

Family Farming in India

The Asia-Pacific region holds 60 percent of the world's population and 70 percent of its family farmers. Small-scale food producers, farmers, forest producers, fishers and herders produce 80 percent of the region's food. Family farmers ensure the future of Asia and are at the heart of food security and sustainable food systems.

The United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDF 2019-2028) aims at unleashing the potential of family farmers as key agents of change to transform food systems world-wide. Within this framework, the ComDev Asia communication initiative implements a regional campaign to raise awareness on the UNDF and promote improved communication capacities and services for family farming in Asia.

KEY FIGURES

Out of over 500 million small farmers in the world, India accounts for 126 million small and marginal farmers (31 percent of world) having less than 2 hectare of land holding size.

Both men and increasingly more women are engaged in family farming and produce 70 percent of food. Family farming also generates income for hundreds of millions of rural people.

The diversification of their existing farming systems helps in the reduction of malnutrition in the country. Its family farming strategies are also a source of livelihood and employment to families and are associated with major ecological and socio-economic benefits. In India, the contribution of small and marginal farmers to total farm output exceeds 50 percent, while they cultivate 47 percent of land.



UNDF in Action

The UNDF Global Action Plan has identified seven pillars to strengthen family farms by addressing their challenges. India is currently progressing towards the elaboration of a National Action Plan.

In India, the National action plan to achieve the seven pillars include right to land ownership for women and tenant farming households. This has also been re-iterated in the paper submitted by the Government of India at the United Nations Food System Summit. It also includes credit access under enabling policy environment to strengthen family farming. This will result in integrated development of family farms and improved quality of life.

Youth needs to be attracted through tailored innovations to the future of food systems and to farming for which agriculture in India needs to be more remunerative. Development and promotion of women-based ergonomic small farm equipment can also promote gender empowerment among family farms.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh pillars are being addressed through development of climate resilient villages, integrated farming systems, and social welfare schemes.

A well-organized institution of Government of India including Agricultural Technology Application Research Institutions, Farm Science Centres and other institutions and Ministries are involved in achieving and contributing for development of family farms in India.

Future policies need to focus on extending access to land and credit especially for women and community driven innovations to make family farms more sustainable and contribute to the UNDF action plan.



Contribution to sustainable food systems

In the paper submitted by the Government of India during the United Nations Food System Summit there is a specific reference to a government programme “under [the] National Rural Livelihood Mission [where] rural women are supported to start nutri-garden, kitchen garden and backyard poultry and livestock rearing for improving livelihood and nutrition of family.” This programme is called the Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP), which translates as a Programme to Empower Women Farmers. One of the themes under this programme is Sustainable Agriculture and the other is Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP).

The core focus under the Sustainable Agriculture theme in MKSP is the promotion of localised agriculture input production, risk mitigation and productivity enhancement to ensure improved food security and income of the family. The objectives of this theme are:

- Create sustainable livelihood opportunities for women in agriculture
- Ensure food and nutrition security at the household and the community level
- Improve the skills and capabilities of women in agriculture to support farm-based activities
- Enhance the managerial capacities of women in agriculture for better management of biodiversity

Useful links

[Multi-state Cooperatives Act 2002](#)

[National Policy on Cooperatives](#)

[National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture](#)

[National Agroforestry Policy 2014](#)

[Agriculture Contingency Plan](#)

[National Initiative for Climate Resilient Agriculture](#)

[Food System Summit National Dialogue - Advance Equitable Livelihoods](#)

[Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana](#)

[UNDF 2019-2028, Regional Action Plan to implement the UNDF and achieve the SDGs in South Asia](#)



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India - a family farming story

The Barabanki District of Uttar Pradesh prides itself on having many women farmers. They cultivate diverse crops including wheat, mustard, fenugreek, vegetables, among others. With the land being fertile, they earn reasonably well but because of following traditional farming practices, they are disadvantaged in terms of quality and quantity of produce, and hence, are unable to develop their farm as an enterprise. Lucknow Mahila Sewa Trust regularly provides capacity building training, awareness sessions and exposure visits to the women farmers who are part of the National Farmers Forum. In line with this, 60 farmers from Uttar Pradesh were provided with training on SRI (System of Rice Intensification) Technique.

SRI is a low-water, labor-intensive method that uses younger seedlings singly spaced and typically hand weeded with special tools. This technique aims to increase the yield of rice and efficient utilization of scarce resource to enable crop productivity. Lucknow Mahila Sewa Trust aims at gradually turning the farmers towards deploying new farming techniques and organic farming practices, multiply their yield, maintain the nutrients in the soil, enhance the produce quality, and use this as a pilot to cascade this technique to other farmers through training programs.

The benefits of practicing good agriculture practices include increased yield (20-200 percent), improved resistance to environmental stresses, increased carbon sink activity while reducing emissions making it a triple win situation for agriculture, climate security, and food security.