



Evolution of farming systems for sustainable agriculture and rural development

Building on policies, strategies and tools

Ten years after the Rio Conference (1992), the level of achievement towards sustainable agriculture and rural development has been much lower than the expectations. Today, developing countries face urgent demands to increase food security, to reduce poverty and to preserve the natural resources and the environment. In certain regions, the situation will probably worsen if nothing is done to turn the tide.

Sustainable agriculture and rural development requires identifying adapted and efficient strategies, which are broadly accepted. While important institutional capacities are needed in order to implement them, the national and local administration and the concerned stakeholders are often unprepared.

Mobilizing financial resources as well as skills and appropriate tools, which are often lacking, is also essential for activating these policies. To address this situation, the purpose of the "Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development – Evolution of Farming Systems (SARD–FSE) Project" is to gather governmental and non-governmental actors to make a diagnosis of different farming systems and to work together to identify innovative policies and strategies.

Drawing upon FAO's long-term worldwide experience on farming systems and SARD, the project will contribute to the effective implementation of FAO's Strategic Framework and Medium-Term Plan, which includes: reducing food insecurity and rural poverty; creating sustainable increases in the supply and availability of agricultural, fishery and forest products; conserving and enhancing sustainable use of the natural resource base; and generating knowledge of food and agriculture, fisheries and forestry.



FAO photo/13221



UN/DPI/Eskinder Debebe

The **Johannesburg Declaration**, adopted at the **World Summit on Sustainable Development** in September 2002, fully recognizes that "... sustainable development requires a long-term perspective and broad-based participation in policy formulation, decision-making and implementation at all levels".

Identifying innovative policies, strategies and decision-support tools that promote and work for sustainable agriculture and rural development



Policies and strategies as outputs

The objective of the SARD–FSE Project is to enhance the capacity of governmental and non-governmental institutions to plan, implement and evaluate sustainable agriculture and rural development policies and strategies. The expected outputs of the project are:

- ▶ an analysis of the past evolution, present and future pathways of farming system developments, through case studies, to understand their driving forces and the various social and institutional constraints and obstacles for achieving SARD;
- ▶ relevant and flexible policy guidelines and institutional strategies;
- ▶ user-friendly and cost-effective decision-support tools for promoting and working towards SARD, adapted to the specific needs of each type of stakeholder and decision-maker.

A participatory, bottom-up and interdisciplinary approach

The stakeholders participating in the project's activities include:

- ▶ government agencies;
- ▶ civil society organizations such as non governmental organizations, community-based organization's and farmers' associations;
- ▶ private enterprise sector;
- ▶ agricultural research centers, other research, extension and educational institutions;
- ▶ external cooperation and donor agencies.

To ensure a broad participation and consultation, all stakeholders are involved in the case studies, from local and territorial to national levels, and in national and regional workshops.

The country case studies are being conducted by national, interinstitutional and interdisciplinary teams. They take into account the cultural, social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability.



FAO/18228/J. Villamora



FAO/10995/J. Van Acker

Current country case studies around the world



The maize/bean-based farming system in Honduras, Central America

This traditional food production system, which dates back to the pre-Columbian period, is pervasive throughout Central America. In Honduras, 80 percent of the land allocated to this system is found on sloping terrain. After decades of neglect as a result of the focus on export agriculture such as banana, coffee and sugar cane, the maize/bean system is increasingly receiving greater attention from national policy-makers as a strategy for poverty reduction and rural development. Two of the poorest departments, Lempira Sur and Santa Barbara, located in mountainous northwest Honduras, were selected as representative territories for the study.

The cereal/root crop-based farming system in Mali, West Africa

This farming system is most crucial for food security and poverty reduction in West Africa. The region of Sikasso in south Mali was selected as a representative territory for the study. Demographic growth, climatic hazards and new technologies have expanded and densified the agricultural areas. The introduction of cash crops has intensified land use, destroyed the ecosystems' balance (i.e. soil degradation, shrinking pastoral lands and forestry), and led to the decline of certain activities, the emergence of new market-oriented ones, and to social and cultural transformation. The national strategic plans for rural development have been established in accordance with the SARD global commitment.

A three-year action-oriented project

- ▶ Country case studies in selected countries, already being implemented in Honduras, Mali and the Philippines, culminating in the formulation of country proposals (April 2003 – April 2004).
- ▶ Cross-country analysis and systemization in FAO headquarters of the draft outputs and recommendations regarding proposed strategies, guidelines and decision-support tools (May – November 2004).
- ▶ Validation of proposed recommendations to assess, for each country, their relevance, flexibility, cost-effectiveness and user-friendliness (December 2004 – February 2005).
- ▶ Finalization and dissemination by FAO of project outputs and decision-support tool kits (April – August 2005).

Partners for mutual benefit

- ▶ Strengthened participation of numerous concerned actors coming from civil society and farmers' associations who contribute to the elaboration of recommendations and tools.
- ▶ Interaction between the grass-roots and national levels to devise elements of methodology for articulating their own interests, negotiating differences, analysing policy choices and, ultimately, decision-making.
- ▶ South – South partnership and networking among national teams of studied countries.
- ▶ Guidance, coordination and support from FAO headquarters through:
 - a Project Steering Committee representing FAO departments, donors and participating countries;
 - an FAO Interdepartmental Task Force;
 - synergy with other complementary FAO programmes including the Livelihood Support Programme, SARD Initiative (www.fao.org/wssd/sard), SARD in Mountain Regions, Roles of Agriculture Project (www.fao.org/es/esa/roa), Production Systems Priority Area for Interdisciplinary Action (www.fao.org/ag) and the Global Forum for Agricultural Research (www.egfar.org).



FAO/18884/G. Bizzarri



FAO/19280/R. Jones



The lowland rice-based farming system in the Philippines, Southeast Asia

This system feeds 860 million people in the world. It covers 44 percent of the area under rice cultivation in the Philippines, where Nueva Ecija in Central Luzon was selected as the representative territory for the study. To be self-sufficient in rice, the country's production would need to increase by about 80 percent by the year 2025. Efforts must focus on existing rice zones, which means that the potential contribution of rainfed areas will be crucial. The increase of productivity per unit area will have to be managed within broader development objectives of reducing poverty and ensuring environmental sustainability.



Donors

- ▶ Governments of France and Japan
- ▶ National participating institutions
- ▶ FAO departments

Case study partners

▶ Honduras, Central America

Programme for Sustainable Agriculture on Sloping Lands in Central America (PASOLAC), Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (SAG), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (SERNA), National Association for the Promotion of Ecological Agriculture (ANAFEA) and the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT).

▶ Mali, West Africa

Institute of Rural Economics (IER), Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Social Development and Solidarity, Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Infants and Family, Coordination of NGOs (CA-ONG), Association of Professional Peasant Organisations (AOPP), Permanent Assembly of Chambers of Agriculture of Mali (APCAM), Institut du Sahel/Inter-Country Committee to Combat Desertification in the Sahel (CILSS), International Cooperation Center of Agricultural Research for Development (CIRAD) and International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT).

▶ Philippines, Southeast Asia

Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), Department of Agriculture, Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Environmental and Natural Resources, Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD), University of the Philippines – Los Baños (UPLB), Southeast Asia Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) and the Central Luzon State University (CLSU).

For more information, please contact:

▶ SARD–FSE Project Team

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations,
Sustainable Development Department
Rural Institutions and Participation Service
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100, Rome, Italy
Tel.: (+39) 06 57056077; fax: (+39) 06 57053250
E-mail: marcelino.avila@fao.org or dominique.legros@fao.org

▶ Honduras National Team

PASOLAC, Col. Tapeyac, Calle Yoro, Casa No. 2301
Apartado postal 3202, Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Tel.: (+504) 2398831; fax: (+504) 2393505
E-mail: salinasjaimehn@yahoo.com (Mr Jaime Salinas); pasolac@sdnhon.org.hn

▶ Mali National Team

IER, Avenue Mohamed V, B.P. 258, Bamako, Mali
Tel.: (+223) 2222606; fax: (+223) 2223775
E-mail: alpha.kergna@ier.ml (Mr Alpha O.Kergna)

▶ Philippines National Team

ANGOC, 5-B Marilag St., U.P. Village, Diliman, Quezon City 1103, the Philippines
Tel: (+63 2) 4337653-54; fax: (+63 2) 9207434
E-mail: angoc@angoc.ngo.ph (Mr Antonio Quizon)



FAO/20218/L. Dematteis



FAO/21818/R. Grisolia



FAO/15859/R. Faidutti



www.fao.org

Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00100 Rome, Italy