

The Farmers' Forum

In conjunction with the forty-seventh session of IFAD's Governing Council

12-13 February 2024



Investing in rural people
Investir dans les populations rurales
Invertir en la población rural

The Eighth Global Meeting of the Farmers' Forum

What is the Farmers' Forum?

The Farmers' Forum (FAFO) is an ongoing bottom-up process of tripartite consultation and dialogue between organizations of small-scale farmers, artisanal fishers, and pastoralists – collectively known as farmers' organizations (FOs) – IFAD and governments, focused on agricultural/rural development and poverty reduction. The Forum is rooted in concrete partnerships and collaboration at the country and regional levels.

The Forum was conceived in July 2004, during a meeting of several leaders from African FOs with the President of IFAD. In October 2004, an embryonic edition of the Forum was held at IFAD, with the participation of eight FO representatives. The consequent workshop organized in 2005 officially launched the FAFO process, aimed to provide strategic orientation to IFAD operations and to jointly identify opportunities for partnerships in IFAD's country programmes and investment projects.

The 2024 edition will celebrate the FAFO's 20th anniversary, refining as a strategic tool to strengthen IFAD-FO partnership based on results achieved, lessons learned, challenges and opportunities at different levels (country/regional/global). As a result, a way forward for the future partnership between IFAD and FOs – both in operations and in policy dialogue – will be jointly identified.

The decentralization of the Farmers' Forum

At the sixth global meeting of the FAFO in 2016, the decentralization of the process was agreed upon to strengthen its country-level impact. The FAFO is now organized on a four-year cycle, with global meetings every four years, and regional ones held in between. This change was in line with IFAD's reform agenda and its process of decentralization, aimed to increase IFAD's country presence and to strengthen its partnerships with national stakeholders and the results and impact of its operations.

The first cycle of regional meetings of the FAFO took place between 2017 and 2019 in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. More than 200 FO leaders – representing millions of small-scale farmers, artisanal fishers, and pastoralists – and over 400 IFAD staff, government officials and managers of IFAD-supported projects took part in the event. Deliberations from these regional meetings informed the 2020 Global FAFO. Between September 2022 and February 2023, the second cycle of regional meetings was expanded to all regions covered by IFAD's interventions, reaching out to the Near East, North Africa, East Europe, and Central Asia. Thus, seven regional meetings were organized (1 for WCA, ESA and APR, and 2 for LAC and NEN¹) with the participation of more than 230 leaders of FOs, representing millions of small-scale farmers, artisanal fishers, and pastoralists, and over 340 IFAD staff, government officials and managers of IFAD-supported projects.

The key outputs of these regional meetings include **Action Plans** with recommendations by countries. The Action Plans are focused on strengthening the collaboration between FOs and IFAD in the context of IFAD operations, including country strategic opportunities programmes, project design and implementation, and in-country policy engagement. As proven by the two rounds of regional meetings, the decentralization of the FAFO is indeed instrumental to getting closer to country-level interventions, where the IFAD-FO partnership has greater expansion potential.

The 2024 Farmers' Forum

The eighth global meeting of the FAFO takes place after four years of unique uncertainty, due to the global health crisis of COVID-19 and its socioeconomic consequences on the livelihoods of small-scale farmers, food producers, artisanal fishers, and pastoralists all over the globe. This was followed by the Russia–Ukraine war and its impact on food and energy price volatility, dramatically affecting family farmers. Furthermore, within this multi-crisis scenario, climate change consequences such as water stress in crops and livestock, coastal erosion from rising sea levels, and unpredictable pest infestations, are increasing their impacts every day, reaffirming the need for governments and family farmers to invest in climate-resilient and sustainable food systems by promoting the transition to farming practices such as agroecology.

The 2024 global FAFO is closely linked to key IFAD corporate processes, as it follows the Consultation on the Thirteenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD13) and is being held in conjunction with IFAD's Governing Council, whose forty-seventh session will take place on 14–15 February. It is important to note that for the first time, IFAD has formally engaged in consultations with rural civil society organizations, including FO representatives, from the outset of the thirteenth Replenishment process.

FOs are instrumental to the three IFAD13 priority areas: (i) they contribute to biodiversity preservation, natural resources management and climate-resilient adaptation/mitigation, supporting the transition of their members towards more sustainable and resilient food systems; (ii) they are able to profitably partner with the private sector in value chains, through economies of scale and value addition; and (iii) being grass-root organizations, they are able to effectively reach vulnerable rural people in fragile contexts, as proven during the pandemic and in conflict areas.



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2019–2028: The United Nations Decade of Family Farming

The eighth global meeting of the FAFO takes place halfway through the **United Nations Decade of Family Farming** (UNDFE, 2019–2028). This presents a unique opportunity to reflect on family farmers as key agents of change towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and to take stock of the progress achieved in implementing the UNDFE Global Action Plan, for which IFAD and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) are co-implementing agencies.

To this end, in December 2023 IFAD approved a grant of US\$1 million, aimed to support – in collaboration with the World Rural Forum and the FAO-based UNDFE Secretariat – the UNDFE policy engagement processes. The grant will support the implementation of National Action Plans on Family Farming, together with National Committees of Family Farming, ensuring the participation of family farmers in policy and knowledge-sharing events, including the 2024 FAFO global meeting. Ultimately, the grant is expected to contribute to an improved policy framework to support family farmers and their organizations in targeted countries.



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Who will be attending?

Representatives of FOs attending the global meeting of the Forum are nominated by its Steering Committee. This year's meeting, held in Rome on 12 and 13 February 2024, brings together over 80 farmers' leaders – representing millions of small-scale farmers and rural producers from all over the world – and 36 partner observers.

Overview of the agenda

On Monday, 12 February, the President of IFAD, Mr. Alvaro Lario, and the Strategy and Knowledge Department Associate Vice-President, Ms. Jyotsna Puri, will open the eighth global meeting of the FAFO, together with the members of the FAFO Global Steering Committee. IFAD will then present its analysis of evolving partnerships with FOs, from the Partnership in Progress Report 2020–2023 and the Approach Paper on IFAD–FO engagement. Two parallel working group sessions on strategic aspects of the partnership will be held, and the outcomes emerging from the discussions will be reported back in plenary.

On the second day, the key regional programmes supporting FOs (FO4A, FO4LA, FO4ACP, GAFSP²) will be presented, showcasing innovations, key results and lessons learned. In addition, two thematic parallel discussions will address the issues of climate change resilience and biodiversity conservation, and smallholders' access to finance. Three side events will take place in parallel – *“Joining efforts in advancing peasant rights through UNDROP implementation”*, *“Strengthening capacities of farmers' organizations to support sustainable food systems transformation and resilience”* and *“How can youth lead and be supported to sustainably produce the tomorrow's food?”*. The events are co-organized by IFAD and FOs, respectively La Via Campesina, the Pan African Farmers' Organization, and the Intercontinental Network of Organic Farmer Organization.

A Synthesis of Deliberations and Recommendations, prepared and agreed upon by the entire FAFO delegation, will be presented during the FAFO closing session in front of Governors, Executive Board representatives, and IFAD's Senior Management. Remarks by the Vice-President of IFAD, Ms. Gérardine Mukeshimana, will conclude the eighth global meeting of the FAFO.

A statement from the FAFO's Synthesis of Deliberations will also be delivered by an FO representative to the delegates of the forty-seventh session of IFAD's Governing Council on Wednesday, 14 February at IFAD headquarters.



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1 Western and Central Africa; Eastern and Southern Africa; Asia and the Pacific Regions; Latin America and the Caribbean; Near East and Central Asia.

2 Farmers' Organizations for Asia; Farmers' Organizations for Latin America; Farmers' Organizations for Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific; Global Agriculture and Food Security Program.