



## **Statement for World Food Day – 16 October 2012**

**The International Cooperative Agricultural Organization (ICAO) a sectoral organisation of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) and the World Farmers' Organisation, representing farmers' and agricultural cooperatives from around the world, are happy to join in celebrating the Food and Agriculture Organisation's World Food Day.**

Celebrated in more than 150 countries today, World Food Day reminds us of the importance of feeding every member of society, regardless of where he or she lives. Ensuring people have food on the table relies on the work of millions of farmers around the globe and their organisations.

It is particularly fitting that this year's theme for World Food Day focuses on agricultural cooperatives, both because we are about to conclude the UN's International Year of Cooperatives (IYC), and because agricultural cooperatives are key in helping the world's farmers to earn a decent living and to meet global food needs.

We are convinced that this year has succeeded in promoting renewed interest in the value of farmers' organisations, cooperatives, and other rural organizations. The result is to give them a greater voice in issues affecting their lives, to help them obtain their rightful share in the economy while also reducing real as well as potential risks to their livelihoods.

We believe that food production challenges each one of us in our own countries, in our own fields. Farmers in our own communities are working every day on our behalf. And it is through agricultural cooperatives and other farmers' organisations that farmers, especially smallholders - so critical in meeting their communities' food needs with safe, nutritious food - are able to develop the safeguards and receive the education and support that helps individuals, their families and their local communities.



ICAO and the World Farmers' Organisation believe that rural organizations enable farmers to realize economic benefits that they could not achieve on their own. They improve their bargaining power in the marketplace, reduce costs and increase benefits. Moreover, in developing countries, farmers' organizations and cooperatives play an important role in providing farmers, in particular smallholder farmers, a variety of services such as training in natural resource management as well as better access to information, technologies and innovation. In this context the cooperative system represents a fundamental tool for eradicating hunger and reducing poverty, being a catalyst for socially-inclusive development. They also represent a powerful means for supporting marginalized groups, such as youth and women.

Therefore, to better achieve their mission and to assure complete independence, rural organizations should be created and managed by farmers themselves based on their own needs. In order to achieve this, and given their positive role in a national economic and social context, national administrations should enact policies to encourage the creation of independent farmers' organizations and cooperatives.

On World Food Day, ICAO, ICA and the World Farmers' Organisation wish to express their strongest support to farmers in the process of establishing rural organizations, such as producer's organisations and cooperatives, confident that such a process would enable them to improve their position within the food supply chain and increase their competitive position in the markets.

To conclude, the wide range of agricultural cooperatives is a reflection of the strength of this movement in meeting the challenges of sustainable development and poverty alleviation.



Agricultural co-operatives are values-based businesses that are the essence of both “can do” and “must do.”

“Can do” in the sense that farmers who alone could not compete with their limited crop yields or limited capital together can help build a better and more secure world. “Must do” because it is agricultural cooperatives which reflect cooperatives values, helping not just the individual to earn a living but supporting the communities in which those cooperatives reside. Time and again the “can do” and the “must do” signal the best of what World Food Day wants from all of us: respecting the individuals and the groups that toil around the globe to provide our food. They also underscore that working in harmony with a sense of greater purpose enriches all of us.

ICAO promotes the cooperative movement among farmers and in rural communities helping smallholder farmers to obtain badly needed resources for their production, while also assisting them in getting better terms in their markets and in maintaining their businesses in a sustainable way.

ICA has members in over 100 countries. Co-operatives represent approximately one billion individuals worldwide.

The World Farmers’ Organisation is built by farmers for farmers and its mandate is to bring together national agricultural producer organizations and agricultural producer cooperatives organizations to create policies. It also advocates on behalf of farmers all over the world in order to improve the economic environment and livelihood of producers, their families and rural communities.