Republic, which took place in El Salvador; b) the international conference on Public Policies and Family Farming in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC): Current Situation and Medium and Long-term Challenges, held in Santiago, Chile; and, c) the Ninth International Forum on Territorial Development: Family Farming, Rurality, Territory, and Public Policy, which took place in Fortaleza, Brazil.

Those events attracted more than 900 senior officials, specialists and other actors involved in the development of FF, and several publications were produced based on the dialogues that took place. The publications were: a) *Políticas públicas y agriculturas familiares en América Latina y el Caribe: nuevas perspectivas* (Sabourin *et al.* 2015); b) *Agricultura familiar: ruralidade, território e política pública* (IICA and Fórum DRS 2015); and, c) two others that are in press, on family farming and the future world, and policy and institutional frameworks for FF in LAC.

The Institute also took part in the preparation of studies on the current situation, public policies and institutional framework related to FF in 16 countries of the Americas, which will be used as background and baseline documents for the design or improvement of policies and public policy instruments for the delivery of differentiated support to family farmers.

With a view to promoting the sustainable development of FF and increasing its contribution to food and nutrition security and the rural economy, IICA made the productivity and sustainability of FF one of the main crosscutting strategic emphases of its technical cooperation in its 2014-2018 MTP.

In endeavoring to find a conceptual reference model for FF to guide it in the performance of its mission in the member countries in regard to FF, the Institute opted to identify the common attributes of FF in the different countries of the continent.

In doing so, IICA identified the following as common characteristics of FF, although the importance of each one varies from country to country:

- The family is directly responsible for production and the management of agricultural activities on the productive unit.

- Family farmers live on, or close to, a rural property, regardless of the type of tenure involved.
- Family members are directly and heavily involved in the productive and management activities carried out on the farm, in many cases with no outside assistance—i.e., given the limited amount of productive and financial resources at their disposal, family members perform all (or nearly all) of the production work.
- Mainly during the busiest periods (planting and harvesting), the family labor force is complemented with casual workers.
- Family income is comprised of a combination of income from agricultural activities, family agro-industries, and other, non-agricultural activities.
- The activity is by nature multifunctional.

IICA recognizes that, within this universe of FF, it is possible to distinguish a number of types based on different criteria, such as farm size, the type of production, income from production, degree of integration into the commercial economy, and the level of adoption of technology, among others. Another factor that must be considered is the heterogeneity of farms, as some family units produce only, or mainly, for family subsistence; others produce under uncompetitive conditions with weak market linkages; and yet others are completely integrated into the market. Each type of operation requires specialized public policies.

Results-based cooperation

Employing different strategies set out in its 2014-2018 MTP, the Institute aims to offer technical cooperation of excellence to its member countries in general and to FF in particular, with a view to achieving concrete results in the countries and delivering public goods that provide comprehensive solutions to complex problems in the rural milieu.

According to its MTP, IICA will provide its technical cooperation, perform its duties, and deliver its products and services via four types of instruments: i) flagship projects, ii) externally funded projects, iii) rapid response actions, and iv) the Competitive Fund for Technical Cooperation (FonTC).

The flagship projects are the principal instruments that the Institute uses to carry out a set of coordinated, interrelated technical cooperation actions designed to promote its innovative capacity, the effective and transparent use of its resources, and the delivery of concrete results in the FF of its member countries.

IICA has adopted the project approach as the best way to integrate the work involved in most of its actions and activities, making the best possible use of its human and financial resources and infrastructure, and mobilizing the capabilities and financial resources of its partners more efficiently.

The Institute's four flagship projects are: i) Productivity and sustainability of family farming for food security and the rural economy; ii) Inclusion in agriculture and rural territories; iii) Competitiveness and sustainability of agricultural chains for

food security and economic development; and, (iv) Resilience and integrated risk management in agriculture. In addition to

the strategic issues addressed by the flagship projects, IICA carries out agricultural health and food safety actions.

Box 2. Objectives and components of the flagship project “Productivity and sustainability of family farming for food security and the rural economy.”

General objective

Promote the sustainable development of family farming and an increase in its contribution to food and nutrition security and to the rural economy.

Specific objectives

- 1) Strengthen the public and private institutional framework with a view to improving participatory management and constructing differentiated public policies for sustainable production aimed at generating income and employment, and achieving food security.
- 2) Develop knowledge and share scientific, technical, ancestral, and other information related to sustainable production, food security, and socioeconomic integration into territorial dynamics and productive linkages.
- 3) Promote strategies for the development of technical capabilities, technological innovation and extension processes with the participation of family farmers, in order to help increase productivity, resilience, and food security in FF.
- 4) Increase the technical, institutional and management capabilities

of associative organizations in the countries for the sustainable integration of FF into economic and commercial dynamics.

Expected results

- 1.1) Strategic issues related to the sustainability of family farmers incorporated into public agendas and decision-making processes in selected countries.
- 1.2) Expanded institutional capabilities for designing, implementing, managing, and evaluating innovative, differentiated public policies for sustainable production and food and nutrition security in FF.
- 1.3) The countries are implementing institutional innovations, with emphasis on the validation and dissemination of technologies for FF.
- 1.4) The countries are increasing the representativeness of, and coordination and intersectoral action among, public and private institutions in the countries, including the representation of women and young people, thus improving the performance and outcomes of the services provided to achieve food and nutrition security.

- 2.1) More knowledge and information in the hands of key actors and decision-makers concerning the characteristics and contributions of FF.
- 2.2) Family farmers, especially young people, women, and indigenous groups, are strengthening and disseminating local knowledge, achieving more comprehensive agriculture.
- 2.3) Public and private institutions and family farmers are orienting their supply of and demand for productive technologies based on participatory research.
- 3.1) The actors linked to FF are strengthening their capabilities for sustainable production and more active participation in territorial management.
- 3.2) Innovative management tools to strengthen rural extension are being developed and disseminated.
- 3.3) Family farmers are enhancing the management of their natural and productive resources, and have more staple foods available.
- 3.4) Public and private FF institutions and organizations are implementing initiatives to improve food production and reduce the amount of food lost during production, harvesting and postharvest management.
- 4.1) The countries are promoting efforts to strengthen the associative and agribusiness management of FF organizations in order to improve their performance, access to services and commercial linkages.
- 4.2) The countries have mechanisms for developing strategies aimed at improving access to services for members of rural associative organizations linked to FF.



Lines of action for the development of family farming

Differentiated public policies and strategies for family farming and institution building

- Help the countries to promote a new generation of differentiated public policies for FF.
- Support the construction of public policies by strengthening institutional frameworks to meet the new challenges.
- Support innovative extension processes and productive enterprises based on the sustainable management of productive resources and differentiated commercial integration for FF.
- Continue to support the generation of social management processes in territories where FF is important, with the organization, training and consolidation of new institutional arrangements that reflect the social and productive forces and the social management cycle: organization, planning (plans and projects), coordination, and social control (monitoring and evaluation).



Capacity building

- Develop the capabilities of technical officers, agents of development and leaders of FF through a permanent, comprehensive FF training program on the subject that includes not only efforts to enhance farm management capabilities and involvement in territorial management processes, but also to train technical and management teams that facilitate development processes.
- Strengthen the technical, institutional and management capabilities of associative enterprises and support institutions for the sustainable integration of FF into the dynamics of rural economies.

Knowledge management and use

- Cooperate in efforts to identify and establish the true value of FF, its diversity and characteristics in the countries, with a view to positioning the subsector as a focus of public policies, taking into account contemporary aspects of rurality and territories.
- Promote the management and exchange of knowledge related to FF and territorial FF systems.

Consensus-building and coordination of actors

- Promote an interinstitutional and intersectoral dialogue in order to address FF issues in the countries and regions, with a view to increasing interaction among the relevant institutions and actors.

Productive innovation and rural extension

- Strengthen national rural extension systems and services to facilitate institutional innovation aimed at the transfer of knowledge that impacts on the intensification of production, socio-organizational strengthening, commercial integration, and participation in development processes in territories and even at the national level.
- Management for the generation and dissemination of innovative tools to strengthen technical assistance and rural extension institutions and services working with family farmers.
- Implement initiatives with public and private FF institutions and organizations designed to improve food production and reduce the amount of food lost during production, harvesting and postharvest management.

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