

IFAP Presidency Letter

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“A new era of participation”




Dear colleagues,

I have spent some time thinking about the way farmers can take advantage of the growing opportunities for participation that IFAP has been opening up internationally. Recently, I met with senior staff at IFAD, the FAO and other international organisations in Rome to discuss further practical measures for collaboration with the IFAP network. I also attended a consultation with the World Bank to prepare its World Development Report 2008, which will be on agriculture, and I discussed collaboration with the Regoverning Markets project.

Clearly, there is a new openness by international bodies to work with farmers' organisations. Opportunities for consultation with farmers are almost unlimited. This is very exciting for us. We have real opportunities to influence the policies that will have an impact on our livelihoods and rural communities. But this is also a challenge.

That means we have to prepare ourselves to this new era of participation for farmers' organisations. We have to make sure we have the capacity and the willingness to face these new commitments. IFAP has been working for a long time to open these doors with international bodies. Now, that IFAP has succeeded, we need our member organisations to fill the seats at the table and come prepared with the knowledge and ideas of the farmers of their country. All of us in IFAP owe it to our members to influence decisions that will have an impact on agriculture. It is therefore crucial to have clear messages, and at the same time the capacity to participate and to influence outcomes.

Some examples of “opened doors”:

-  - At national and regional levels, IFAD has started to involve farmers' organisations in the design of the type of programs they need in their country.
-  - IFAP has representatives in almost all global, regional and sub-regional research networks giving virtually unlimited possibilities to be involved in setting research agendas.
-  - IFAP has established consultative relations at the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and has representatives on Codex Alimentarius standard-setting committees.

With AgriCord, IFAP member organisations have the chance to build their capacity in order to fully participate in these new opportunities. There are resources available for you.



I'm asking to all national farm leaders: “Do you truly have the capacity to respond to the opportunities for consultations made available to IFAP? If not, what do we need to do to accomplish this?”

IFAP is a unique organisation because of its worldwide network and its consultation status with many international organisations. But IFAP needs its network to be strong and dynamic in order to face its commitment to advocate farmers' interests worldwide.

Jack Wilkinson
President of IFAP