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TOWARDS THE CELEBRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FAMILY FARMING-IYFF. A dream nearer each day- June 2010

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REPORT ON THE IYFF

We are updating and summarizing this report with the last events. In the world today there are 3000 million people who live in the countryside. The greater part of these women and men, some 2500 million, are farmers. More than 1500 million work 404 million plots which are less than five acres in size, the majority are less than two and a half acres. The rural population involved in industrial agriculture is less than 20 million people.

Of the more that 1020 million people who suffer hunger in the world, a great number are peasant families, including fisherfolk communities, with little land, few resources and no public support. Neither do they have infrastructures, nor technical assistance, nor access to credit, nor markets close at hand, nor educational or sanitary installations, etc.

In this so significant, so dramatic context, at the end of 2007, a thought-provoking proposal arrived at the Executive Secretariat of the World Rural Forum: that of promoting the recognition and the support of family farming by means of the declaration by the United Nations of an International Year of Family Farming-IYFF.

We, in the WRF –an international network of rural and farmers’ associations, research institutes, etc-, began to dialogue about this proposal and we arrived at the conclusion that it was worth while to try and take it forward: we were very mindful of the very serious problems of family farming in general and those of the developing countries in particular.

The ideal occasion to make known this idea came with the celebration of the 2nd Farmers’ Forum in Rome, 11-12 February, 2008, a note-worthy meeting of agricultural organisations from all over the world. This meeting is organised periodically by International Fund for Agriculture Development-IFAD whose headquarters are in Rome. The WRF had been invited as an observer.

After the end of the Farmers’ Forum, we launched the first pamphlet about the IYFF Campaign.

From that time until now, more that 280 farmers and rural organisations etc. from the different continents have given their official support to the WRF Campaign in favour of the IYFF. (See up-dated list in the WRF web: www.familyfarmingcampaign.net).

Our great priority at this moment is the achieving of more government support which would lead to the introduction in the agenda of the General Assembly of the UN the proposal of the declaration of an International Year of Family Farming. At this moment we can count on the support of 6 Ministries and Divisions of Agriculture of Belize, Pakistan, Peru, El Salvador, Switzerland and



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Uganda. We confidently await the support of the governments of Central America, Brazil, India, Luxemburg, Spain, Uruguay, Lesotho, Zambia, and many others.

In this context, we earnestly ask all those organisations which have joined this Campaign to take the necessary steps to ask their respective governments for their official support for the IYFF.

We have already taken the first steps to arrange political support in the UN headquarters in New York, as well as financial support to the IYFF activities from donor institutions.

On many occasions, linked to the participation in the diverse Forums in Rome, we have maintained contacts with the FAO and the IFAD as international organisations linked to agriculture in which we have explained everything in relation to the Campaign in favour of an IYFF.

We attended, as observers, the 3rd Farmers' Forum organized by IFAD, Rome, February 15th-16th as well as the IFAD Governing Council, 17th-18th.

In relation to the IYFF Campaign, the Farmers' Forum Synthesis includes, at the end of the second paragraph, the following phrase: "We acknowledge in the significance of family agriculture in the world and we uphold the campaign for the UN declaration of the International Year of Family Farming".

This support represents magnificent encouragement from the associations involved in the Farmers' Forum to our common IYFF Campaign. Even if not every one of them gets actively involved in the Campaign, a fact that we fully respect and understand, the support given by the Farmers' Forum, reflects a real appreciation to the future International Year of Family Farming-IYFF and the acknowledgement that the event will be beneficial to all the women and men farmers of the world.

In addition to this, The Parliamentarian Front against Hunger, of Latin America and the Caribbean, at the end of its First Forum, held in Sao Paulo, Brazil, 4th-5th March, gave its support to the IYFF Campaign. The point 9 of the final Declaration states "To support the Civil Society initiative requesting the UN to declare an International Year of Family Farming".

The first IYFF Asia continental Meeting took place, as expected, in New Delhi, 23rd-25th March 2010. There were participants, reports and contributions from India, Nepal, Pakistan, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan and South Korea.

Two senior members of the Indian Central Administration participated in the Meeting, Mr. Sadamate, Adviser of Agriculture, Planning Commission, and Mr. Metha, Deputy Director of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research-ICAR. Both of them had a very positive approach to Family Farming and contributed in their own way to the success of the Meeting. Mr. David Kahan, from FAO Asia Regional office, and Ms. Judith de Souza, IFAD India office, gave also their valuable time and skills to the venue.



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Ms. Mary Jo Kakinda, from PELUM Network, Zambia, shared with the participants the rich experience of the IYFF Campaign in Africa. Europe was represented by ILEIA, through the very active presence of Mr. Prasad. Unfortunately, the representative of the IYFF Campaign in Latin America, Mr. Rigoberto Turra, COPROFAM, from Chile, had to cancel his participation in the Asian gathering due to the very serious earthquake that hurt his country last February. All the participants in the IYFF Asia continental Meeting expressed their deep solidarity with the peoples of Haiti and Chile.

Apart from getting many valuable insights about the situation of Family Farming in Asia through the different national and regional reports, the participants identified the main tasks to be accomplished at national level in order to push ahead our IYFF Campaign and they made commitments to implement them. Two main areas were underlined: to get government support at every national level, and to further mobilize civil societies into the Campaign.

The participants elected Ms. Marlene Ramirez, Executive Secretary of the Asian Network for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia-AsiaDHRRA, and Mr. Chengal Reddy, Secretary General of the Consortium of Indian Farmers' Associations-CIFA, as the two Asian members of the future IYFF World Consultative Committee (one woman-one man, one rural NGO-one Farmers' association).

After the first preparatory meeting of the IYFF Africa Continental Meeting, held in Dakar, Senegal, on January 28th -29th, we are planning –with some delay due to internal meetings in some of the Farmers Federations-, a last preparatory meeting in Lilongwe, Malawi, in June-July. The IYFF Africa continental Meeting will take place in Malawi, probably in September-October.

The Continental Meeting in America will take place in Brasilia, just before the XIV Specialized Meeting on Family Farming-REAF, Mercosur, on November 22th-26th 2010. This decision was taken between WRF, as worldwide Coordinator of the IYFF Campaign, the REAF national coordinators and COPROFAM, during the preparatory meeting held just before the XIII REAF, Mar de Plata, Argentina, last May 31st.

We do hope that the Continental Meeting in Europe will take place beginning 2011. Once these meetings have ended, the first World Consultative Committee of the IYFF Campaign will be organised with two representatives –our suggestion: to be elected, as in Asia, with gender approach and associative criteria: one woman-one man, one Farmers' association, one rural NGO- by each Continental meeting.

On May 27th 2010, The WRF met -at the kind initiative of Mr. Hans-Jörg Lehmann, head of the Swiss Mission, Rome-, the Permanent Representatives to FAO/IFAD/WFP of 9 countries: Argentina, Austria, Germany, Australia, Brazil, Spain, USA, Italy and Switzerland, as well as three FAO representatives. The informal meeting about the IYFF was a very relevant occasion to share



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about the initiative. The WRF received valuable suggestions about how to push ahead the Campaign.

We have also set in motion an IYFF Scientific Area which will be able to get diverse world experts together, women and men capable of laying the basis of all things relevant to Family Agriculture as the principal of food production and the preservation of environment-friendly conditions. The first preparatory meeting was held in Bilbao, Spain, on March 10th 2010.

After visiting Brussels from June 1st to 4th and meeting CTA, European Parliament and several NGO, a delegation of the WRF will travel soon to New York in order to meet several Embassies and International Institutions with the aim of promoting our IYFF Campaign and to get acquainted with the UN procedures.

On June 25th, the WRF Executive Secretary briefed the Central American Council of Land and Cattle-CAC, in Panama City, about the IYFF Campaign, requesting their official support. The CAC will decide about this matter during its next meeting, before the end of the year.

The new Web is a very effective tool to make known to the world the up to date evolution of all the activities of the IYFF Campaign. Visit it and use it as a sensitizing instrument with the existing diverse material to promote the Campaign.

Many millions are the peasant families throughout the world that will be able to get most benefit from the implementation of an International Year of Family Farming, sponsored by the United Nations Organisation. We will give maximum possible projection and effectiveness to the official IYFF through the more than 280 organisations participating in the Campaign.

To make this dream a reality is in the hands of everyone. We need cooperation, support and help to make it come true.

June 2010