



*World Day to Combat Desertification, June 17<sup>th</sup>*

## **Increasing investment in agriculture to turn dryland areas into economic ones**

**Paris, 16 June, 2006** – On the occasion of the World Day to Combat Desertification to be celebrated on June 17, worldwide farmers of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers highlight, in the following message, the essential role of farmers to combat desertification and their commitment to join efforts along with the international community and other relevant stakeholders to be more effective in this endeavour:

### **Message of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)**

Desertification and food security are intrinsically linked. Desertification is one of the causes of food insecurity, which then engenders social, economic and political tensions. Farmers are among the first victims of the phenomenon of desertification as natural resources such as fertile topsoil, organic matter, plant cover and healthy crops are the most severely affected by this plague.

Farmers are well aware of their important role in their daily fight against desertification and land degradation. They are developing improved farming practices to increase agricultural productivity while protecting ecosystems and contributing to land regeneration. However, these experiences are not well documented, and so it is difficult to know what measures and initiatives for either combating desertification or attenuating its effects are being used in the affected regions.

For IFAP, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is a unique sustainable development and poverty reduction instrument, which suffers from being inadequately developed. The lack of investment for implementing the Convention is mainly due to a lack of political will and commitment. IFAP calls on all countries party to the Convention, to place desertification and land degradation high in their development agenda and set up sound strategies to combat desertification in a sustainable way while involving relevant stakeholders including farmers and their organisations. Indeed, Farmers wish to be systematically involved in the UNCCD process. IFAP is pleased to note the positive reaction from the UNCCD Secretariat towards supporting a more structured partnership between farmers organizations and the UNCCD to identify common solutions in combating desertification and land degradation. Farmers are indeed part of the solution!

Desertification and land degradation are the result of climate change and human activities and have damaging consequences on the agricultural resource base and thus on agricultural productivity. Therefore combating desertification is a sustainable development issue as it contributes to the long term well-being of the populations in affected areas. And yet, there is a failure to associate the combat against desertification with economic development.

In a new policy statement, IFAP calls for increased investment in agriculture to turn dryland areas into economic ones through: investments in family farming and local food security which are the engines of economic growth; looking at all the assets of rural development; as well as development of people centered and rights based approaches to rural development.

*Note: The IFAP Policy Statement “The role of farmers in combating desertification and land degradation” can be read on the IFAP website at <http://www.ifap.org/en/about/37wfc2006.html>*

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*IFAP is the world farmers’ organisation representing over 600 million farm families grouped in 115 national organisations in 80 countries. It is a global network in which farmers from industrialised and developing countries exchange concerns and set common priorities. IFAP advocates farmers’ interests at the international level since 1946 and has General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.*

**Information:** Julie Emond, Communications Coordinator.

International Federation of Agricultural Producers, Paris, France.

Phone: +33 1 45 26 05 53 Fax: +33 1 48 74 72 12 E-mail: [Julie.emond@ifap.org](mailto:Julie.emond@ifap.org) Web Site: <http://www.ifap.org>