



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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GENERAL SECRETARIAT

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*DIRECTORATE-GENERAL B
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES
SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH*

*International and horizontal aspects
of the CAP, in particular direct
support schemes and crop products*

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**Subject: 29th session of the Regional Conference for Europe
(Bucharest, 2 - 4 April 2014)**

**item 9: International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) in Europe
and Central Asia**

Delegations will find attached the final version of the EU Statement on **item 9** of the abovementioned meeting.

This statement has been approved by the Coordination Working Party (FAO) at its meetings in Bucharest on 31 March and 1 April 2014.

Final Commission Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

Item 9: International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) in Europe and Central Asia

Ms/Mr Chairperson,

1. I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union and its 28 Member States.

The candidate countries to the EU (Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey) align themselves with this statement.

2. We would like to thank the FAO for having included in the agenda, such a relevant point. Whilst welcoming the quality of the document ERC/14/5 we have a few comments on it.

3. We agree on the importance of the points underlined by the document as regards the sustainability of Family Farming, namely the access to natural resources, in particular land and water, financial support to increase capacity of Family Farming, improvements in rural infrastructure and training and education starting at the school level. However, the document is very weak on equal opportunities between men and women and gender aspects and how such inequalities effects measures, access to services and thereby may hamper economic development. We have also identified additional issues that represent important challenges for the farmers; such as bargaining power and access to markets. Decision makers have to recognize family farmers as entrepreneurs. The farmers need an enabling environment where they can grow and develop their activity.

4. While the EU Common Agricultural Policy is referred to in the document, we would like to update on its latest reform. The new CAP includes enhanced possibilities in relation to family farming, both as regards direct payments and rural development, for instance special attention to young farmers. With respect to paragraphs 27 and 39, we wish to add that CAP reform also addresses distribution of support (e.g degressivity) and Member States can implement a simplified scheme for small farmers.

5. Moreover, the figures regarding percentage of family farming for the 28 EU Member States are not the same in paragraphs 10 and 15. It is also not clear why France was excluded from these statistics in paragraph 10.

6. We think that the document should not oppose, as it is the case in paragraph 44, family farming and commercial farming: indeed, family farming produce over 70% of all food, with a large part of its production being exchanged on markets. Family farming should not be considered only as subsistence farming or semi subsistence farming.
7. Having made these comments on the document, we want to reiterate our strong commitment to the International Year of Family Farming. We are conscious that an International Year is mainly focused on awareness rising. As properly recorded in the report, the European Commission kick started the process of this International Year in November 2013 through the Conference "*Family Farming: a dialogue towards more sustainable and resilient framing in Europe and the world*". Family farming was also the topic of the informal meeting of the EU Agricultural Council in September 2013 in Vilnius which highlighted the importance of the promotion of cooperation, short food supply chains and local food systems, strengthening of bargaining power, assurance of better access to land and capital, application of innovations and scientific research for greater sustainability of family farms.

Amongst other events, we would like to mention the "Global Forum and Expo on Family Farming" that was hosted in Budapest in March. The summary conclusions of the Global Forum are going to be a significant contribution for further discussion and events throughout the International Year. We also would like to mention the international seminar on agriculture farming "Family farming, a future oriented agriculture" at the International Agriculture Show in Paris in February where a ministerial declaration in favour of family farming was proposed by the French Minister of Agriculture and agreed by 26 countries and the FAO.

8. Certainly the initiatives that the region will be hosting throughout 2014 will highlight the relevance of family farming in today's agricultural farming systems and contribute to identify the current weaknesses affecting the family farming and the most adequate actions to rectify them. Evidently there are numerous challenges, not least related to succession planning and the uptake of new innovative techniques.
9. We look forward to concrete outcomes this year in order to strengthen the position of family farmers in agricultural production and the rural economy to attract younger generation of farmers.

Thank you, Ms/Mr Chairperson.
