



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



Strategic
work of
FAO to

**REDUCE
RURAL
POVERTY**



STRATEGIC PROGRAMME
TO REDUCE
RURAL POVERTY

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KEY MESSAGES

➔ FAO helps countries achieve SDG1 (No poverty) and SDG2 (Zero hunger) by improving the livelihoods of poor and extreme poor rural people, including smallholders and family farmers.

➔ FAO supports governments in the design of pro-poor policies, strategies and programmes that promote inclusive and sustainable agriculture, income diversification, decent employment, access to social protection and people's empowerment in rural areas.

➔ FAO helps countries improve access to technologies, services and markets, as well as access to and sustainable management of natural resources for poor rural people, including smallholders and family farmers, to increase their productivity and income in the context of mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

➔ FAO works to empower the rural poor and strengthen rural institutions, including family farmers' organizations, producer organizations and cooperatives, to enable them to influence the formulation of rural development policies that affect their livelihoods.

➔ FAO assists countries in the design of policies and programmes that promote decent employment creation and entrepreneurship among the rural poor, especially family farmers, women and youth, including by addressing the root causes of distress migration.

➔ FAO helps countries build on synergies among social protection, food security and nutrition, and small-scale agriculture with a view to strengthening the resilience of rural livelihoods and reducing poverty.

➔ FAO supports countries in the collection and analysis of rural poverty and development trends, as well as knowledge generation on approaches with a proven poverty reduction impact, and contributes to monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals related to rural poverty.

TUNISIA

Tunisian fishermen
repairing nets on the dock.
©FAO/Giulio Napolitano

**"BY SUPPORTING
FAMILY FARMING
WE CAN
TRANSFORM A
SECTOR THAT HAS
BEEN NEGATIVELY
ASSOCIATED TO
THE PROBLEM OF
HUNGER INTO
BEING PART OF
THE SOLUTION."**

José Graziano Da Silva,
FAO Director-General

REDUCING RURAL POVERTY FOR INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

Poverty is one of the biggest obstacles to human development and economic growth. Although progress has been made in reducing the number of the poor in the past decades, about 900 million people continue to live in extreme poverty and inequalities are still pervasive, between economic classes, rural and urban areas, regions, ethnic groups and between men and women.

Most of the world's poorest people (some 75 percent) live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods and food security. Yet, they are often constrained by limited access to resources, services, technologies, markets and economic opportunities, which lower agricultural productivity and income in rural areas.

In many low and middle-income countries, poverty and

its consequences – malnutrition and hunger – are aggravated by global challenges such as fast population growth and climate change, which exacerbate the vulnerability of poor people and hinder rural development.

With the adoption of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, countries have renewed their commitment to fight against poverty, hunger and malnutrition, recognising that inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth is key for achieving sustainable development and moving people out of poverty.

As part of its mandate, FAO through its Strategic Programme 3 is supporting countries to achieve the goals of poverty reduction by making ongoing processes of structural transformation and rural transformation more pro-poor and inclusive, to make sure that no one is left behind.

QUICK FACTS

> Worldwide, there are around 2.1 billion poor people, and 900 million still live in extreme poverty. Of these, nearly 75 percent live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their subsistence (World Bank, 2014).

> Ninety five per cent of the rural poor live in East Asia, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2016).

> Most of the rural poor are smallholders and family farmers. Worldwide, the 475 million small farms of up to 2 hectares account for more than 80 percent of all farms but cover only about 12 percent of the world's farmland (FAO SOFA, 2014).

PATHWAYS OUT OF POVERTY

Evidence shows that in low-income countries in particular, investing in agriculture - especially in small-scale agriculture - has a greater impact on reducing poverty than investing in other sectors, as it offers the most direct route for rural people to benefit from land and labour, their main assets.

Yet, investing in agriculture is not enough to reduce poverty because the rural poor are often engaged in multiple economic activities. While pro-poor growth starts in

agriculture, reducing rural poverty requires increasing productivity of small-scale agriculture, creating jobs, fostering economic diversification and investing in people.

Through the process of rural transformation, households have three pathways out of poverty: they can either specialize in agriculture, combine agricultural activities with other forms of higher return non-agricultural activities (self-employment, service provision, wage labour and

transfers, including migration), or they can leave agriculture completely for non-agricultural activities.

Reducing rural poverty requires a multi-sectoral approach that addresses the social, economic, political challenges that poor rural people face. This set of policies and interventions should foster inclusive structural transformation and growth, enabling the poor to actively participate in and significantly benefit from economic activity.



KYRGYZSTAN

Women farmers harvesting corn in Kyrgyzstan.
©FAO/Sergey Kozmin

A BROAD APPROACH TO REDUCE RURAL POVERTY

Recognizing the diverse spectrum of poor rural households, FAO proposes a broad approach with differentiated strategies to help the rural poor move from low labour status and low levels of productivity (e.g. subsistence agriculture, casual paid labour) to a high labour status and high productivity (good employment conditions). That is, households and individuals reaching a

decent standard of living through their livelihood. This approach should aim to:

- Address structural constraints faced by poor agricultural households by increasing their access to natural resources and other assets; improve their capacity to manage risks and increase their productivity; and link small-scale agriculture to markets and food systems;

- Create decent off-farm employment for the poor in agriculture and the rural non-farm economy, including by fostering entrepreneurship and providing occupational skills;
- Build and scale-up social protection systems;
- Build rural infrastructure, especially in energy, transport, water and sanitation;
- Build human capital, in particular access to basic social services such as health and education, as well as occupational skills and organization capacity;
- Strengthen rural institutions and local government to foster their participation in policy dialogue and decision-making;
- Empower the rural poor to increase political participation, as a way for them to benefit from the development process.

The scope of what is needed goes well beyond the mandate and capacity of the Organization, which is why FAO works with governments and other development partners to achieve results on a wider scale.



TAJIKISTAN

A farmer winnowing rice drying on a farm after harvest, in Tajikistan.
©FAO/Vasily Maximov

PROMOTING MULTI-SECTORAL PRO-POOR DEVELOPMENT POLICIES



PAKISTAN

Women preparing lunch for their family.
©FAO/Farooq Naeem

Country legal frameworks are the backbone to improve the livelihoods of the rural poor. Reducing rural poverty requires improving the enabling environment through multi-sectoral policies, strategies and programmes that address the economic, environmental and social vulnerabilities that poor rural households face in their daily lives.

With this in mind, FAO encourages inter-ministerial collaboration, supports multi-stakeholders platforms for

inclusive policy dialogue and provides countries with evidence-based policy support for the design of multi-sectoral and pro-poor rural development strategies and programmes related to agriculture, rural transformation, decent rural employment and social protection.

FAO also works to strengthen governments' capacities to design inclusive and people-centred policies, and provides tools and methodologies to foster policy change in support of the rural poor, such as the Gender

and Agriculture Policy Tool (GAPo) and the Decent Rural Employment toolbox.

In addition, FAO supports national and global statistical processes for the collection and analysis of rural poverty and rural development trends, including the World Agriculture Watch (WAW), with a view to improving evidence-based policy dialogue and formulation. As part of these efforts, FAO will also contribute to monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals related to rural poverty reduction.

SUPPORTING FAMILY FARMERS



**DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

A woman winnowing corn from a height to separate grains from chaff during post-harvest processing.
©FAO/Olivier Asselin

The majority of the rural poor are smallholders and family farmers, who depend on agriculture and natural resources for their livelihoods.

Supporting smallholders and family farmers is key to boosting local economies and accelerating progress towards a world poverty and accelerating progress towards a world free of poverty and hunger.

FAO works with governments and key ministries to shape pro-poor poverty reduction policies, strategies and programmes that target smallholders and family farmers, promoting their empowerment and increasing their access to resources, services, pro-poor technologies and markets.

FAO also supports countries to tailor investment plans for

agriculture and rural development that increase the yields and income of poor family farmers while helping them adopt sustainable agricultural practices, reduce production costs and adapt to climate change.

Family farmers are key to reducing rural poverty

FAMILY FARMING IS VITAL TO LOCAL ECONOMIES



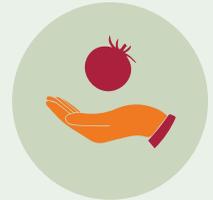
More than **90%** of farms are run by an **individual** or a **family** and rely primarily on family labour



Family farms occupy around **70-80%** of farm land



Family farms produce about **80%** of the world's food

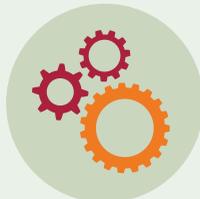


Due to the variety of food they produce, family farmers also strongly contribute to **food security**

WHY IS FAMILY FARMING IMPORTANT?



Especially when combined with **specific policies** aimed at social protection and the well-being of communities



Family farming represents an opportunity to **boost local economies**



Largest share of **investment in agriculture** comes from farmers

FAMILY FARMING IS KEY TO SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION



Agriculture is responsible for **70%** of **global freshwater withdrawals** worldwide



Agriculture conserves **biodiversity**



Agriculture produces valuable **ecosystem services**

Source: ©FAO 2014

EMPOWERING PEOPLE AND STRENGTHENING RURAL ORGANIZATIONS

Getting poor rural people organized increases the chances of long-lasting poverty reduction. Through collective action, cooperatives, producer organizations and networks, poor rural people can improve their bargaining power, access to markets and productivity, increase their participation in decision-making processes and influence the formulation of national policies affecting their livelihoods.

FAO helps countries empower the rural poor and strengthen rural organizations to improve their productivity and participation in national and local decision-making processes.

FAO also promotes farmer-to-farmer exchanges among organized small-scale producers and communities as a South-South Cooperation strategy to reduce rural poverty. By sharing knowledge on sustainable agricultural practices, farmer-to-farmer exchanges put rural people back in the driver's seat, strengthening their organizational capacities, improving management of natural resources, and increasing rural people's capacity to adapt to climate change.

These experiences also generate opportunities for policy change in support of the rural poor, as government representatives participate in the exchanges.

QUICK FACTS

> Worldwide, cooperatives have more than 1 billion members, a large proportion of which are in the agriculture sector. Thirty percent of the 300 largest cooperatives are found in the agriculture sector (FAO, 2016).

> By coming together in formal organizations, smallholders and family farmers can gain joint access to resources, set up small enterprises and work their way out of poverty (FAO, 2016).

> Producer organizations contribute to increase food production through economies of scale (FAO, 2016).



IMPROVING ACCESS TO PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES, SERVICES, TECHNOLOGIES AND MARKETS



GRENADA

A local farmer inspecting freshly planted crops in Mirabeau, Grenada.
©FAO/Giuseppe Bizzarri

Poor rural people often rely exclusively on their labour for their income because they lack access to and control over natural resources, such as agricultural land. They are also excluded from markets and they do not benefit from tailored technologies and rural advisory services. These constraints lower their agricultural productivity and perpetrate poverty.

Rural poverty can be reduced by making agriculture more inclusive, sustainable and productive. FAO helps countries better engage poor rural households in agriculture, increase their yields and income, and adapt to climate change.

To do so, FAO promotes investments in agriculture and supports the design of pro-poor development strategies and programmes that address the structural constraints faced by poor households in rural areas. This includes improving rural people's access to, control over, and sustainable management of natural resources as well as access to rural advisory and extension services, markets, technologies and inclusive finance, particularly for women and youth.

📍 QUICK FACTS

- > Investing in agriculture and related rural off-farm activities can foster inclusive economic growth. Cross-country evidence shows that growth in agricultural production is 2.8 times more effective in reducing poverty than growth in industrial and service sectors (L. Christiaensen, L. Demery, J. Kuhl, 2006).
- > Poor access to resources, services, markets and infrastructure results in low yields in agriculture. Workers tend to be more productive if they have improved access to finance and services (World Bank, 2016).
- > Expanding access to markets can increase the demand for products, expanding production and fostering economies of scale (World Bank, 2016).

ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES OF DISTRESS MIGRATION

Migration is a key component of development process and yet, in poor rural areas, it is increasingly becoming a forced choice rather than an option for diversifying and increasing household' income. In many low- and middle- income countries, poverty, food insecurity, lack of employment opportunities,

limited access to social protection, natural resource depletion and the adverse impacts of environmental degradation and climate change are forcing rural people, especially women and youth, to migrate in search for better opportunities.

An additional billion young people will enter the job market in

the next decade and 600 million new jobs will be needed over the next fifteen years to keep to current employment rates (World Bank, 2013). Increased population will give rise to more intense competition for increasingly scarce resources and employment opportunities. This is likely to weaken the already fragile capacity of rural people to move out of poverty, causing widespread social and political instability.

Agriculture and rural development can make a significant contribution to address the root causes of distress migration by giving poor people viable options for moving out of poverty within or near their own communities. FAO works to increase the resilience of displaced people and host communities in protracted crises, and to prevent conflict and reduce tensions related to natural resources. In addition, FAO supports safe, regular and responsible migration from rural areas, including seasonal migration, and helps countries harness the developmental potential of migration.

FAO is committed to work with its partners to improve country capacities to deal with large movements of refugees and migrants, and support the design



WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP

A farmer taking a herd of goats to a rehabilitated cistern in the arid region of al-Rashaydi, for a drink of water.
©FAO/Marco Longari



BURUNDI

Refugees fleeing civil conflict carrying what household belongings and tools they can carry
©FAQ/M. Linton

of policies and programmes that can address the root causes of distress migration. This is done including by generating evidence on international and internal migration, its root causes, and its contribution to agriculture and rural development; disseminating lessons learned and best practices to scale up innovative solutions; facilitating policy dialogue to improve the understanding of rural migration; and strengthening partnerships and advocacy strategies to address the root causes of distress migration.

📍 QUICK FACTS

- There are 244 million international migrants and 740 million internal migrants. The number of international migrants increased by 41 percent from 2000 to 2015 (World Bank, 2014; UNDESA, 2015).
- About one-third of all international migrants are in the 15-34 age group (UNDESA, 2011).
- Accounting for 48 percent of all international migrants, women are almost as likely to migrate as men (UNDESA, 2015).
- Almost 40 percent of international remittances are sent to rural areas, suggesting that a significant share of international migrants comes from rural areas (World Bank, 2014).

ACHIEVING DECENT RURAL EMPLOYMENT

Poor rural people often hold precarious, poorly paid and informal jobs. Many of them, particularly women and youth, are unable to find employment. This can trap them in a vicious cycle

of hunger and poverty, hindering rural development and fuelling distress migration.

Reducing rural poverty requires economic diversification,

investments in human capital and more decent rural employment. Decent employment involves opportunities for work that are productive and respect core labour standards, provide a fair income (whether through self-employment or wage labour), grant safe and healthy working conditions, allow workers to have a voice in the work place, and ensure equal opportunities and treatment for women and men.

FAO aims to build lasting policy change for creating more opportunities in rural areas and helping people move out of poverty. To do so, FAO supports countries in the formulation of policies, strategies and programmes (including national rural youth employment policies) that foster the creation of decent rural employment, especially for women and youth, and promote the application of international labour standards to rural areas, particularly for child labour prevention.

In rural areas, high levels of unemployment and under employment prevent poor households to diversify their income and move out of poverty in a sustainable manner. Unemployment is often a consequence of poor access to credit, markets and productive resources along with limited entrepreneurial and work skills,



**DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF
CONGO**

A man and woman
pouring corn into a mill.
©FAO/Olivier Asselin



all of which lowers poor people's ability to work and earn an income.

FAO supports countries to build human capital in rural areas by providing poor people, especially women and youth, with skills and capacities to access better decent employment opportunities in agri-food systems as producers, entrepreneurs, or wage workers. Furthermore, FAO supports the development and implementation of agricultural and food-systems strategies that are employment-smart, prioritize local employment creation, harness rural-urban linkages, and support the inclusion of vulnerable workers.

📍 QUICK FACTS

- Agricultural and other rural livelihoods are responsible for over 38 percent of employment in low- and middle-income countries, making the agrifood sector a major source of jobs (IFAD, 2016).
- Globally, nearly two-thirds of youth are found in a state of extreme, moderate or near poverty, reaching over 90 percent in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (ILO, 2015).
- Women are more likely than men to hold low-wage, part-time, and seasonal employment (FAO, 2011).
- Nearly 8 out of every 10 of the working poor live in rural areas (ILO, 2012).
- Almost 60 percent of all child labour is found in agriculture, affecting nearly 100 million children (ILO, 2010).

UNLEASHING WOMEN'S POTENTIAL TO REDUCE RURAL POVERTY

Women and girls play crucial roles in rural economies, where the fight against hunger and poverty is most pressing. Yet, they often face significant gender-based constraints, particularly in access to productive resources, services, economic opportunities and decision-making processes. Gender inequalities prevent women from reaching their full potential, weakening the agricultural sector and undermining rural development.

FAO works to eliminate gender-based barriers in access to productive resources, technologies, knowledge and markets, by supporting the design of gender-sensitive rural development policies and programmes that increase women's economic empowerment and decision-making in agriculture and rural development. This includes strengthening rural women's



NIGER

A group of women from a Dimitra club.
©FAO/Andrea Sanchez Enciso

organizational capacities and collective action to enhance their leadership, decision-making and bargaining power within the household, the community, and in policy processes.

FAO also assists countries to address gender-based discrimination embedded in countries' legal frameworks. As part of these efforts, FAO supports the design of gender-equitable tenure policies and provides capacity development to key stakeholders, including in customary contexts, to enhance women's access to land.

FAO helps countries enhance women's entrepreneurial skills and business planning capacities, while ensuring that more women can access and benefit from gender-sensitive extension and rural advisory services, social protection and inclusive finance.

QUICK FACTS

- > Women make up 43 percent of the global agricultural labour force, ranging from 20 percent in Latin America to 50 percent or more in some parts of Africa and Asia (FAO SOFA, 2011).
- > Evidence shows that in many countries in Africa, Asia

and Latin America, women's participation in agriculture is increasing (FAO SOFA, 2011).

- > Women have less access than men to productive resources (i.e.: land, skills, services) and employment opportunities (FAO, 2011).

BUILDING INCLUSIVE, NUTRITION-SENSITIVE, RISK INFORMED AND SHOCK-RESPONSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Rural people have a strong potential to reduce poverty when they are given the means to do so. Reducing poverty requires enabling the rural poor, especially the extreme poor, to participate in the rural economy and in the broader processes of rural and structural transformation.

Social protection can play a fundamental role in helping households manage risks and shocks. It also facilitates economic transition, providing a minimum income for the poorest and helping the poor transition into jobs and

income-generation opportunities by relaxing insurance and credit constraints (e.g. through cash and asset transfers or targeted subsidies).

Moreover, the sustainable transition to the labor market would require that social protection is also extended from a risk management and social assistance to a stabilization and transformation role. It is therefore critical to ensure that rural farmers and farm workers have access to a minimum package of social protection, including

social insurance and other contributory elements.

Social protection puts poor and extreme poor rural people back in the driver's seat by making them economically viable. FAO provides countries with evidence-based policy support to design inclusive nutrition-sensitive, risk informed and shock-responsive social protection systems, and advocates for expanding the coverage to poor and extreme poor rural people, with a view to reducing poverty.

FAO also promotes coherence between social protection and agriculture by generating evidence on the productive impact of social protection in rural areas and supporting the design of broader rural development strategies that combine social protection programmes and agricultural interventions.

QUICK FACTS

> About 73 percent of the world's population has no access to adequate social protection. Of these, the majority are smallholders (ILO, 2014).

> Less than 20 percent of agricultural workers have access to basic social protection (ILO, 2011).

> Social protection improves the use and ownership of

productive investments (such as modern inputs, livestock, etc.) at the household level, leading to increased farm production (FAO SOFA, 2015).

> In Ethiopia, for every dollar transferred through social protection programmes up to 2.52 dollars in income is generated for the local economy. This significantly boosts growth and development in rural areas (FAO, 2014).

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

The FAO action is predominantly on the ground and responds to country needs through three Regional Initiatives that aim to reduce rural poverty and achieve food security. The focus is to assist small-holders and family farmers to improve their livelihoods, access decent job opportunities and benefit from social protection

schemes. These thematic initiatives implemented in Latin America and the Caribbean, Near East and North Africa, and Europe and Central Asia are set up to foster inclusive and sustainable rural development, address the needs of smallholders and family farmers and respond to country and regional priorities.



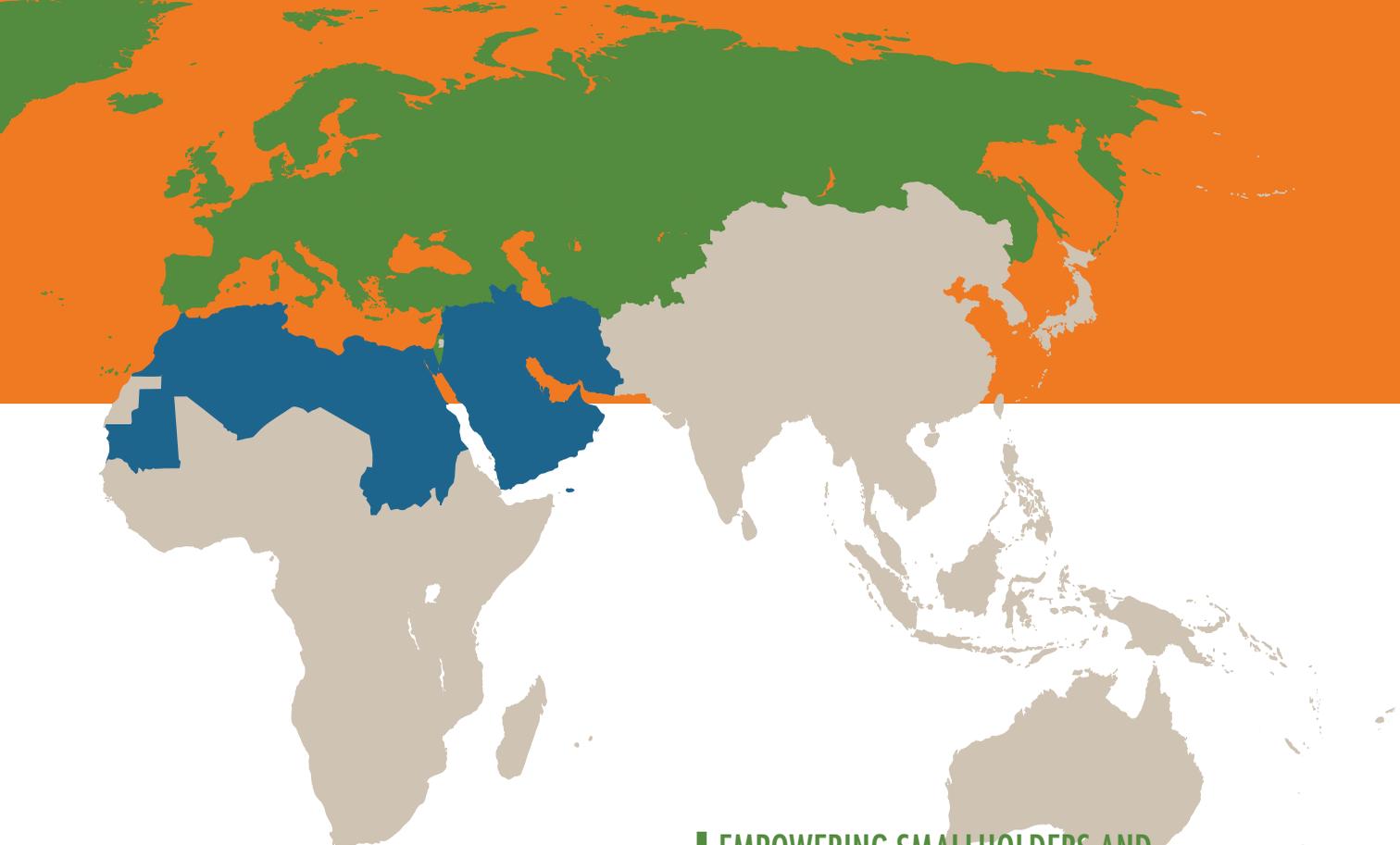
NICARAGUA

FAO works to strengthen women farmers' productivity in Nicaragua.
©FAO/Saul Palma

FAMILY FARMING AND INCLUSIVE FOOD SYSTEMS FOR SUSTAINABLE RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

FAO supports countries through this initiative to create inclusive food systems to fight malnutrition, through public procurement programmes, school feeding programmes and improved public supply systems and value chains. It also focuses on helping countries increase the availability of fresh and healthy foods, improving diversity in diets to fight obesity and decrease dependency on imports, strengthening resilience to economic and natural shocks.

Through this Initiative, FAO also aims to strengthen producers' organizations and improve government capacity to design policies and programmes to strengthen family farming, create inclusive food systems and promote rural development. This includes supporting the development of inclusive social protection policies and systems and their alignment with agricultural and rural development policies and employment programmes.



SUSTAINABLE SMALL-SCALE AGRICULTURE FOR INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Countries from the Near East and North Africa region through this FAO Initiative promote sustainable intensification practices, aimed at strengthening the capacity of small-scale farmers to make sound knowledge-based decisions, including through the development of farmer field schools. The Initiative also seeks to enhance smallholders' managerial, negotiation and marketing skills and increase decent employment opportunities, in particular for youth and women.

Through the Initiative, FAO promotes and strengthens inclusive producer organizations, cooperatives and networks to improve small-scale and family farmers' access to markets and strengthen their voice in policy-making.

EMPOWERING SMALLHOLDERS AND STRENGTHENING FAMILY FARMS IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

This Regional Initiative aims to enhance productivity and income levels through sustainable intensification of production, adequate access to rural services and better integration to agrifood value chains in Europe and Central Asia.

Through the Initiative, FAO supports small producers and family farmers to adopt sustainable production technologies, access innovative rural services (such as advisory services and micro-loans) and develop inclusive and efficient agribusinesses. The Initiative also promotes the dissemination of agricultural best practices related to sustainable management of agricultural land and water resources.

The Initiative also focuses on granting inclusive and gender-equitable access to land by supporting the creation of national governance frameworks for the sustainable management of resources and the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure.

ACHIEVING RESULTS AND SHOWING IMPACT





UGANDA

Members of the Ocukuri youth group meeting with the group's secretary.
©FAO/Isaac Kasamani



INCLUSIVE FINANCE FOR PRODUCER ORGANIZATIONS IN NIGER



FAO has been working with the government of Niger since 2015, to establish a credit guarantee fund to help producer organizations improve their access to credit

to buy agricultural inputs and increase their capacity to invest in agriculture.

To maximize the fund's potential, FAO has ramped up a capacity development programme to increase producers' access to agricultural credit. Eight producer federations (representing 70 000 smallholder farmers) have been supported in developing investment plans. Three of them have accessed credit from banks to fund them. Another five producer organizations have implemented their investment plans with their own means and four more

organizations are in the process of negotiating a loan.

So far, the project has helped around 20 000 smallholder farmers enter into a negotiating dialogue with the banks, increasing their bargaining power and access to credit. This has stimulated a mutual learning process, improving the capacity of stakeholders to design and deliver loans to smallholder families and in the end improve their livelihoods.

SUPPORTING COUNTRIES TO EMPOWER RURAL WOMEN



Together with IFAD, UN Women and WFP, FAO is implementing the Joint programme on accelerating progress towards the economic empowerment of rural women (RWE) to help women fulfil their economic potential in agriculture and rural development.

Through the RWE programme FAO has supported rural women in Rwanda to increase their income and escape the vicious cycle of poverty through trainings on agriculture techniques, nutrition, hygiene, saving and credit, income generating activities, family planning and kitchen gardening as well as inputs, such as fortified beans, sweet potatoes and livestock.

Thanks to the loans and the material support received from the project, beneficiaries are now able to invest and diversify their income generating activities. This has contributed to diversify agricultural production, improving living conditions, food security and nutrition in the country.

By 2015, the programme has helped around 20 000 women and their households from Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Niger and Rwanda increase their income, improve their food security, enhance women's leadership and their participation in decision-making processes at the national and community level.

Through the programme, FAO has also worked to increase the capacity of policy makers to mainstream gender into land, food, agriculture, nutrition and rural employment policies, with a view to creating a more gender-sensitive policy environment for the economic empowerment of rural women.



NIGERIA

A Fulani herdsman carrying a young oxen over a long distance with the mother cow in close pursuit.
©FAO/Pius Ekpei

SUPPORTING YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS IN AGRICULTURE TO FOSTER ECONOMIC GROWTH



Agricultural growth contributes to reducing poverty directly, by raising farmers' incomes, and indirectly, by generating more employment opportunities in

rural areas. With this in mind, FAO is supporting the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Nigeria to better engage young rural people in agriculture through the Nigeria Youth Employment in Agriculture Programme.

Launched in September 2014, the Programme aims to create more decent employment opportunities and foster entrepreneurship in key value chains among poor young people in rural areas. Nigeria is committed to allocating some US\$230 million to cover the total cost of the programme, which will guide the support to create

750 000 jobs for young people in the agricultural sector over a five-year period.

The programme has already trained almost 7 000 young "agropreneurs" in the country (3 893 female and 2 725 male) in different agricultural productions, including rice, aquaculture, poultry, maize, tomato, wheat, sorghum, apiculture, soya bean, cassava, and palm oil. The trainings have contributed to increase the productivity of poor young people and their access to decent employment opportunities, with a positive impact on rural poverty reduction in the country.

EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF SOCIAL PROTECTION TO ERADICATE POVERTY



Partnering with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), national research institutions and national governments of seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the FAO work on social protection has demonstrated the productive

impact that cash transfer programmes can have on reducing poverty in the region.

The development of rigorous impact assessments, carried out in close coordination with government counterparts, helped strengthen the perception of social protection as an investment rather than a cost. Evidence shows that cash transfers can help poor and extreme poor rural people increase the amount of land dedicated to production and invest more in agricultural inputs. In many sub-Saharan countries, such as Lesotho and Zambia, this has resulted in increased productivity and food security, contributing to

improving living conditions and reducing poverty in rural areas.

Today, policymakers are increasingly viewing social protection as an effective measure to fight hunger, reduce poverty and foster rural development. By highlighting the productive impact of social protection measures such as cash transfers, the FAO work has fostered policy dialogue around social protection in many countries of the region. In some cases, such as in Zambia and Lesotho, this has brought to major policy changes, leading to the expansion of social protection coverage in rural areas.

POLICY SUPPORT TO STRENGTHEN FARMING COOPERATIVES IN GEORGIA



As part of the Regional Initiative on Empowering Smallholders and Strengthening Family Farms in Europe and Central Asia, FAO is working closely with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agriculture Cooperative Development Agency of Georgia to help farmers’ cooperatives become competitive, adopt sustainable agricultural practices and increase productivity.

As part of this Initiative, FAO is facilitating collaboration between the Agriculture Cooperative Development Agency and the European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD), funded by the EU. Started in 2013, the programme aims to promote business-oriented farmers’ cooperatives as a model for smallholders and family farmers to improve their production and access to markets.

FAO has also supported farmer’s cooperatives in Georgia to adopt sustainable agricultural production systems and to enhance their access to knowledge and innovative technologies that can improve the quality and quantity of their yields.

These activities are part of the country’s Strategy for Agricultural Development that has seen agricultural production, product quality and yields increase for Georgian farmers’ cooperatives.

To formalize the role of cooperatives in the country, FAO has assisted Georgia in creating a national farm registry and has supported the design of tailored financial schemes for registered cooperatives. At the policy level, FAO has helped the Government improve taxation regimes for farmers’ cooperatives by proposing amendments to the Law on Cooperatives and Tax Code.

TURKEY

Small farmer families
feeding a flock of turkeys.
©FAO/Ami Vitale



GENDER-SENSITIVE RURAL ADVISORY SERVICES FOR WOMEN FARMERS



FAO is supporting the Turkish Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock and the Ministry of Agriculture in Azerbaijan to increase women's access to rural advisory services in both countries. The project aims to develop tools and methodologies to design demand-focused programmes that address the challenges that both women and men farmers face in their lives, while recognizing the specific needs of rural women.

Because women play a key role in agriculture, increasing equitable access to rural advisory services can help them benefit from economic opportunities in the agricultural sector as much as men do. Gender-sensitive rural advisory services strengthen women's knowledge, skills, and innovative capacity. This fosters entrepreneurship, increases women's participation in the rural economy and improves their productivity and income generating capacity.

FAO is providing the Turkish and Azeri extension units with capacity development to design gender-sensitive advisory services for rural women in Kastamonu, Kars and Antalya (Turkey), Samukh, Khachmaz and Salyan (Azerbaijan). The goal is to help the recipients capture the gender-sensitivity of rural advisory services and identify which areas need improvement.

The project also focuses on trainings aimed at providing agricultural development bodies and rural women with a better understanding of, and tools to analyze how gender relations influence socio-economic conditions in rural areas.

Up to now, a hundred gender-sensitive advisors, representatives from different agricultural development bodies and rural women have been trained in Turkey and Azerbaijan. As part of the project, FAO is collecting lessons learned and good practices on gender-sensitive rural advisory services, with a view to include them in capacity development materials.

FARMER FIELD SCHOOLS: EMPOWERING SMALLHOLDERS THROUGH SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE



FAO has created around 2 000 Farmer Fields Schools to help small-scale farmers improve their livelihoods and move out of poverty in the Near East and North Africa region. This inclusive community-based approach is

part of the Regional Initiative on Small-Scale Agriculture and aims to improve rural livelihoods by disseminating good agricultural practices and supporting small-scale farmers to enhance their agricultural skills.

In the Near East and North Africa, rural poverty lingers and small-scale agriculture remains neglected by most of the policies related to agriculture, food security and rural development. Yet, smallholders provide more than 80 percent of agricultural production, which makes small-scale agriculture key to boost local economies, create decent job opportunities and foster rural development in the region.

Farmer Fields Schools have proven to be crucial to intensifying agricultural production and reducing rural poverty in the region, especially in Tunisia and Jordan. Through Farmer Fields Schools, FAO has disseminated good and sustainable agricultural practices, decreasing costs of production while increasing yields and quality. Farmers have acquired technical skills and knowledge to improve their productivity, income and food security. Farmer Fields Schools have also contributed to enhance social inclusion and have empowered poor rural people, especially women, to participate in the social and economic life of their communities.

STRENGTHENING PRODUCERS' ORGANIZATIONS TO REDUCE RURAL POVERTY IN VIET NAM



In Viet Nam, FAO and the National Farmers Union supported an informal group of 15 acacia growers, including six female headed-households, to formalize its registration as a producer organization, through the Forest and Farm Facility programme. The group, which

managed a total of 57 hectares of forest, has also received training in enterprise development, wood sawing techniques as well as successful forest-based business models.

Thanks to the market analysis and development training received, seven members of the producer organization pooled their money to raise an initial capital of US\$ 23 000 to invest in a small-scale sawmill, which has increased the income of group members by 10 percent within seven months. The acacia growers' organization has now applied to become a cooperative and benefit from government incentives.

Overall, the Forest and Farm Facility works with more than

500 producers' organizations, representing approximately 40 million people (10 percent of smallholders and family farmers worldwide). The programme helps poor rural people enhance their business skills, build their own enterprises, increase access to markets, services, knowledge and technologies and improve access to, control over and sustainable management of natural resources.

The programme also aims to empower the rural poor and strengthen producers' organizations, to enable them to participate in national decision-making processes that affect their livelihoods, with a view to reducing rural poverty.

FAO SUPPORTS WOMEN FISHERS IN COSTA RICA TO ACCESS DECENT EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES



In the Pacific coast of Costa Rica, more than 1 000 families of mollusc gatherers engage in fisheries for their livelihoods, making a substantial contribution to small-scale fisheries in the country. Many of these fishers are

women who work in the informal sector and lack decent employment opportunities. FAO has supported them to obtain legal recognition of their work and achieve better work conditions to improve their livelihoods.

As part of these efforts, FAO has helped women mollusc gatherers engage with the government to achieve official sustainable use permits. Thanks to this support, women molluscs' gatherers can now legally capture the product and have achieved decent employment conditions that allow them to access healthcare, a retirement pension and social security.

The support of FAO to women molluscs' gatherers has not only empowered small-scale fishers but it has also increased the visibility of this activity in line with the objectives stated in the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, promoted by the Organization worldwide.

These results are part of the country's participation in the Regional Initiative on Farming and Inclusive Food Systems in Latin America and the Caribbean that seeks to reduce rural poverty and enhance food security for poor people in the region.



VIET NAM

A Vietnamese farmer weeding an Acacia tree nursery.
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OUR PRIORITIES

Today, member states face an increasing myriad of demands and challenges in agricultural development. To support them, FAO has identified five key priorities on which it is best placed to intervene. These priorities or Strategic Objectives represent the main areas of our work to achieve a world without hunger, malnutrition and poverty and do so in a sustainable manner – contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To help accomplish our Strategic Objectives, FAO works through five Strategic Programmes, leveraging on the Organization's core functions to achieve concrete results. Our technical knowledge underpins everything we do, while fully integrating gender, governance, nutrition and climate change impacts in all aspects of our work.



Help eliminate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition

FAO supports governments in the development of coherent and evidence-based policy and programmes with stronger focus on food security and nutrition, including greater commitment and allocation of human and financial resources for implementation and stronger and more inclusive coordination across sectors and stakeholders.



Make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable.

Agriculture, forestry and fisheries production systems in both developing and developed countries need to adapt to rising demands and shifting lifestyles in a sustainable way. FAO supports countries in strengthening integrated approaches towards more productive and sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries, taking into

account the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability.



Reduce rural poverty

FAO helps countries in their efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger by supporting the development and implementation of evidence-based pro-poor policies, strategies and programmes that promote inclusive sustainable growth, income diversification, decent employment, access to social protection and empowerment of women and men in agriculture and in rural areas.



Enable inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems

FAO helps build inclusive, efficient and sustainable food systems that support all stakeholders, including farmers, agribusinesses, and consumers. For developing countries to benefit from globalization and commercialization, FAO assists in building capacities to access global and regional markets, develop local markets, meet international food safety standards, and improve processes along entire value chains.



Increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises.

Together with its partners, FAO works to increase the resilience of agricultural livelihoods at risk of disasters and crises. People with resilient livelihoods are better able to withstand damage, recover and adapt when disasters cannot be avoided. The increasing frequency and intensity of disasters caused by climate change reinforces the urgency to build the resilience of agricultural livelihoods of vulnerable communities.

FOOD and AGRICULTURE in the 2030 AGENDA

From ending poverty, hunger and malnutrition to sustaining our natural resources to responding to climate change, food and agriculture lie at the very heart of the 2030 Agenda. The FAO Strategic Framework is aligned with the SDGs, geared towards tackling root causes and building a fairer society.