



SELECTED CONCLUSIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF FAMILY FARMING

Internationally and nationally renowned speakers and representatives of agricultural businesses, cooperatives and institutions contributed throughout the various sessions of the International Conference on Family Farms, held at the University of Almería.

Many diverse conclusions were drawn out of the sessions and below are some of the most important highlights:

- The international year of family farming demonstrates the global movement to **revindicate the importance of family farm structures**. Family farms play an important role as suppliers of food, representing 70% of food production on a world-wide level. They also are important in the **management and conservation of natural resources**.
- The **concept of family farming has changed** over time so that in developed economies it is no longer defined by who works in agriculture, but rather who has management and property rights. Use of salaried labour is now considered common in family farms.
- One of the aspects which differentiates family farming is that it is **not solely guided by the maximisation of profits** at all costs, thus representing a paradigm of sustainable production of food.
- Equally important is the **generation of social capital** connected to this type of agriculture, which is reflected through associative organization and the development of cooperative entities.
- In the context of global change, **family agriculture must be proactive and insert itself in the value chain and new channels of distribution without losing its essence**. In order to achieve these goals, family farming must organize itself given that such collaboration is fundamental to its survival and growth. In this sense, it has been shown that the integration in cooperatives is the most efficient tool to generate economic and social value, both for developed and developing economies.
- The **functioning and adequate adaptations of cooperative organisations will depend on the economic sustainability of family farms**, taking into account the current configuration of the agri-food market.
- These changes will greatly depend on the **innovation** which these entities develop (added value, including in the design stage, such as the support for biotechnology), efficient and transparent management of a truly entrepreneurial enterprise and the continued integration of family producers.
- **Success stories**, particularly in the context of Europe, were analysed, above all from the point of view of **sustainable rural development and the competitiveness of family farms**. These successes have been a result of the coordination of commercialisation strategies and the cooperative sector, as well as the formation of industrial districts (integrating local auxiliary industry) and the promotion of endogenous development.

- Family farming constitutes a **strategic sector**, both in developed and non-developed economies, such that the investment in this type of agriculture is **sufficiently important to require adequate public policies** that specifically provide solutions to their necessities and demands.
- Of particular interest are **initiatives in the new CAP** in which there is an emphasis on and support for ecological agriculture, specialization, shorter supplies chains linked to more local and autochthonous production, as well as promotion of a more equitable food supply chain. However, the benefits derived from such policy lines will depend upon national and regional policies which concretize and put into practice more specific policies adapted to specific contexts.
- The **central role played by women** in family agriculture is a very relevant theme which has not been sufficiently recognized and studied. Women are the principle pillar of family farm organization, often involved in labour intensive activities and carrying out a double role of co-business partner and at the same time the person responsible for managing the home and taking care of children.
- **Education and training** is an essential element and may be a decisive factor in the sustainability as well as in the **generational continuity of the family farm**. In many cases children of farmers are better educated and could thus meet the demands for change and specialization that are necessary for such farms to continue and be competitive.
- Indicators which demonstrate the **function of family farms to combine economic, social and environmental sustainability** were presented. Recent scientific results concerning this theme and related to the case of Almería have shown:
 - ✓ The role that family farms have in the **socio-economic development**. It is a system which has promoted the equitable sharing of benefits more so than in other activities and contexts in the Spanish economy.
 - ✓ The **agro-ecological role** of family farms is due to a more efficient use of basic natural resources, as well as a concern for the environment stemming from the relationship with the land and the intergenerational transmission of the family farm.
 - ✓ The **social value** embedded in family farm systems is evident and can be seen in examples such as the integration processes of foreign workers, and the influence on a greater sense of entrepreneurship.
 - ✓ Family farms have played an important role in **food security and safety**, forming the base for the provision of food in both national and international markets.
- Important characteristics of family farms are their **flexibility and capacity to react quickly**, allowing them to confront market changes and changing consumer demands.
- One of the great strengths of intensive family farming in Almería is that it has **maintained its family farm structure** during its 50 year history. It is a paradigmatic example of the **resilience of family farms** in the face of various challenges during the course of five decades. The transformation has leaned towards an **integrated sustainability, combining economic, social and agro-ecological action and results**.