

IYFF National Committees: the emergence of key stakeholders for the development of public policies in favor of family farming?

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National Committees for family farming were created in 52 countries in 2014. According to Auxtin Ortiz of the World Rural Forum, and Mahamadou Fayinkeh, of the National Committee in Gambia, these platforms offer opportunities for public

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Grain de sel: *What is a National Committee for family farming?*

Auxtin Ortiz (AO): It is a platform at national level gathering different stakeholders and working specifically on public policies in favour of family farming. In every National Committee (NC), there are farmers' groups and GOs working on rural areas and family farming. Most NC also gather research centres, universities or association related to research. In some NC, there are also representatives of international organisations, such as FAO or IFAD, and national public institutions like ministries, which is very positive I think.

GDS: *How many National Committees were created?*

AO: This is a very dynamic process: some Committees have been recently created like in Guinea Bissau, in Ghana or in Benin; a few (Switzerland, Uruguay) decided that they had finished their work. Last year we achieved a maximum of 52 NC. Today, there are more than 40 National Committees still working.

GDS: *How are these Committees created?*

AO: The first National Committee was created in Ecuador in July 2012. One day, we received an email here in the secretariat of the World Rural Forum from the national stakeholders in Ecuador. Some organisations in the network of the World Rural Forum (WRF) had decided to create a national platform to implement the International Year of Family Farming at national level. We thought that this was an excellent idea so we decided to spread the information all over the network of the WRF and we started to promote this idea in an active way. Other Committees were then created. For example in Costa Rica, a farmers' organisation heard about the Committee in Ecuador and decided to do the same. Then came Columbia, Senegal and so on. Most of the time the initiative to create a National Committee comes from a farmers' organisation. But there were countries where a ministry took the lead, for example in Brazil, in Uruguay or in the Philippines.

GDS: *Were some National Committees more successful than others to influence public policies? If so did you identify a reason for this success?*

AO: Some Committees were particularly successful in influencing public policies. For example in Gambia there are new laws on land and seeds that are quite positive. Burkina Faso and Nepal raised the budget in favour of family farming. In Colombia, a specific program for family farming was created, with a budget and a several measures. I could underline three key elements for this success, even if it also depends of the national context. In general terms, successful NC are democratic and inclusive: the objectives and the working plan are agreed collectively, as well as the leader of the Committee; and the NC includes all national stakeholders willing in an honest way to contribute in favour of family farming. Another important element is quite abstract but still very true: motivation. The most successful NC were those that gathered very committed institutions: it was the case in Gambia, in Nepal and in Costa Rica for example. Another important element is that the NC is led by a farmers' organisation. This is the case in many countries, but not all of them. For us it is an important element for success because they know best about their demands and needs.

GDS: *How are the NC organised at the regional and international level?*

AO: The main level of priority is the national level. Sometimes NC have common initiatives: the Committees of Ecuador and Columbia worked together for example. Here at the Secretariat of the WRF, we promote that NC are connected through different means and we promote regional meetings of NC. We organised for example a regional meeting of NC of Latin America and the Caribbean in November 2014. We want to repeat this experience in Asia, in Africa and in Europe. At the international level, there is also a body from the civil society, called the World Consultative Committee which works to establish the general guidelines of the IYFF+10 campaign.

Grain de sel: *How was the National Committee for Family Farming created in Gambia?*

Mahamadou Fayinkeh (MF): A national workshop on the role of family farming to feed the market in Gambia was organised in November 2013. It was attended by 24 institutions including farmers, researchers, civil society, the private sector (the marketing, processing, transformation and export industry), policy-makers, the media, University of The Gambia, the Non-Governmental Organization, donor-funded project and fisher-folk. These institutions decided to set the National Coordinating Committee (NCC), constituted of 18 Institutions, to organise the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) in Gambia.

GDS: *How does this Committee work?*

MF: The members of the NCC decided to set a working group and a focal point. The working group comprised two representatives from farmers' organizations, one representative from IFAD, one from the ministry of Agriculture and one from the private sector. The role of the focal point is to implement and monitor the activities, we all agreed on. It collects the data and information and reports to the NCC. It also negotiates programs related to family farming and

public policies with donors and the public sector. The working group is here to support the focal point. When we cannot gather all members of the NCC, the working group can still take important decisions, in the name of the NCC. Every three months, we have a planning meeting and an evaluation meeting. The focal point presents the activities and achievements over the past three months to the NCC. Nacofag (National Coordinating Organization for Farmers Association in The Gambia) is the focal point of the NCC. As the president of Nacofag, I was the National Coordinator of the NCC-IYFF in 2014.

GDS: *Did the creation of this Committee help you promote family farming in Gambia?*

MF: Yes. It helped us achieve important goals, especially concerning seeds and land. On the issue of seeds, the NCC was able to push the National Assembly to approve the Seed Act, which is in favour of family farming. This Act will establish a Seed Council within which farmers' organisations obtained 2 seats. The Seed Council will be responsible for everything related to seed issues. More specifically it will evaluate seed production and seed importation. You will need the approval of the Seed Council to sell seeds in Gambia. As you know, it is a big issue for us; this Act will enable to better protect seed producers.

In the context of the NCC, we started working with the support of IPAR (Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale) on the evaluation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests. This instrument can help us modify the policies related to land governance in Gambia and IPAR helps us advocate in that direction (Land use, ownership, and control). The process has enabled us to review the land policy in Gambia.

GDS: *Did the NCC decide to continue working after 2014?*

MF: Yes. We changed the name to Platform for Policy Dialogue and we broadened our objectives. The Platform for Policy Dialogue is here to discuss any issue related to policy and family farming and to implement activities and recommendations from the 2014 campaign.

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