

**Launch of 2014 International Year of Family Farming  
High Level Panel on Family Farming  
Friday, 22 November 2013, 3pm – 5pm  
UN Headquarters, New York**

Mr. Chairperson, H. E. Jim MacLay

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to join you today to speak on behalf of H.E. John W. Ashe, President of the General Assembly on the occasion of the launch of the International Year of Family Farming.

At its 66<sup>th</sup> session, the General Assembly formally declared “2014 the International Year of Family Farming” (IYFF), recognizing the important contribution of family farming and smallholder farming to the eradication of poverty and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals.

Following the Rio+20 Conference, the international community has embarked on a transformative exercise to define a new development paradigm that integrates the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. While we discuss the parameters of this new agenda within the confines of our conference rooms in New York, nobody knows better than family farmers that the well-being of our planet is inextricably linked with the well-being of its inhabitants.

As producers of about 70% of the food in developing countries, family farmers are essential actors in our global fight against hunger and malnutrition. They sustain local economies by generating income and creating jobs. They manage and conserve natural resources and they safeguard our biodiversity through the

cultivation and preservation of traditional crops. In other words, family farmers can be our champions in our collective efforts to build a more sustainable world.

Yet, despite their crucial place in this world, many small farmers live in dire poverty and struggle daily to ensure their subsistence. If family farming is to be part of the solution in our fight to eradicate hunger and poverty, we need policies and frameworks to effectively support smallholders. This means encouraging innovation and boosting productivity on family farms through access to training, technology and credit. For example, simple initiatives such as allowing farmers in remote areas to receive the latest weather forecast on their mobile phones can significantly increase their yields. Or harnessing the power of solar energy for water pumping or drip irrigation can have a similar effect. Training programmes in areas such as crop storage, price negotiation and the use of technology are also proven methods to improve the lives and well-being of small farmers.

Looking into such solutions, public-private partnerships can play a key role, providing innovative sources of financing, while South-South cooperation can be an effective platform for sharing best practices and lessons learned.

However, increasing production levels won't be enough if products do not find their way to consumers through improved access to markets. In addition, we need to build better resilience to food price volatility and extreme weather shocks, which as we know all too well are growing in number and severity.

Against a backdrop of the global population set to reach 9 billion, incomes continuing to rise, environmental degradation and the increasing impacts of climate change, we need to see how we can incorporate the needs of family farming into agricultural, environmental and social policies conducive to sustainable family farming.

This includes ensuring that family farmers, women and youth in particular, have better access to and control over natural resources. If women had access to the same assets and productive resources as men, they could increase their yields by 20 to 30%, ensuring food security for an additional 100 to 150 million people.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The International Year of Family Farming provides a unique opportunity to explore ways to develop prosperous and sustainable family agriculture, while raising awareness about the contributions, needs and constraints of family farmers. I strongly encourage Member States to actively engage within their respective national development programmes in support of this important initiative.

And as we begin setting the stage for the post 2015 development agenda, let us bear in mind the small farmers, artisan fishers, pastoralists and others who are contributing to our food supply and the biodiversity of our planet. Let us see how we can empower them to work together to end poverty and hunger, while developing sustainable food supplies.

For family farming is much more than an agrarian economic model: it is the nuclear unit for the management of our environment and its biodiversity; it is a source of traditional culture and knowledge; and it is a fundamental pillar of the sustainable development of all nations.

Thank you