Farmers' organisations building democracy, growth and a fairer distribution of income

Farmers' organisations are well placed to tackle the systemic causes of poverty. Representing the legitimate voice of farmers in shaping pro-poor rural policies, they articulate farmers' interests to governments, processors and retailers. And as entrepreneurs, farmers can drive balanced social and economic development. Farmers Fighting Poverty reflects the conviction that stronger farmers' organisations contribute to:

- the spread of democracy (through better institutions)
- economic growth (by offering better services to farmers)
- a fairer distribution of income (as more smallholder farmers become involved in business).

Mobilising farmers' organisations since 2003

Operating since 2003, AgriCord has the backing of a growing number of farmers’ organisations in Europe (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden), in Canada (Québec), in Asia (several countries), and in Africa (Senegal). The AgriCord network brings together 20 agri-agencies. They are professional development agencies, mandated by the farmers’ and rural people’s organisations in their own countries, to support their colleagues in developing countries. This programme is labeled « Farmers Fighting Poverty », and follows the guidance of an Advisory Committee of representatives from developing country farmers’ organisations.

Organisation-to-organisation policies and practices

Farmers speak the same language. Farmer-to-farmer exchanges, backed up by their organisations, can generate inspiring new ideas. Advisors, who are themselves part of the farmers’ world, provide advice based upon the specific needs of each organisation.

Capacity Building and Collective Action

Organisational strength and inclusiveness

Strong farmers’ organisations have professional staff, adequate facilities and their own financing that allows them to operate sustainably and independently. Inclusive farmers’ organisations have active members who are informed, motivated and keen to participate. They represent a substantial proportion of the farmers, both women and men, in their area of operation. A large membership base gives them political and economic leverage.

Institutional development

Well-connected farmers’ organisations have created sound working relationships with public and private institutions: line ministries, research institutes, international development organisations, NGOs and private businesses. They cooperate with different institutions to improve the position of their members.

Policy elaboration and advocacy

Informed and pro-active farmers’ organisations develop opinions - together with their members - on policies that affect members’ livelihoods. On local, national and international platforms they articulate these views, bringing farmers’ voices to the fore and advocating for groups that might otherwise go unheard.

Farmer-Led Economic Activities

Enterprising farmers’ organisations increase the economic opportunities of their individual members by bringing them together and developing collective services for inputs, markets and new technologies. They facilitate farmers’ exchanges and combine energies to implement more suitable or more extensive activities. This increases productivity, improves incomes and creates rural employment.
Farmers Fighting Poverty 2013
Countries / Volumes / Farmers' organisations

Piet Vanhemsche, AgriCord president:
"Farmers organisations hope to set up mechanisms to support investment in agriculture. Experience shows that this is feasible. But it is crucial to well listen to the real farmers' needs. And thus to support structures, with genuine participation of the farmers' world, which serve their investment needs."

AgriCord
is a non-profit development organisation, that has ODA-status with the OECD.
The agri-agencies have supported over 200 farmers' organisations in more than 60 developing countries.

Information on activities and organisations
www.agro-info.net provides information on farmers' organisations and their projects worldwide.
You can search information per farmers' organisation, per country, per programme, per agri-agency, etc.
At the AgriCord website you find a short user's manual.

Farmers Fighting Poverty was set up with financial support from the Government of the Netherlands, and has been – since then – supported by the governments of several OECD countries (Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Sweden), by IFAD, and by the European Commission.
Agri-agencies and associated farmers' organisations in their own countries also raise funds and mobilise resources for Farmers Fighting Poverty. Funds come from membership subscriptions, from other private sources, and from their governments.
Farmers Fighting Poverty operates as a multi-donor trust fund.
It is steered by farmers' organisations and managed by AgriCord.
The key competences of farmers' organisations

Farmers Fighting Poverty is comprehensive: it covers the whole range of capacity-building needs and operations of farmers' organisations. These are clustered into four work areas, each of which includes a set of specific competences (deliverables):

Competences for Organisational strength and inclusiveness:
1. Policies and strategies prepared with members' participation
2. Well-managed human resources and adequate facilities
3. Sound and transparent financial management
4. Democratic governance
5. Representativeness and local membership base
6. Empowerment of young people, women and specific vulnerable groups

Competences for Institutional development:
7. External networks and partnerships
8. Formal alliances and agreements

Competences for Policy elaboration and advocacy:
9. Participatory policy formulation
10. Joint advocacy of family farmers on food security
11. External communication
12. Policy positions in national strategies

Competences for Farmer-led economic development:
13. Fair access to land, water, credit and other resources
14. Improved access to inputs for agricultural production
15. Improved processing and handling services
16. Improved product marketing
17. Development of farmer-led enterprises

Cross-cutting concerns

All FFP projects take into account the following cross-cutting concerns:
• Gender equality and the empowerment of women
• Financial management
• Environmental sustainability
### Agri-agencies, members

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<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
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<th>Country</th>
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### Farmers' organisations, associated members

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