Minutes of the Extra-ordinary General Assembly of AgriCord
Brussels, 6 October 2010, 15.00 – 17.00
c/o COPA, Rue de Trèves 61, 1040 Bruxelles

Dialogue between the General Assembly of AgriCord
and the representatives of farmers’ organisations in developing countries
on “Farmers Fighting Poverty”

Chair: Piet Vanthemsche

Participating farmer leaders

Farmer leaders from OECD countries, members of AgriCord

- FNSEA: Karen Serres (France)
- LTO: Albert Jan Maat (Netherlands)
- FWA: René Ladouce (Belgium)
- AGPB and Unigrains: Henri de Benoist (France), apologised
- Boerenbond: Piet Vanthemsche (Belgium), president of AgriCord
- LRF: N. (Sweden)
- UPA (Québec, Canada): Christian Lacasse (Canada), apologised
- CAP: João Machado (Portugal)
- CIA: Giuseppe Politi (Italy), represented by Chiara Marinai
- MTK: Juha Marttila (Finland), represented by Antti Sahi
- UPA (España): Lorenzo Ramos Silva (Spain), represented by José Luis Gutiérrez

Farmer leaders from developing countries, working with AgriCord

- IFAP: Carlos Simancas (Colombia)
- ROPPA: Mamadou Cissokho (Senegal)
- EAFF: Philip Kiriro (Kenya)
- AFA: Esther Penunia (Philippines), video presentation
- SACAU: Ishmael Sunga (South Africa)
- IFAP DCC: Vardan Hambardzumyan (Armenia)
Pekka Pesonen, Secretary General, Copa Cogeca, welcomed the participants to Copa Cogeca, referring to the economic stress on farmers, in Europe and in other parts of the world.

Piet Vanthemsche, Boerenbond, Belgium and President of AgriCord chaired the meeting and presented the agenda. As the new president of AgriCord, he intends to lead the organisation in an efficient and transparent way. He addresses thanks to the past president of AgriCord, Laurent Pellerin.

In this General Assembly, AgriCord welcomes 2 new associated members: CAP from Portugal (Confederação dos Agricultores de Portugal) and UPA from Spain (Unión de Pequeños Agricultores y Ganaderos).

João Machado, president of CAP, Portugal introduced his organisation and gave reasons for CAP to join AgriCord recently. CAP is interested in stable and close relations with farmers in Europe and around the world. CAP will seek to establish good relations especially with farmers’ organisations in Portuguese speaking developing countries.

For UPA, Spain, José Luis Gutierrez, UPA, expresses UPA’s thanks to Agriterra and AgriCord, and UPA’s interest in collaboration with fellow farmers around the world. In 2009, UPA initiated a meeting with AgriCord and the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs. Since then UPA has established its own agri-agency ACODEA and visited Libya and Bolivia for familiarization with farmers’ organisation projects. As a result, proposals for collaboration projects have been presented to the Spanish government. With Spanish support UPA wants to contribute and participate within AgriCord. UPA finds that collaboration with countries that speak the same language, Spanish, is easier and that the Bolivian experience was very positive.

Piet Vanthemsche introduced the delegates from farmers’ organisations in developing countries.
Ignace Coussement, AgriCord, presented the purpose of the extra-ordinary general assembly. AgriCord’s constituent farmers’ organisations from OECD countries discuss the new “Farmers Fighting Poverty” plan for 2011-2014, in an open and transparent way. They expect and respect the guidance from the representative farmers’ organisations in developing countries. He also welcomed observers from different governments, supporting Farmers Fighting Poverty.

Kees Blokland, Agriterra, presented details of the Farmers Fighting Poverty progress and successful experiences in the past 3 years (2007-2009):

- Farmers Fighting Poverty supports 187 farmers’ organisations, 398 projects, with 2.4 million participating farmers, of which 38% women 38%. Farmers’ organisations increased their membership from 5 to 8 million farmers, and became less dependent on foreign donor money.

- This was done with only 66% of the funds needed. Farmers Fighting Poverty was not able to raise the necessary funds to respond to all genuine requests from farmers’ organisations, despite repeated pledges from heads of state and governments. A call and a petition were launched, see http://www.farmersfightingpoverty.org/en and watch http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vRGyJ5ZrA4.

- Diagnoses by spidermap present crucial strengths of farmers’ organisations, for key indicators, including representation, accountability, gender, strategic potential (promotion of economic matters), etc. Progress is real but slow. This can be partly explained by the increases in membership.

- **Farmers Fighting Poverty, after 3 years, is on track**, except for the number of policy plans prepared and presented by farmers’ organisations to governments.

Laure Hamdi, Afdi, discussed how Farmers Fighting Poverty will respond to needs of farmers’ organisations in developing countries. Results from the past have been discussed with farmers’ organisations (mid term performance audit in March 2010), and lessons learned are taken into account. The basic principles remain:

- demand driven, no top-down approaches

- long term nature of relationships

- flexible capacity building to improve services delivered by farmers’ organisations in an agro-food chain perspective

- combining direct funding with advisory services.

Funding will only be provided to farmers’ organisations that link with agri-agencies as part of Farmers Fighting Poverty. Family farming is the key focus. Unfortunately food security pledges of the OECD governments have not (yet) benefitted farmers’ organisations adequately. It is regrettable that rather than project leaders, farmers’ organisations are seen more as operators at the service of the donors.
**Esther Penunia**, Asian Farmers’ Association, Philippines joined in by a video message (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=prgp3FBzSyw). AFA is a regional Asian alliance since 2002, supported by Agriterra, with farmers’ organisations from 8 countries representing 10 million members. AFA is a recognised key stakeholder for ASEAN, FAO, IFAD. AFA is happy with the directions taken in Farmers Fighting Poverty. It is a unique approach to support farmers’ organisations directly. Farmers’ organisations are key pillars for change in society, as they help a large number of smallholders. The real needs of farmers can be addressed through Farmers Fighting Poverty. The focus on organisational development of farmers’ organisations is a long term venture, which can take 10 years before success stories can be displayed. Donors should be patient. Farmer-to-farmer development cooperation together with the flexible approach of Farmers Fighting Poverty are promising. Farmers Fighting Poverty is comprehensive and reaches local, national and regional levels of farmers’ organisations. Farmers Fighting Poverty can also facilitate formation of cooperatives along commodity lines.

**Ishmael Sunga**, SACAU, South Africa also stressed that results take time, and that organisational, technical and human resources needs to be strengthened, but he warned against paternalistic approaches: “give us the space to develop a good service centre”. It is good that SCC (Swedish Cooperative Center, member of AgriCord) has given us space, and we have been able to deliver. SACAU is strong now. It is important that farmers’ organisations are not turned into NGOs that focus on serving the donor rather than their farmer members. Farmers’ organisations want to be respected, and “speak for themselves”. He highlighted the need to support regional platforms of farmers’ organisations. The regional level is important to support as a conduit for development of national levels. The strengthening of farmers’ organisations by capacity building takes a long time and patience. “We lack financial resources and experience”.

**Antti Sahi**, MTK, Finland discussed cooperation with AgriCord as part of MTK’s international cooperation with farmers’ organisations around the world. MTK unites both farmers and forest owners associations in Finland. This is a particularly interesting setting: in the Finnish experience, farmers are involved in both agriculture and forestry. MTK works together with other international forest producers’ organisations such as IFFA, the International Family Forestry Alliance (http://www.familyforestry.net/). Within Farmers Fighting Poverty, and with the support of the Finnish Government, MTK has already started in supporting forest producers’ associations in Africa and Asia. MTK is interested in the link between climate issues and forestry. Finland’s support to Farmers Fighting Poverty started in 2007, and will continue.
Carlos Simancas, IFAP vice-president and Confecampo, Colombia said that large land owners dominate the agricultural policy in Colombia and 29% of farmers are below the poverty line. However, investments in cooperative processing activities in Colombia are very successful. Coops are very important to create and secure access to retail markets for the farmers’ products. Confecampo is a member of IFAP since 2000. While IFAP helps farmers to cooperate, there has been some reluctance to recognize the executive role of region in policy making and defending small farmers. Global lobbying is necessary, but regional policies, to defend small farmers and family farming, need to be improved.

For Albert Jan Maat, LTO, the Netherlands the new Farmers Fighting Poverty focus for the next years, on economic development and rural entrepreneurship, is an important initiative to strengthen the economic position of farmers worldwide. LTO welcomes cooperation in these approaches with farmers’ organisations to bring economic benefits to their members. He appreciates and thanks all partners involved for their cooperation within the network, and expresses thanks to the Dutch government. Focus should indeed remain on the economic position of farmers, on entrepreneurship and on the position in the food chain.

Jose Luis Gutierrez Garcia, UPA, Spain confirmed that UPA shares the Farmers Fighting Poverty philosophy and focus on entrepreneurship. UPA itself has been successful in introducing economic development. He stresses that women farmers are key contributors in this respect and there is a 50/50 gender participation in UPA. As an example, he refers to the role of FADEMUR. Federación de Asociaciones de Mujeres Rurales (http://www.fademur.es). UPA looks forward to developing projects in the future, also with funding by the Spanish government.

For Mamadou Cissokho, ROPPA, Senegal, the agri-agencies and AgriCord are revolutionary tools for development. “AgriCord est une révolution dans le financement du développement”. ROPPA appreciates the contributions already made: agri-agencies have been instrumental and crucial for the existence of the majority of farmers’ organisations. Agri-agencies are platforms for the farmers’ organisations. He appreciates that we will deal with economic issues and value chain approaches in the future. Flexibility and complementarity are necessary. Farmers’ organisations need different “windows” for their development. Africa has five distinctive regions, and a political will for regional and continental integration. In West-Africa ECOWAS (UEMOA) is a reality. Regional platforms become natural partners for COPA, but the discussions must go beyond aid, support and funding: as farmer leaders from these different regions, we need to discuss politics, production economics, how to handle crises in agriculture ...
Vardan Hambardzumyan, IFAP DCC vice-chair and FAA ULE, Armenia informed that farmers cannot effectively use 2/3 of the land in Armenia. Our attention should go to supporting 82% of farmers, who are smallholders with less than 2 hectares of land. Farmers can make better use of the resources if agriculture is profitable. Marketing is the key issue in Armenia, and the role of “non profit cooperatives” has proven to be successful, as supported by Agriterra. More government support is needed to improve infrastructure, as part of the access to markets for smallholders, and legislation on cooperatives.

Karen Serres, FNSEA and Afdi, France commented that Afdi has had 4,000 French volunteers to help with its activities, mainly in francophone Africa. We want see that farmers’ organisation members receive benefits from their farming activities, and are comfortable as farmers. “L’agriculture est un métier honorable”.

Philip Kiriro, EAFF, Kenya also highlighted the value of regional farmers’ platforms in Africa. EAFF covers 5 East African countries now. We want to build capacity of the farmers. The Farmers Fighting Poverty is unique in its participatory approach and an important programme for producers. Several issues should be discussed: Agri-agencies should develop into centers of excellence in specific areas of expertise. Such centers can be called for support by farmers’ organisations as need for such expertise arises. Support regional policy preparation (for example in food security) by improving the connection of national levels to the regional platform. Support smallholders to participate in commodity markets by improving warehouse receipt systems and by developing business forums and agri-business clusters. Support regions to develop indigenous knowledge management that has been overlooked. AgriCord should link development programmes to regional platforms, which are a relevant entry point to the national level. Respect the independence of farmers’ organisations by developing demand driven programmes. Sustainability of the farmers’ organisations should be based on supporting the long term business plan of the farmers’ organisations (to develop sustainable income generating activities), which can lead to bankable plans that can be also financed locally. Funding should be pooled as multi-donor trust fund which can be accessed by the farmers’ organisations.

Philip Kiriro and Mamadou Cissokho shared information on the formation of a new Pan African Platform, as agreed by the five regional platforms in Africa. The constitutive general assembly of this new platform is scheduled for end of October 2010 in Lilongwe, Malawi.
René Ladouce, FWA, Belgium confirmed the commitment of FWA (Fédération Walonne de l’Agriculture) on 3 issues. First he requested that the synergy of public-private cooperation be improved so that farmers can increase their bargaining power in markets (volumes and prices) and receive fair returns for their work. Second, the inclusiveness of AgriCord can be improved. Why cannot the southern farmers’ organisations be agri-agencies themselves? Third, he calls upon donor governments: we as farmers agree fully that transparency and accountability for public support is important. It is for us sometimes frustrating that the rules change suddenly and amount of paperwork is very high. Further, the FWA strongly believes and invests in farmer-to-farmer exchanges, and looks back at positive experiences with farmers in Senegal, Brasil and Canada.

Carlos Simancas, IFAP, Colombia said that the organized farmers must lobby for a better distribution of the national state aid to farmers. Aid resources are very limited and investments in infrastructure are needed. In Colombia, farmers do not participate in policy discussions and our farmers should organize themselves better for discussions with the government. He also highlighted the lack of a strong regional platform for Latin America and the Caribbean, IFAP helps us to reach our global objectives, but is not strong enough to address the (regional) development banks for more resources.

Ishmael Sunga, SACAU, South Africa encouraged more cooperation between the European and African farmers’ organisations for development of governance and value chains as there is good experience in Europe. Generally farmers’ organisations are poorly governed and need help, but there are some good examples in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia of farmers’ organisations that have more than 100 years’ history. Stronger African organisations can support the weaker ones. European experience would be useful in the regionalization of agricultural policies and sharing of lessons for better policy advocacy (where the French examples seem successful). Europe has the CAP, Southern Africa begins to engage with SADEC. Finally, it is important to help with the monitoring of aid flows, and the follow-up of the pledges of billions for agriculture and farmers, by heads of state and governments.
Mamadou Cissokho calls upon his colleagues. Among farmers, we have to discuss funding issues, but we must go beyond. « Discuter au-delà de l’argent ». We face common challenges, climate change, consumer needs, multinational strategies, the policies of our governments which can strengthen farmers or weaken them... We need time to tackle such issues. Nevertheless, our governments and the international institutions created by our governments have money, but –indeed- they do not allocate these funds as the should. We must mobilise an active lobby for these funds.

Piet Vanthemsche concluded that AgriCord is indeed our (the farmers’ own) organisation. Choices within AgriCord are the choices of the constituent farmers' organisations. NGO’s have an ideology, AgriCord has the mandate from organised farmers.

Progress of Farmers Fighting Poverty, as reported, is good with impressive numbers on different aspects of support. AgriCord as a tool seems to be working well. There are many NGOs working in the rural areas of developing countries, but we are the farmers with our own agri-agencies.

The farmers’ organisations in AgriCord confirmed and commented their commitment today, and we will keep listening to and accept guidance from our colleagues in developing countries, as we have done during this general assembly. Poverty and farming are often referred to in the same sentence. However, we are convinced that agriculture is not the problem, but the solution to poverty.

AgriCord, Brussels, 7 October 2010
AgriCord General Assembly
Extra-Ordinary Meeting
Brussels, 6 October 2010, 15.00 – 17.00
C/o COPA, Rue de Trèves 61, 1040 Bruxelles

Dialogue between the General Assembly of AgriCord and farmers’ organisations in developing countries on “Farmers Fighting Poverty”

Chair: Piet Vanthemsche

Agenda

1. Approval of agenda.
2. Welcome and presentation of new associated members: UPA Spain, CAP Portugal.
6. Comments by farmers’ delegates of AgriCord.
7. Comments by representatives of farmers’ organisations in developing countries.
8. Discussion.
Basic facts programme implementation

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<tr>
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<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
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<tr>
<td>Farmers’ organisations</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total budget</td>
<td>€17.1 m</td>
<td>€32.7 m</td>
<td>€38.4 m</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants in projects</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>1,900,000</td>
<td>2,400,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation of women</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poverty reduction</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership (profiled POs)</td>
<td>5,171,000</td>
<td>6,991,000</td>
<td>8,303,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial independence</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farmer-to-farmer advise</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>293</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding of programme budget</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>66%</td>
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Graphical presentation strength POs

1. Representation Indicator
2. Participation Indicator
3. Accountability Indicator
4. Strategic potential
5. Professional Capacity Indicator
6. Gender Indicator

1st Profile 2nd Profile
# Indicators of strengthening farmers organisations per region

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa (20)</td>
<td>-0,5%</td>
<td>-4,3%</td>
<td>3,8%</td>
<td>5,0%</td>
<td>-3,8%</td>
<td>1,1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America (16)</td>
<td>1,6%</td>
<td>3,0%</td>
<td>0,6%</td>
<td>-4,8%</td>
<td>-2,2%</td>
<td>0,4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asia (14)</td>
<td>4,5%</td>
<td>-0,9%</td>
<td>2,4%</td>
<td>5,2%</td>
<td>-1,4%</td>
<td>-1,5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern Europe (3)</td>
<td>20,2%</td>
<td>4,8%</td>
<td>-0,9%</td>
<td>3,2%</td>
<td>1,4%</td>
<td>9,4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average relative change</td>
<td>2,5%</td>
<td>-0,6%</td>
<td>2,1%</td>
<td>1,4%</td>
<td>-2,4%</td>
<td>0,5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yearly planned change</td>
<td>2,4%</td>
<td>5,7%</td>
<td>3,6%</td>
<td>3,6%</td>
<td>4,7%</td>
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## We are on track!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy plans</th>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Result</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy plans</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos with improved financial management</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos with improved institutional relations</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>New grass-root groups</td>
<td>2.750</td>
<td>8.159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pos facilitating access to innovative agricultural techniques</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking &amp; insurance projects</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer field schools</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chain innovation projects</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer telecenters</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
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Technical assistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>missions</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer-to-Farmer</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agri-agencies’ personnel</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consultants</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events’ participants</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (students etc.)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>261</strong></td>
<td><strong>532</strong></td>
<td><strong>689</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

“Lessons learned and the way forward”

Les organisations de producteurs (OP) partenaires des agri-agences, ont été questionnées sur leurs pratiques de travail avec les agri-agences du réseau AgriCord, et sur leurs attentes pour améliorer cette coopération au travers de FFP.

Les points positifs :

- Les OP ont apprécié le fait que FFP se construise sur leur propre demande.
- Le travail sur le long terme est également un aspect positif du partenariat entre les agri-agences et les OP.
Les principaux points à améliorer portent sur :

- Le renforcement des capacités des OP qui doit aussi porter sur la qualité et l’efficacité des services aux membres.

- Renforcer la place des OP dans les filières, avec un effort sur la mise en place de services économiques.

L’approche Farmers Fighting Poverty phase II

Une condition pour accéder à FFP II : les partenaires OP du futur programme sont des OP ayant une base forte.

Un programme qui a pour caractéristique :

- Les projets sont ceux proposés par les OP (demand driven)

- Les échanges entre paysans du Nord et du Sud, et entre OP sont considérés comme un outil pertinent

- Le programme FFP gardera une grande flexibilité pour s’adapter à des crises et s’ajuster aux réalités des OP.
Les spécificités opérationnelles de Farmers Fighting Poverty

Ce programme est à destination des OP ayant un partenariat avec une agri-agence.

Chaque projet d’OP comporte :

• une composante de subvention directe à l’OP pour la mise en œuvre des activités
• Une composante de services d’appui-conseil mis en œuvre par l’AA partenaire

Ce programme dispose d’un dispositif de suivi-évaluation partagé par tous (OP et agri-agences) avec mise en commun des indicateurs de résultats et des “livrables”.

Agenda

Comments by representatives of farmers’ organisations in developing countries. Comments by farmers’ delegates of AgriCord. Discussion.

Farmers Fighting Poverty: where is the promised money?
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vRgyJ5ZrA4