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FAMILY FARMING
The beginning of a renaissance
**1 | COLLECTIVE CHALLENGES**

- **ANALYSIS: SHAPING FAMILY FARMING FOR THE FUTURE**
- **Interview: “Farming the family way”, by Dyborn Chibonga, chief executive officer of the National Smallholder Farmers’ Association of Malawi (NASFAM)**
- **Field report from Germany: Keeping pace with change**
- **Interview: “Diversified and multifaceted family farming”, by Jean-Michel Sourisseau, socioeconomist at the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD)**

**2 | CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS**

- **ANALYSIS: BUILDING BLOCKS FOR IMPROVED PRODUCTION**
- **Field report from Côte d’Ivoire: Cashew, a cornerstone of the family economy**
- **Interview: “Cooperatives – strength in unity”, by Elizabeth Atangana, president of the Subregional Platform of Peasant Organisations of Central Africa (PROPAC)**
- **Field report from Uganda: Productive combination – ICTs and hands-on training**

**3 | PROFITABLE INTEGRATION**

- **ANALYSIS: A VITAL LINK IN THE CHAIN**
- **Field report from Samoa: From farm to table**
- **Interview: “Taking a profitable approach”, by Haron Wachira, managing director of Akili Holdings**
- **Field report from Kenya: The power of collective action**

**4 | INCENTIVE POLICIES**

- **ANALYSIS: THE ROLE OF THE STATE**
- **Case study: Innovative policies in practice**
- **Interview: “A holistic approach to family farming”, by José Graziano da Silva, director-general of FAO**
- **CTA’s focus on family farming**

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**SPORE** is the bi-monthly magazine of the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA). CTA operates under the Cotonou Agreement between the countries of the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group and the European Union and is financed by the EU. The United Nations has designated 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) to draw global attention to the significant role family farming plays in ensuring food security, fighting poverty and hunger, and enhancing sustainable natural resource management. The IYFF is helping to mobilise partnerships among different stakeholders – farmers’ associations, NGOs, governments, international agencies and agribusinesses – to put in place conducive policies and boost investments to support family farming. CTA is joining forces with regional farmers’ organisations and other partners to support the IYFF through a variety of activities, including this special issue of SPORE. Our work on policies, inclusive value chains, ICTs and knowledge management is focused on helping family farmers become profitable and prosperous, which is why we attach a special significance to the IYFF.

Michael Hailu
Director – CTA
Family farming, rather than being a problem, offers solutions to global challenges. But the vital role that these farms play needs to be recognised and most still have to emerge from poverty.
In 2014 - the International Year of Family Farming - NGOs, researchers, donors, governments and international organisations are focused on family farming. This involves rich and poor families in developed and developing countries, overseeing large-scale high-tech farms or microplots, managed by agricultural engineers or farmers with varying levels of education and literacy. This farming category has been considered of secondary importance for a very long time, and many experts have even recommended that family farms be pushed aside to pave the way for modern, production-oriented, capitalist agribusinesses.

The narrative of the long-expected death of family farming prevailed until awareness was heightened on the quantitative and qualitative importance of these farmers, their importance in food production and especially their intrinsic sustainability. Family farming is above all a ‘lifestyle’, says Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, rural sociology professor at Wageningen University in the Netherlands. A lifestyle that currently accounts for an impressive 70% of the global food supply. It is also a major source of rural employment, curbing potential outmigration to urban centres. In many cases, family farmers are not primarily concerned about preserving the environment, as they are too busy striving to feed their families on a daily basis. However, these farmers work in harmony with their environment because of their intimate knowledge of the habitat and survival instinct.

Family farmers continue to be associated with poverty, and for good reason, since 70% of the poorest in the world are family farmers or herders, and 95% of family farms are under 5 ha. These farmers often live with scant financial resources and little access to credit, while still hoping to enhance their living conditions. They often have little influence in decision-making processes, although advances in this direction have been achieved in recent years.

The image of family farming must therefore be rebuilt. Five percent of family farmers are rich, modern, productive and generally based in developed countries. Their high living conditions highlight that the model can be viable and it offers a real alternative to entrepreneurial agriculture.

“In the African setting, and thus for NEPAD, it is essential to reconstruct the family farming concept to supersede the competing and often connoted concepts that are generally used: small-scale farming, subsistence farming, peasant farming, etc.,” says
Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, chief executive officer of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD).

**Family farming ‘qualities’**

But what is meant by family farming? How can this type of farming - which encompasses such a wide range of realities, whether in developed or developing countries - be defined? Probably by considering that it is a *bona fide* ‘lifestyle’ rather than just another type of farming. Instead of trying to define the concept, van der Ploeg lists some 10 ‘qualities’ that characterise family farming. These qualities also make it possible to plot the future.

The family is the key to the success of family farming. The family controls, without necessarily possessing, the main means of production - land, livestock, equipment and labour. This control also concerns know-how, especially with respect to local biodiversity and water conservation. The family may also be a member of a cooperative and have access to a network of influential people or decision-makers.

The family provides the bulk of the workforce but may also depend on temporary paid or unpaid labour, as illustrated by rotating collective exchanges between families to help with harvests.

Another ‘quality’ concerns the balance between the farm and the family. As the farm generates the bulk of the income and food for the family, the key is to strike a balance between the number of mouths to feed and the number of hands to work. This rings true with those in favour of short supply chains and local products.

Importantly, family farms are not just production units, but are living environments, generally with history and traditions. Their experience is cumulative. Finally, they are also an integral part of the landscape and thus have a role in biodiversity conservation, while being a part of a broader rural economy, with cultural codes and attachment to traditional local products.

However, as van der Ploeg points out, these qualities are seldom all found at the same time on one farm. This explains the plurality of family farming, which cannot simply be summed up by two criteria - property and family work.

**Proud to be a farmer**

These features highlight the importance of family farming in society and its future. Family farmers’ voices should thus be taken into account by policymakers and others at local, national and international decision-making levels. For this, farmers have to own and be proud of their work, which must be viewed as a real profession that is legally and socially recognised. Farmers should know and control their environment like specialists and promote this expertise via organisations set up with other family farmers. This recognition must apply to all members of the family unit, especially women and children, in order to optimise their work, role and innovation capacity.

This is what many organisations, such as the International Agriculture and Rural Training Network (FAR), are striving to achieve with young farmers. FAR encourages young farmers to not only focus on changing their farming techniques in order to boost their technical and economic performances, but to also be involved in and develop networks with different farmers, traders and other intermediaries, or with political representatives, says Pierre Blaise Ango, president of the FAR Network. “They must be trained on managing these linkages,” he says. “We have begun to set up multimedia centres in our training centres because our training courses are methodological tools designed to help young people think about their systems. In this way, whenever a problem arises, they will no longer have to seek help at the centres. This generates economic operators who can modify their farms according to current climatic, political and economic patterns.
They thus become real counterparts rather than just farmers who can be manipulated with gifts of inputs and other items.”

A lack of alternatives
Family farming, in most cases, involves poor farmers hampered by prices that are too low to be remunerative and too volatile to consider potential investments. Climatic variations, diseases and pests, vulnerability in interactions with commercial operators, difficulty in entering remunerative value chains and markets and in freely choosing and appropriating suitable technologies are daily challenges. These are crucial, since farmers’ only financial resources are often solely derived from sales of their products. Having no access to credit, they are not equipped to take risks even though agricultural production is by nature a risk-taking activity. Farmers seldom benefit from supportive, targeted and strategic public policies, except in specific sectors - often export trade. Family farming support policies are still too often hollow and mantra-like.

This situation is especially alarming since poor family farmers in ACP countries currently have few alternatives. From the 19th century until the 1950s, their counterparts in developed countries could always move from rural areas to look for work in the cities.

Family farmers utilise a significant proportion of global arable land

- North and Central America: 83%
- South America: 18%
- Europe: 68%
- Africa: 62%

Source: FAO, 2014
The industrial revolution created a situation that combined high demand for unskilled labour while providing an outlet for its products. The post-Second World War Marshall Plan in Europe greatly contributed to this situation. “There really was a match between farmers’ aspirations and a national and even international vision of society,” says François Affholder, researcher at the French agricultural research centre, CIRAD, who recalls that there was even talk of ‘food weapons’ during the Cold War. This highlights the extent to which politics was involved in agriculture, which was still overwhelmingly a family farming affair.

“In meetings with farmers 50 years ago, it was clearly understood that farmers should leave their farms since these estates could not be divided up equally between heirs,” explains Affholder. “It was therefore necessary to ensure that those who left did not lose out in compensation, quality of life, or security, but that those who remained on the farm would benefit from genuine public policy support, guaranteeing them a decent income while being prepared to negotiate the terms of interactions between the agricultural activity and the rest of the goods and services in society.”

This connection between agricultural and industrial development no longer exists in Africa, Latin America or Asia, apart from large emerging countries such as Argentina, Brazil and China. Although industrial development is still a major challenge - as highlighted by the 2007-2008 crisis - the priority issues include achieving food security for everyone while focusing on preserving the environment to safeguard future production. This was further stressed in the Evenstad Declaration put forward at the end of the Annual General Assembly of European Coordination by Via Campesina in March 2014: “Politicians have begun to recognise the need to preserve all forms of agriculture - and not just the industrial model - to ensure global food security.”

Tomorrow’s agriculture must be oriented towards family farming.

Bénédicte Châtel
How would you define family farming?

Family farming refers to the collective effort by families working together on a farm in order to sustain themselves through food production, for consumption and income. This concept is strong in rural settings where families - guided by family values such as trust, commitment, love, persistence and determination - work together in order to fend for themselves. These farming families often have no other major sources of income or food apart from farming.

What does the future hold for family farming?

Unless drastic action is taken, the future of family farming seems uncertain. Climate change is a serious threat. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2014 report, climate change will contribute to around a 25% yield reduction of maize, wheat and other crops by 2050. Rapid population growth is also putting pressure on productive resources, especially land, which will make it more difficult for farming families to access sufficient land for farming. Vast land acquisitions by foreign investors will also limit smallholders’ access to land. The high costs of production (in particular of inorganic fertilisers), and low promotion and adoption of organic technologies, are other challenges. HIV and AIDS have also devastated farming families. They have destroyed the cohesion and togetherness of families, weakened cultural trust and goodwill, killed family members, and left others stigmatised, discriminated against and ostracised from their own community.

Are there opportunities for family farmers in Africa?

Despite the challenges, there is hope because some families have embraced farming as a business, and are approaching farming in a planned and organised way. For example, farmers who are members of NASFAM are realising the importance of value addition, and they are coming together to invest in value chains of different crops and livestock products. Good examples include chillies in Mulanje, sunflower oil in Mzimba, Kilombero rice in Karonga, and livestock feed in Lilongwe South. Furthermore, many farmers have embraced crop and food diversification in order to adapt to climate change.

How can family farmers become more involved in modern value chains?

Local and regional organisations have a role to play in supporting farmers. Firstly, local organisations like NASFAM can help mobilise and empower family farms to work in organised groups and can provide necessary financial and technical support to help farmers achieve economies of scale. It is also easier to provide other appropriate services if farmers work in organised groups. For example, through clubs and associations, NASFAM has been able to provide family farmers with extension, and training in governance and institutional development. NASFAM is now supporting farmer groups to invest and manage innovation and productivity centres where farmers are investing in agro-processing and other forms of value addition.

The Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions and the Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network are regional organisations that work closely with family farming organisations in Southern Africa, including NASFAM. These organisations provide technical support in the form of scientific research analysis, and interpretation of research findings and their implications for farming families. As regional organisations, they are also actively involved in high-level advocacy and lobbying and resource mobilisation at regional and continental levels.

What other types of support are required to make family farming more profitable?

Farmers need to be supported with high quality and market-oriented extension services, and access to technologies like improved seeds and sustainable inputs that would help them produce efficiently and effectively. In addition, they also need support in ways of adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Charles Mkoka
For many farming families, sending a son or daughter to university is a good way to ensure that they take a different career path. But an agricultural sector as developed as Europe’s does not have to mean that family farms will fall by the wayside – but they do need to work hard to keep pace. “Formal training can be an extremely useful tool,” says dairy farmer Matthias Daun, who earned a degree in agricultural sciences at the University of Bonn, Germany before returning to his family’s 180 ha farm.

“What was clear to me from the beginning was the constant need to keep up with the trends in the sector and closely follow developments by actually investing in newly developed technologies. Agriculture, like any other business sector, is a competitive area and young farmers are very well aware of the fact that they need to be on top of developments.”

Daun, together with his parents, keeps around 180 dairy cows on their farm in the western grasslands of Germany.

Farming for the future

When not tending to his cows, Daun is also vice-president of the European Council of Young Farmers (CEJA). Across the EU, he has seen his generation of family farmers embrace higher levels of technology and more demanding markets. “As young farmers become better educated and more able to make use of technology and communication tools, it becomes clear that they are best placed to not only provide food for the generations to come, but that they will do so more efficiently and in a more sustainable way,” Daun contends.

Farming in the EU shares few similarities with farming in developing countries. However, the most significant challenge facing family farms is the same: young people are looking elsewhere for careers. Daun sees three reasons behind this: “First, farming is a business which still pays less than most sectors of the economy, with low returns on high investments in the first years of production. Second is societal pressure; farming is frowned upon, not only by young farmers’ peers, but often by their parents too – even if they are farmers themselves. The third reason is entry barriers such as access to land and credit.”

These problems are far from restricted to Germany; they are causing a demographic crisis in agriculture across Europe. Only 7% of European farmers today are under the age of 35, compared to one-third over the age of 65.

“We need to focus our efforts on incentivising the agricultural industry for young people. We need to break down barriers that stand in their way,” states Daun. This is the aim of CEJA, which unites young farmers around Europe. Since farmers – including Daun – often need to stay close to home, much of this has happened online. CEJA has worked with internet training courses to help more young people become farmers, including the project ‘Mentoring Women in Entrepreneurship’.

“We believe young people who have grown up in family farming must be supported, in order to be able to stay in rural areas and continue to work on their farms. At the same time, public policy should focus on facilitating the entrance of new blood into the sector, whether this comes from urban or rural areas.”

For farmers in developing countries, European agriculture represents a technologically advanced ideal to aspire to. However, Daun knows that the survival of family farms in Europe, and elsewhere, depends on something more basic: farmers coming together to stand up for themselves. “Cooperation between farmers at the local, national and regional level is crucial, especially in light of the global economy,” he says. “Young farmers understand this more than anyone else.”

T Paul Cox
Family farming is highly diversified and multifaceted. By proclaiming 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming, isn’t there a risk that any proposal put forward will be global in scope but not very relevant locally?

Agriculture is predominantly a family affair in terms of employment and there is little chance of sweeping standardisation. The latter could come about through the modernisation and industrialisation of agricultural processes, land concentration, increased farming areas, decreased crop diversity, and standardisation of downstream processes. But this process could destroy family farming. The diversity of family farming, and the broad range of ways that farms are run, will have to be respected in order to preserve this form of agricultural production.

Changes in farming structures should not simply be viewed in linear terms. Today’s concentration of modernised farming structures and forms in Europe only dates as far back as the industrial revolution, often only after the Second World War. This is a fairly short period of time relative to the overall history of world agriculture, and the future still looks bright for the highly diversified forms of family farming.

This is especially true since, according to research conducted under the World Bank’s RuralStruc programme, 330 million young people should enter the workforce in sub-Saharan Africa by 2025, most of them from rural areas. Would a conventional production-oriented agricultural policy be feasible to address this employment challenge on a macroeconomic level? Probably not. Although the percentage of farmers in the workforce in France plunged from 50% to 2% within just a few decades, is it currently conceivable that only 2% of the workforce in sub-Saharan Africa, or even globally, will be involved in farming?

But family farming is affected by global phenomena such as the increased use of ICTs, urbanisation and the ageing farmer population.

Family farming is affected by all of these global phenomena but their impacts vary. For instance, Africa is becoming urbanised, but that doesn’t mean that people are deserting rural areas, as has occurred elsewhere, because the rural population will also inevitably grow over the next 20 to 40 years simply due to demographics. Moreover, it’s believed that modernisation necessarily favours the concentration of farming structures, but that is not true in West Africa or India where fragmentation of these structures has been noted. The average farm size in Brazil has stagnated, while in countries like the US both large and very small farms are increasing in number. Globally, only 2% of all farms are motorised and operate under Green Revolution principles. So even if we wanted to offer consistent comprehensive solutions – which I’m not sure is possible – there are still diversity and productivity differences and this situation is unlikely to change.

Is the performance of family farming dependent on the type of family structure? How do changes in the status of women and children affect this structure?

It is often deemed that family farming is good for everyone, but let’s be more objective. Most family farming structures are often highly patriarchal and hence not conducive to the emancipation of women, with production decision-making and resources generally concentrated around the farm head – often a man. However, under a single authority, it is actually the flexible use of this readily available and often underpaid family labour force that partly accounts for the efficiency of family farming.

As the legitimate demand for the individual emancipation of young people and women on farms increases, social relationships within farming families are being recast, but without the family structure being called into question. The idea is to preserve the strength of the family organisation, the approach to work and heritage, while striving to rebalance social relationships within the family.

Bénédicte Châtel
Building blocks for improved production

Family farms in ACP countries can produce more, and differently. Better trained and informed men and women, effective use of local skills and know-how, a favourable environment and tailored policies are conditions that help family farmers deal with the many challenges they currently face – including climate change, soaring population growth, and urbanisation.
Industrial agriculture prevails in developed countries and has long been the only model for development, yet nearly 98% of the 500 million farmers worldwide are family farmers. Now we better understand why the excesses and risks associated with industrial agriculture - productive but heavily reliant on inputs, harmful to the environment and tightly linked with volatile global markets - have been highlighted and discussed to such a great extent in recent years. This has led to the rediscovery of the multiple positive features of family farming. In ACP countries, in a setting of rampant urbanisation and climate change, family farms are helping maintain the often fragile social, economic and environmental balance. Nevertheless, specific conditions are required for them to thrive, as was the case in Europe.

**Trained and organised farmers**

Family farming currently sustains 2.6 billion people and provides employment for 40% of the global workforce. But this population - a good half of which are women along with a high proportion of youth - is poorly trained and has scant access to training. ICTs have revolutionised capacity building and skills of smallholders in ACP countries. Mobile phones now enable farmers in remote areas to communicate with the outside world. In Uganda, an innovative collaborative initiative between the state and the Grameen Foundation provides top quality extension services to remote communities via mobile phones (see p 18 *Productive combination - ICTs and hands-on training*). Women shea butter producers in Burkina Faso now have mobile phone access to information and training regarding their rights, market prices and marketing conditions, thus enabling them to sell better quality products more profitably. In Haiti, the Roots and Tubers project - coordinated by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, Haiti’s Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Rural Development, and the Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute - focuses on the entire potato, cassava, yam and taro (*Colocassia esculenta*) production chain and

**Mali: access to credit is now a reality**

With the support of the international NGO SOS Faim, a fund to support rural initiatives (FAIR) was launched in 2009 by a farmers’ organisation in the Office du Niger region (SEXAGON) and the microfinance institution Kafo Jiginew. The aim was to give smallholders in the rice-growing area in central Mali access to financial services tailored to their needs. In 5 years, 6,200 loans were granted to enable farmers to purchase seeds, fertilisers, cattle or cultivators. “FAIR is successful because the loan interest rates are lower than those practiced by Malian banks and the guarantees are adapted to farmers’ income and production,” says David Dao, managing director of Kafo Jiginew, while adding, “the presence of over 300 sales representatives trained to address smallholders’ needs has created a relationship of mutual trust with local farmers.”

Soumaila Diarra
promotes the consumption of these products while helping processing units enhance the presentation and quality of processed products.

Knowledge sharing and dialogue at local, regional and international levels by farmers’ organisations is well under way. Farmers’ organisations in ACP countries now share their experiences, successes and failures globally. Their arguments in favour of family farming are better formulated and more heeded by governments. In Africa, the Sub-Regional Platform of Farmers’ Organisations in Central Africa, the East Africa Farmers Federation and the Network of Farmers’ and Agricultural Producers’ Organisations of West Africa have issued a clear message geared towards mobilising their members and the international community: “Innovative family farming, when supported by appropriate research, favourable investment and sufficient protection, can outperform industrial production. This is the basis of food sovereignty of African communities, countries and subregions.” Farmers’ organisations have developed financial and other services that are increasingly essential for family farms. In Mali, Kafo Jiginew (a microfinance institution) and SEXAGON (rice farmers’ union of the Office du Niger) have developed a strategy to provide financial services for smallholders. In Ethiopia, the Oromia Coffee Farmers’ Cooperative Union founded its own bank, which provides loans to coffee growers.

Building on the ‘local’

Over the generations, family farmers have been gradually selecting local seeds that are adapted to local environmental conditions. These seeds are now back at the forefront after having been abandoned in favour of other seeds that supposedly give higher productivity. These farmer-selected seeds often have low water requirements, are resistant to local climatic conditions and pests, and can be obtained at low cost, hence ensuring food security. In Niger, traditional millet varieties have shown high resilience to climate variations. In Mali, an association of professional farmers’ organisations (AOPP) set up seed cooperatives through a network of experimenting farmers, which sell certified seeds adapted to local conditions.

Improving the added value of local products is also essential. Ziama Macenta coffee, Oku white honey, Penja pepper and Jamaican Blue Mountain coffee are a few of the high quality origin-linked products (protected by geographical indications) that have been developed in recent years in Africa and the Caribbean. They are supported by a number of regional organisations (African Regional Intellectual Property Organization, Caribbean Community and Common Market) and technical and financial partners (French Agency for Development, CIRAD, CTA, EU, FAO, World Intellectual Property Organization). Such strategies theoretically enable farmers to sell their products at better prices while benefitting from legal protection. Although the organisational costs and certification fees (for obtaining certificates, monitoring and quality control, associated costs) can be substantial, these approaches promote local family farming dynamics, enhance know-how and, in some cases, provide access to new markets.

Disseminating family farmers’ innovations in other countries or regions is a further step towards promoting family farming. For instance, in Trinidad and Tobago, the Ramsaroop family is recognised...
for its innovation capacity. A small farm which initially had soils depleted by decades of intensive sugarcane production, is now thriving thanks to the inventiveness of the father, Chemraj, and the perseverance of Sita the mother. While Chemraj invented inexpensive farm machinery with recycled material to make up for the shortage of labour, Sita managed the finances and administration of the family farm which skilfully produces root crops and other vegetables. The family has developed a popular technical package that is disseminated throughout the island. Otherwise, in the Dominican Republic, family beekeepers successfully - and with considerable inventiveness - participated in a project coordinated by the Centre for Agriculture and Forestry Development aimed at reviving the honey production sector which has been devastated by parasitic Varroa mite attacks in traditional apiaries.

Family farmers can effectively cope with climate change by combining crop and livestock farming, while adopting farming techniques such as agroforestry practices associated with conservation agriculture. Their strength lies in their high adaptation capacity, labour availability and knowledge of their land. Planting trees in a cultivated field is beneficial in many ways (less evaporation, shade, fodder for livestock, etc.) (see Spore 170 Evergreen Agriculture: rethinking modern farming).

Improving access to funding and safeguarding land

Family farmers often have no access to funding, so this factor is a major lever for the development of this sector. ICTs have facilitated access to remote areas in ACP countries. In Kenya, Equity Bank offers banking facilities in rural villages via ‘mobile agencies’ installed on utility vehicles. Governments also strive to boost family farmers’ access to funding. As early as 2005, the Tanzanian government brought in a law imposing storehouse certificates (warrantage) whereby small-scale coffee and cotton farmers deposit their harvested crops in a storehouse in exchange for a loan that is equivalent to 70% of the market value of their products. Once the sale is made, the bank recovers the loan capital plus interest and pays the remaining amount to the farmer or the cooperative.

Securing family farmers’ access to land is another
Pressure on land is rising sharply (population growth, urbanisation, land grabs), leading to outmigration of local communities, food security and often deforestation. Land laws must protect the most vulnerable small-scale farmers, especially women and young people. This is a major challenge in many ACP countries where patriarchy prevails. When states pass legislation, they are usually faced with heavy resistance. The Land Research and Action Group in Burkina Faso helps women gain recognition of their rights, which are enshrined in the rural land law adopted in 2009 (specifically recognising women’s rural land rights, equivalent to those that apply to men), but which are seldom recognised in the field. Through a participatory mapping system, based on community involvement and participatory geographic information systems, vulnerable remotely located communities on Tuvalu and Vanuatu islands were able to gain awareness regarding their rights and territories, which they are now better equipped to defend.

National policies favourable for family farmers are thus essential. States should ensure access to land and funding while being committed to providing financial support for agriculture. According to the agricultural economist and CIRAD researcher Jean-Michel Sourisseau, these conditions are important but not adequate. “The Maputo Protocol (whereby, in 2003, African Union states pledged to spend 10% of their GDP for agriculture) goes in the right direction, but it is insufficient. Comprehensive development, including transportation, education, health and access to ICTs, is also required. This is essential and goes far beyond ‘rural development’. But more importantly, rapid growth of family farming cannot take place without protecting farmers against competition from industrial agriculture.”

Family farming has an incredible potential to meet the many challenges facing rural people in ACP countries - providing real solutions in terms of food security, contributing to the sustainable preservation of biodiversity and the environment, and participating in social welfare by serving as providers of decent employment for the entire population. Family farming can be a viable and reliable alternative on condition that they are supported.

Anne Perrin
Cashew, a cornerstone of the family economy

Cashew cropping and processing work is mostly well distributed between members of the same family and is an activity that is divided between the farm and the factory.

Seventy-one year old Yao Adjoua, who lives in Bamoro, alongside the Bouaké–Katiola road in central Côte d’Ivoire, has been producing cashews for over a decade. She says she works in close collaboration with her husband Kanga Yao, also a cashew producer. Despite her advanced age, Adjoua claims she is involved in the entire production process, from tending the trees on her 1.5 ha plot to harvesting and selling the cashews. She works tirelessly with simple tools, growing cashew along with other crops (yam, cassava, okra, etc.), which enables her to provide for her family without resorting to any outside assistance. She harvests her cashews and sells them during the high season, from February to June, while sometimes also selling small quantities stored throughout the year. Her seasonal income is around FCFA 60,000 (€90), in addition to FCFA 5,000–10,000 (€7–15) in the off-season, which is enough to fulfil her family’s food and health needs, as well as educating her seven grandchildren, who in turn help her tend her field and harvest nuts during the school holidays.

West African landowners are generally men, who may entrust a small field to their wives. Clearing and tilling operations are done by men, weeding by women, and harvesting is a group activity. With food crops, the work is unpaid and carried out by the family, whereas cashew cropping is more of an economic venture. Sons may live on the farm and wish to work in the cashew plot, but their fathers, who head the farms, consider them basically as hired help. Women and children mainly participate in the harvesting because it is painstaking work requiring considerable patience. “In fact, women and children gather the cashews and come back in the evening carrying a bucket full of nuts on their heads,” explains Pierre Ricau of RONGEAD, an NGO specialised in cashew production. “Along the way, they may sell 1-2 kg to pay for vegetables or school supplies. Back at home, the nuts are divided up, with the wife getting a third and the husband two-thirds of the batch.”

Women bear almost all of the daily expenses with the exception, in general, of fresh food during the lean season. Educational fees are often shared between the husband and wife, depending on the balance of power within the family. Otherwise, husbands cover the farm investment costs (motorcycle, seed and equipment purchases, etc.), even those associated with cashew production. In general, the women’s work is only on the farm although increasingly cashew shelling factories are located in large towns or cities and most of the workers are women, but mostly from urban or peri-urban areas. Women from urban households work in the factory at Bouaké, in northern Côte d’Ivoire, whereas those employed in the factory at Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, are generally from peri-urban households.

Few shelling factories are located in the villages, partly due to the shortage of labour. Everyone works on the farm during peak farming work periods – it is more attractive for a woman to gather nuts in her field when cashew prices are over FCFA 250/kg (€0.40/kg) than to work in a factory shelling them. “Factories can more readily find workers in February and March, at the outset of the harvest period when there is not much work to do in the fields,” says Ricau. “They’ll also find labour in July and August after the sowing period, when more hands are available. But the factories have a hard time finding women to hire when the farming activity is at its peak.” In this sector, there is gender balance on the farm but also between the farm and factory.

Patrice Kouakou and Bénédicte Châtel
How do cooperatives address family farming challenges in Africa?

By mobilising human capital, financial and production resources and land, cooperatives serve, in some ways, to pool human, material and financial resources. Cooperative members are thus supported, enabling them to cope with agricultural economy issues.

Do cooperatives help smallholders better integrate markets and increase their income?

Access to markets involves improving productivity and quality in a cost-effective manner. We are more likely to be in a position to meet international market requirements by joining our forces, means and resources. Through cooperatives, we also benefit from training which can help us get a footing in competitive markets through practical experience. To address the problem of land deficits and insecurity, and to be able to enter into contracts, especially regarding input supplies, several family farms grouped together in cooperatives have better negotiating power than individual farms. When alone, it is usually the partner who sets the prices. Individually, I cannot produce the quantities that have been ordered, but together we can. Family farmers are therefore currently advised to get organised in cooperatives. Some rural institutions are also mutualised like cooperatives, but they now have to abide by the Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa law on cooperatives which applies in Central Africa.

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the cooperative model regarding interactions with the private sector?

The human factor is a major asset. Organisations can come together to develop training centres, enhance human resources and provide knowledge, innovations and sustainability. Cooperatives contribute to creating sustainable employment, raising capital and negotiating bank loans.

Cooperatives are also a source of proposals. They are fully aware of and can put forward farmers’ baseline needs, which makes them effective partners in dealing with public authorities. Different issues facing farmers in the field are also taken into close consideration. Cooperatives provide food security and sovereignty by gearing production towards domestic markets. But this is only a few of the many positive features of cooperatives. In terms of weaknesses, their capacities still have to be strengthened in terms of management, governance, negotiation capacities and organisation – all of which require money and resources.

Cooperatives should also focus on value chains – from the field to the consumer’s plate. So we have to boost our competitiveness by improving production, both quantitatively and qualitatively, along with product marketing and presentation.

Cooperatives should be sources of wealth, but some disappear, thus impoverishing their members. What preventive measures could be adopted?

Founders of cooperatives boost credibility and mobilise partners by investing money, but also working time, determination and commitment. Moreover, new partners may immediately want to speed things up. This warrants effective governance and organisation, where all stakeholders uphold and play their roles – strategic and political decision-makers, as well as technical staff. Cooperatives are able to progress and achieve their objectives in this self-paced synergetic environment.

What means do cooperatives have to strengthen discipline?

Discipline requires regulations – national as well as internal regulations. We have to be uncompromising in punishing or reprimanding anyone who does not respect discipline, while still allowing them to make up for their mistakes. But those who do not deserve to stay in the cooperative should have their membership revoked. The membership principle prevails. Apprenticeship, continuing education of managers, technicians and everyone else involved in the cooperative’s activities are essential.

Anne Mireille Nzouankeu
Helping family farmers access agricultural knowledge and new skills is the foundation of an initiative in Uganda that works through Community Knowledge Workers.

Four years ago, Mwanga John Bosco and his family had few skills in farming. Like many others in Kapchorwa district, eastern Uganda, the Mwanga family knew little of pest and disease control or postharvest handling, and attracting a good price for their crops was a dream. But the last 4 years have seen a transformation for them, and thousands of others, through an initiative that has spread to 43 districts in Uganda, serving nearly 300,000 farmers in over 20,000 villages.

The Community Knowledge Worker (CKW) initiative, a US$9 million project implemented by the Grameen Foundation, has trained and equipped over 1,300 locally elected knowledge workers to advise family farmers and connect them with a national, smartphone-based information service. Each CKW is also tasked with ensuring that family farmers undertake agricultural income generating activities and attend training on farming as a business. This is tracked through a family report that each household has to prepare, documenting increased wealth through acquisition of productive assets like hoes, oxen and wheelbarrows.

For the Mwanga household, who now earn an average of 20 million Ugandan shillings (€5,750) a year from mixed crop and animal farming on their 0.4 ha plot, the initiative has been the cornerstone of their success. “I know how to prepare the land, how to space the crops and how to conserve water,” says Mwanga. “If I get a disease or a pest, I call a CKW to come and specify for us how to treat it.” Mwanga’s family are now acting as a learning hub for other farmers, through their Village Farm Sipi enterprise.

Collection and disseminating information
Charles Chebet is the CKW for Chepkwanda parish, who was selected by his community and trained on how to deliver farming tips. “My work is to monitor what my farmers do and identify pests and diseases that affect crops. We also train family farmers and we look for markets outside our parish so that farmers can earn a good price.” With family unity also key to the success of the project, CKWs ensure that spouses work in their gardens and make decisions together.

The Grameen office also runs a Farmer Call Centre, staffed by a team of agricultural experts with capability in nine languages; a toll free phone line is available specifically for farmers. Fiona Byarugaba, the marketing and communications officer at the Grameen Foundation Uganda, believes the CKW model is unique in delivering both extension services and data collection through trusted, community elected agents. “The use of technology has made it possible to support family farmers at an affordable cost,” she says. “The critical component is the human network; technology alone will not drive effective adoption of new practices.”

Saving and prospering
CKWs also act as input suppliers and engage in the bulking of farmer produce for sale. “We support families to grow marketable crops and link them to competitive markets where they get fair prices,” says Sam Satya, a field officer who supervises around 100 CKWs in three districts. A study conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute in December 2013, indicated that after CKWs were introduced, farmers sold slightly less to brokers and more to traders, because they were more knowledgeable about market prices.

Through their CKW, Josephine Chebet’s family farm has learned to grow organic coffee, which they process and sell through a shop at the local market. They also sell powdered red chilli pepper, vegetables and bananas, and have been able to rent extra land in the neighbourhood. Two of Josephine’s children are now studying a Diploma and a Certificate course to help manage the farm projects. “I feel happy because we get good quality produce and out of that we educate our children. Even health wise, it has improved because we have enough food,” says Josephine.

Pius Sawa
As illustrated by examples from Ghana, Jamaica, Madagascar, and Uganda, with the right incentives and supportive contracting systems, family farmers can successfully participate in high quality, international value chains.
in the rural highlands of Madagascar, 10,000 family farmers produce vegetables for European supermarkets. As participants in a global supply chain, the farmers’ micro-contracts are combined with extensive farm assistance and supervision to fulfil complex quality requirements and phytosanitary standards. As a result, family farmers from one of the poorest countries in the world have gained higher living standards and more income stability than those outside the contract farming arrangement. Significant effects have also been observed in improved technology adoption, better resource management and increased productivity in the annual rice crop.

Meanwhile, in Vanuatu, family farmers in remote areas have adopted improved agronomic practices and are producing world-class, organically-certified vanilla, ginger and other spices for export and tourist sales.

Despite the constraints experienced by many small-scale farmers in becoming part of efficient supply chains - including poor rural infrastructure and processing facilities, and lack of inputs - these positive cases indicate that family farmers in ACP countries are able to successfully participate in high quality, international value chains. Regional and domestic markets offer further opportunities to upgrade value chains, through greater efficiency and improved market access, ensuring better returns to all involved, including buyers, processors and farmers.

Local sourcing
SABMiller, a multinational brewing company well known in Uganda for its sorghum-based ‘Eagle’ beer, is buying 20,000 t of sorghum per year from over 20,000 farmers, and thereby meeting more than 60% of its local brewing requirements. In Mozambique and South Sudan, cassava is now the latest ingredient for SABMiller beer, although...
farmers need to meet some exacting standards. To help them, SABMiller has invested in the supply of improved planting material, tools, fertilisers and pesticides, as well as providing its farmer groups with an assured market. Tools are communally owned and each group has a 'seed for seed' agreement, by which they supply planting material equal to that received, to be shared with another group. The groups also serve as a useful forum for sharing information about improved practices.

Until recently, cassava had not been used in brewing beer, as the crop starts to degrade within 24 hours of harvesting. However, a portable machine for initial processing of the roots in the field has increased storage to several weeks. “Africa’s agricultural potential is enormous, but...”

A ‘Divine’ model

In Ghana, Kuapa Kokoo Farmers Union, a cooperative of cocoa associations representing over 85,000 farmers, boasts a 45% share in Divine Chocolate, an international, fair-trade chocolate company. As a result, whenever the company makes a profit, the family cocoa farmers in Ghana also benefit, and when the harvest is good, Kuapa pays a bonus. Governed and controlled by farmers, the Union ensures that its members participate equally in its development, decision-making and management. Income from its Fairtrade social premium benefits all members and their communities, paying for facilities such as wells and schools. Members’ medical fees are paid by the Union and training has been provided to over 60 women’s groups in leadership and skills training. “Fairtrade is good! We trust we are being paid fairly and we have people to share our worries with,” says Fati Issah, a Kuapa Kokoo member.
currently under-exploited,” says Mark Bowman, SABMiller Africa managing director. “The private sector has a critical role to play: by creating market opportunities for small-scale farmers in our value chains, we are able to increase their productivity, allowing them to feed their families and generate a better income.”

Whilst some farms may remain too poor, too remote or just too small to be incorporated into modern value chains, there are growing opportunities for family farms to move away from occasional sale of surpluses and become commercial farmers. By linking to urban markets (see p 25, The power of collective action) or supplying local hotels and restaurants (see p 23, From farm to table), farmers can tap into increasing consumer demand for milk, meat, fruit, vegetables, as well as ready-to-eat processed foods.

Grouping together

However, there are risks for both farmers and companies in establishing sustainable supply chains, so development of long-term trust is crucial. If companies trust farmers to deliver, they will be prepared to invest, supporting the farmers to grow, process and market those products at an agreed price. Similarly, if farmers believe that companies will honour their contracts, they will commit to meeting the terms agreed. Unfortunately, this trust can all too easily be jeopardised, for example, if farmers are persuaded to sell to other buyers when hard pressed for cash or unsettled by sudden changes in the market.

Producer organisations play an important role in strengthening the position of family farmers in value chains, functioning both as service providers and advocacy networks. Producer organisations are frequently key to increasing the value generated throughout the chain, by ensuring, for example, that the product quality is in line with the standard demanded. They can also mobilise support from other stakeholders and help farmers negotiate a fair share of the total profits (see box on p 21, A ‘Divine’ model).

Regional organisations also have a role to play. In October 2013, the West African regional farmers’ organisation, ROPPA, organised a business forum in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, to support the development of partnerships between producer organisations and the private sector. Whilst creating a forum for networking and sharing best practices on effective value chains, the event, co-funded by CTA, also provided training on the value chain approach and contract farming, and organised ‘Business to Business’ meetings specifically designed for farmers’ organisations, to support them in attracting private sector investment (see box below, The advantages of contract farming).

Strengthening partnerships is key if a value chain is to work smoothly and efficiently. This is not only true for chains based on crops; with growing demand for milk and meat, there is increasing potential for pastoralists and other family livestock farmers to work with transporters, service providers, regulators and others, to develop effective livestock marketing systems. A new publication from CTA and the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction, Moving Herds, Moving Markets, provides many examples of best practice, as well as highlighting challenges faced by pastoralists, and is currently being used by FAO and others for training courses in Africa.

Susanna Thorp

The advantages of contract farming

CTA’s value chains specialist, Andrew Shepherd, has spent many years promoting contract farming, which, he argues, can have numerous advantages for family farms and for efficient value chains. Companies usually provide inputs in advance, deducting their cost when the farmer sells the product. Some companies even provide loans for hiring labour, for purchasing inputs for food crops, and for other farming activities not related to the contract. They may also provide extension services, help prepare the land and organise transport for the products.

For example, in 2013, around 56 family farmers were growing peppers for a Jamaican company, Grace Kennedy, one of the producers of the country’s famous hot pepper sauce. Each farm is contracted to supply peppers that meet ripeness, grade and maximum pesticide residue level standards. Delivery follows an agreed schedule and the company pays farmers a pre-agreed price and supports them with seed and other inputs provided by its own farm. It also provides technical assistance, in partnership with Jamaica’s Rural Agricultural Development Authority. The agreement has been a success but the company is still seeking additional farmers so that its processing facility can work to full capacity.
From farm to table

Under the Farm to Table programme, 20 small-scale organic farmers in Samoa have begun to supply local hotels and restaurants, through a supply chain model first developed in the Caribbean.

On her farm in the village of Vaitele, 10 km outside Apia, Malofou Lomiga is studying a supply list. She’s one of 20 family farmers who are supplying 10 restaurants and three hotels, under Samoa’s Farm to Table scheme. Run by Women in Business Development Inc (WIBDI), a local NGO, the programme has been operating since November 2013, and while its aim — connecting family farmers to the tourism industry — may sound simple, in Samoa it means creating a whole supply chain.

Almost all farmers in Samoa can be considered ‘family farmers’. Many are ‘pre-business’: few have bank accounts, keep business records or understand supply agreements. So for WIBDI, success involves many things: doing hands-on marketing, restaurant liaison, produce grading and delivery, invoicing, and even chef training. Supplying just 13 outlets, Farm to Table is, for now, being kept deliberately small so that it can be evaluated and adapted.

Learning the business

Extension worker Timolai Sikuka is a weekly visitor to Lomiga’s farm. For Sikuka, the face-to-face contact is vital in educating farmers about the need for consistent quality and supply. They also negotiate prices with the farmers, based on a fortnightly survey of the city’s market prices. All WIBDI farmers are either certified organic or in the process of getting certified, something Sikuka also monitors during her visits. “We will also be delivering financial literacy training to our farmers so they learn to plan, budget and set goals,” she says.

Sitting with Lomiga, they discuss what crops she has available: oranges, bananas, lemons, carambola, ginger and cocoa. It turns out she also has turmeric plants, cinnamon and curry trees (*Murraya koenigii*). “I’m learning about how these plants can be used in the restaurants,” says Lomiga.

Meanwhile, her husband spends his days at the market in town trying to sell the rest of their farm produce. “He has to look for sales with all the other farmers, but with this programme we make money without wasting our time going around town. They come and make the orders and we just deliver the produce.”

Future vision

WIBDI executive director Adimaimalaga Tafunai believes that within the next 5 years, its farmers will be supplying many of the hotels and restaurants in the country. For now they deliver produce once a week with plans to add a second weekly delivery in the coming months. But even meeting the current demand can be challenging, as Sikuka explains: “We run a guaranteed supply system so if restaurants order it, we guarantee to supply it. It also means we need a lot of back-up suppliers, who are able to supply sporadically.” Fortunately, the NGO has nearly 1,000 farmers on its books and has bought a small chiller truck to keep the produce fresh. “This is a programme that has the ability to create a consistent income for so many farmers who would otherwise rely on remittances from overseas families,” says Tafunai.

As part of the youth component of the project, WIBDI has been running training workshops for young farmers, including seedling distribution. It is also developing a suite of mobile apps to support the programme. One provides a database of farmers; another is a journal on good business habits. A third app features recipes using local produce and an ordering system for restaurants.

Learning from the Caribbean

The Farm to Table model was developed by chef and author, Robert Oliver, when working as an executive chef in the Caribbean. Seeing his hotel menus filled with imported ingredients, Oliver met with farmers to introduce local produce. Although never measured, he is sure the programme increased farmers’ earnings. Teaming up with Oliver to develop a Samoan model, WIBDI has attracted support from the United Nations Development Program, which is putting US$30,000 into the initial phases.

Meanwhile, back in Vaitele, Lomiga is happy to read her latest supply list, and grateful to know she will have a secure market for her farm produce.
How can linking to a value chain address the challenges facing family farmers?

Most family farming activities in Africa are dysfunctional and not structured to be profitable. Enormous amounts of time and money are wasted on production and marketing. Connecting families to value chains is therefore vital. First, it is a way of connecting them to knowledge. Our work with dairy farmers has found that livestock feed in the market typically contains 16-20% protein. But, with access to knowledge, farmers can learn that a homemade concentrate made from Moringa and Desmodium mixed with Napier grass will greatly increase protein content - using the same quantity of land to produce - compared to their existing, unproductive feed.

Second, most African farmers, especially family farmers, face a challenge in having fast, easy access to good markets for their produce. Dairy farmers wake at 4 am to milk their cows, but then have to wait hours until the milk is collected; all this wastes time, but is never quantified. Linking to a value chain is a way for family farmers to join a streamlined, functional marketing system, where delays and bottlenecks have been identified and dealt with. This is vital to make a family farm profitable.

Family farms often link to value chains by forming producer groups. What impact has this had in Kenya?

The impact has been very dramatic in enabling farmers to adopt more productive farming practices. A concrete example involves working with the Graphco Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisation (SACCO) in Limuru, 37 km northwest of Nairobi and the Gichugu SACCO in Kirinyaga, 137 km from Nairobi. In both these SACCOs, farmers have been mobilised to develop a milk value chain where they are trained on milk collection, record keeping and the selling of milk. This makes use of a smart card, which utilises the M-Pesa system to allow farmers to use mobile phones for their transactions.

What support do family farmers need to function effectively in a value chain?

Farmers need to be organised and provided with facilities; they need support to put in place delivery mechanisms, to improve their individual productivity and negotiate contracts. Access to scientific knowledge and to supporting financial structures is important. For example, the farmer may need animal feed but not have the cash to pay for it at that particular time. A micro-finance institution is therefore a necessity to assist farmers in obtaining feed, and enabling them to pay after selling the milk.

What then needs to be done to bring on board small-scale farmers that are presently excluded from value chains?

What we need first is to set up learning demonstration sites; once family farmers can see the technology working, they will want to get involved. For example, when we have demonstrated hydroponic fodder production, people have been very quick to imitate. We also need high ranking public figures, such as members of parliament, trained and exposed to the need to initiate programmes in their constituencies. In Kipipiri, for example, the MP there has committed some money from the constituency development fund to buy coolers for dairy farmers. So by working with people with access to resources, it is possible to implement value chain programmes and bring new farmers on board.

How do you see the future for family farmers in Africa in the coming decades, if an effective value chain model is not followed?

Unless the government takes a different approach most family farming will collapse, because most family farming activities are subsidised, which does not lead to sustainability. Hence, even though family farming is touted as the next big thing in Africa, its potential may not be realised unless leaders in government learn to better understand how family farming works, including the role of effective, functional value chains.

Geoffrey Kamadi

Taking a profitable approach

Using productive assets, such as land, family farming can be transformed into a profitable farming business if farmers are organised and provided with improved facilities to become an effective part of modern value chains.
The power of collective action

Rising consumption of highly nutritious African indigenous leafy vegetables (AILVs) has created a lucrative farming opportunity in Kenya. As a result, and with assistance from agricultural organisations, rural family farmers are increasingly cultivating AILVs and selling their bulked produce to one of Kenya’s largest supermarket chains.

In Kenya, AILVs were traditionally sold in informal markets and consumed by low income earners in slums and rural areas. In 1999, however, Uchumi Supermarket – which has 23 branches countrywide – began stocking around eight varieties of AILVs and, driven by their higher nutritional value compared to many conventional vegetables, their popularity quickly soared. Between 2003 and 2006, a study by AVRDC – The World Vegetable Center found that consumption of AILVs in Nairobi alone increased from 31 t to 600 t per year (worth €100,000).

To avoid fears of pollution and wastewater contamination, which can prejudice urban shoppers against fresh produce grown within the city, Uchumi is careful about where it sources its products. In their Nairobi branches, for example, most AILVs come from family farms in the neighbouring Kiambu County, sourced from around 80 suppliers, many with only very small pieces of land (less than 0.05 ha). According to Uchumi fresh produce coordinator, Paul Mukono, AILVs sourced from family farmers in highland regions like Kiambu are both safe and dependable, as rainfall is abundant.

Families join together

Many of these family farm suppliers were linked to Uchumi in 2004, under a pilot project managed by Farm Concern International (FCI) involving over 4,000 family farmers. Around 200 households were clustered in ‘commercial villages’ (CVs) of 20 to 30 members, enabling them to bulk their produce and thereby meet the supermarket’s daily demand for AILVs. FCI educated the farmers on the nutritional and market potential of AILVs, and approached Uchumi to buy from them. They also trained farmers on pest management, manure application and standardisation of AILV bunches; Uchumi requires a bunch to weigh around 500 g and be free of pests.

Kwaaregi Pioneer Organic Self Help Group, a 21-member family farming CV, is one of those now supplying the supermarket. Its members, whose plots average 1.2 ha, grow AILVs such as amaranth, nightshade, Ethiopian kale, saget and cowpeas, largely organically. AILVs regenerate and mature quickly compared to exotic vegetables, with the longest taking 45 days from planting to harvest. According to James Ngata, a CV facilitator, the financial benefits of AILVs also outweigh those of exotic vegetables like cabbages and collard.
greens (*sukuma wiki*). On average, Uchumi buys an AILV bunch from Ngata’s group at 20 Kenyan shillings (Ksh); they can also earn 8–10 Ksh per bunch through farm gate sales. “With *sukuma wiki*, we sold to brokers at just 1 Ksh per bunch,” says Ngata, whose family now earns 3,000 Ksh (€25) per week selling AILVs from their 0.1 ha plot. Previously, growing exotic vegetables, it took them 2 months to earn 3,000–5,000 Ksh (€25–40).

**Financing production**

With consistent income guaranteed by AILVs’ frequent harvest cycles, Ngata’s CV has access to Kilimo Biashara (Farming as Business) and Kilimo Kisasa (Modern Farming) credit facilities from Equity Bank. Loans charged at 1–1.6% monthly interest help the group to pool funds and obtain manure from places such as Narok and Mai Mahiu, over 70 km away. Through the loans, six of the members have also installed biogas plants in their homes. “We haven’t had defaults on loans, only a few delays in payments,” says Ngata.

Low incomes from exotic vegetables also compelled Zachariah Mungai and his nephew to grow AILVs. To meet the demand of the supermarket, Mungai’s family and their Murimi Mugi CV plant AILVs based on a system of staggered planting. “Our farmers are allocated different days for planting in a week,” says Mungai. “That way, there are quantities available for supply when needed by Uchumi.” Apart from enabling farmers to meet the needs of bulk buyers, being a member of a CV has other advantages. “They (CVs) give us bargaining power when negotiating with other buyers, as we don’t sell below our set price,” says John Njenga, a farmer and a CV facilitator. They can also buy farm inputs in bulk, at discounted prices.

According to Mukono, AILV supplies are still insufficient to meet consumer demand. At the Aga Khan Walk branch in central Nairobi, morning shoppers exhaust the AILVs before noon on weekdays. The branch would like to stock 1,000 bunches of various AILVs each day, but current supplies from farmers range between 800–900 bunches. When demand rises and prices increase, Uchumi increases the amount payable to farmers per bunch, thereby giving group members a sense of responsibility for the quality of produce that they deliver. After deliveries are made, Uchumi payments take a fortnight to process.

**Women profit the most**

According to a study by Bioversity International, the popularity of AILVs led to a 70% increase in the amount of land dedicated to their cultivation in highland areas near Nairobi between 1997 and 2007. The number of farmers growing at least one AILV has also risen by 23%, and women have been significant beneficiaries, retaining 80% of AILV earnings. Mary Wanjiku Githwe, for example, has been growing AILVs since 2007 at her home in Kamburu location, Kiambu County. She and her family have subdivided their piece of land into 10 nurseries, eight of which are planted with nightshade and the rest with amaranth, saget and Ethiopian kale. When Uchumi orders each week, Wanjiku is able to supply 300 to 400 bunches of AILVs, from which she earns around 20,000 Ksh (€165) per month. According to Patrick Maundu, a researcher and ethno-botanist with the Museums of Kenya, women in the Nairobi area are currently earning around 1.2 million Ksh (€1,000) a day from AILVs that, until 15 years ago, were the food of the poor. And in terms of their contribution to Kenyan diets, the findings of a 2012 study by Wageningen University and Research Centre are startling: AILVs now account for 30% of all vegetables marketed in Kenya, a percentage that is continuing to rise.

James Karuga
The role of the state

Like any other economic sector, family farming can only grow and prosper in a conducive environment. This requires incentive policies, as applied in the United States, European Union and also in Africa, along with the development of agricultural insurance and greater representation of the agricultural community in decision-making processes.
The importance of a supportive family farming framework is essential, and not only in the South or poor countries. This is a pivotal issue in agricultural policy reform debates in both the US and Europe, two regions also impacted by an ageing farming population (58.3 years old on average in the US) and dwindling family farmland.

The US Agricultural Act of 2014 aimed to be revolutionary by imposing drastic budget cuts (US$23 billion down from US$956 billion). The majority of direct payments and subsidies to farmers are replaced by tools to manage risks, including climate change and price volatility. This is viewed by some as promoting large-scale, high yielding and cost-effective capital-intensive farms at the expense of family farming. However, this Act is geared mainly towards funding the national food programme via food stamps that poor people use to cover their food purchases. The Administration therefore pays close attention to the prices of these products on supermarket shelves. Tom Vilsack, the US Secretary of Agriculture, clearly intends to promote the global leadership of US farmers, while the National Family Farm Coalition protests the lack of programmes designed to ensure that US farmers will receive a fair price to cover their production costs.

As part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2014-2020 (€363 billion, but down by 13.7%), the EU does not intend to overlook family farming, and for good reason. According to Dacian Cioloș, EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, 95% of all farms in the EU are family farms. This is why a system of direct aid has been maintained, while giving each member state considerable autonomy regarding the measures to be implemented. CAP 2014-2020 includes concerns similar to those of ACP countries, such as supporting

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**Geographical distribution of agricultural insurance premiums**

- **USA & CANADA**: US$13.6 billion (56%)
- **LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN**: US$770 million (3%)
- **EUROPE**: US$4 billion (16%)
- **ASIA**: US$5.6 billion (23%)
- **AFRICA**: US$180 million (0.7%)
- **AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND**: US$160 million (0.7%)

Source: Microinsurance Network, 2014
young farmers (under 40 years old) interested in taking over their family farm, and encouraging elderly farmers to pass on their farmsteads or at least hand over management to the younger generation. CAP also promotes aid to smallholdings, as defined by each member state. Alan Matthews, from the capreform.eu blog, says that even though the new CAP reform does not specifically refer to family farms, many measures will benefit them. But he claims that CAP is ill-equipped to deal with market volatility whereas, according to MOMAGRI, a French think tank on world agricultural issues, there is “A very tight link between the gradual withdrawal of government in market regulation and the issue of youth involvement in agriculture.” In other words, government aid to enable young people to take up farming is a major factor.

A universal concern

ACP countries are therefore not alone in facing the challenges of family farming. However, the spotlight on US and EU legislation reflects the central role played by public agricultural policies. Africa is aware of this. The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme was adopted at the African Union Summit at Maputo in 2003. It made provision for 10% of national budget investment in the agricultural sector overall. In 2008, this was only 4% according to the World Bank, and even less for family farming. In Haiti, in 2012/13, only 7.5% of the government budget was allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture, whereas this sector represents 25% of the GDP. Further examples abound.

But the budget issue is not the only one that counts. The development of family farming also requires multi-sectoral governmental mobilisation, which in turn depends on: new technologies; access to inputs, funding and industrial processing; training; transportation; land, fiscal and customs rights; value chains; and standards. A ‘one-stop’ family farming-oriented concept could even be conceivable in some countries.

“In Chad, the Ministry of Agriculture is in charge of family farming,” says Kolyang Palabelé, president of the National Council for the Rural Producers of Chad (CNCPRT). “It is a Ministry of State, so it includes the other ministries to some extent, but these are also working separately. A rural sector monitoring mechanism was established in 1998 involving all development partners, while CNCRPT is a member of the national steering committee, which includes all ministries. We are also members of the Economic, Social and Cultural Committee, so we can make suggestions to the government. Family farming is thus represented at all levels, but this does not mean that all problems concerning the sector are solved. Concrete initiatives are now needed.”

These concrete initiatives should encourage youth to return to family farms. These young farmers have to be assured that, in their remote areas, their children will have a good school, a health service, running water and electricity. The rural environment should be attractive.

Is farming a profession?

Family farming should be recognised and structured so as to be able to develop a policy tailored for this sector. Everything starts with legal recognition of the status and profession of farmers. “Farmers’ status must be recognised in a policy drawn up by mutual agreement. Smallholders are currently not considered as farmers, but rather as poor people who can always be exploited,” says Palabelé. “A family farmer, once recognised as such, should have access to advantages that other economic stakeholders benefit from.” This is a perquisite in order to attract the youth and make their voices heard.

Status for farming is important but what if no land titles exist or if land access is not secure? In Africa, only 2-10% of all land is subject to a title. In Cameroon, Pierre Blaise Ango, national coordinator of AFOP, a professional training support programme, points out that the land status is “Ambiguous because there are two coexisting land laws - legal and customary.” Regarding this point, it was noted that over the years there has been greater focus on habits and customs provided that the land status is clearly established. In 2012, at FAO, the ‘Voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land’ were adopted to serve as a benchmark for governments. In the Caribbean, governments assist youth in purchasing dormant farmland through land bank programmes. This policy is often tricky to apply in some countries: “Cameroonians resist changes in their places of residence. So the application of land use planning policies to - as in Brazil and elsewhere - encourage young people to move into new areas is problematic,” notes Ango.

Status, land… but, alone, a family farmer cannot do much. Note, that prior to the 2008 World Bank report that placed agriculture at the centre of the development debate, the main banner call of donors and governments of developing countries was to erase the ‘family’ aspect of agriculture, which was too closely linked with poverty, in order to pave the way for the emergence of entrepreneurial agriculture.

Family farmers therefore need to develop representative organisations that can fight at all decision-making levels - local, national and international - in defence of their interests and rights. These debates are generally hard to manage, says Marcella Villareal, FAO’s director of the office for partnerships, because there are...
often issues regarding major societal choices requiring tailored arrangements in favour of youth, women, combating rural outmigration, while also being environment-friendly and against unbridled productivity-driven farming. These farmers’ organisations have been springing up everywhere at the regional level, including the Eastern African Farmers Federation, the Sub-Regional Platform of Farmers’ Organisations in Central Africa, the Southern African Confederation of African Unions, and the Network of Farmers’ and Agricultural Producers’ Organisations of West Africa (ROPPA), as well as at the national level. “The National Association of Professional Agricultural Organisations of Côte d’Ivoire has become an indispensable voice of the Ivorian Ministry of Agriculture,” points out the Farm Foundation. “Farmers’ organisations help fight for farmers’ right to be present in policy debates.”

Effective as these organisations are, they are seldom representative of family farming per se. This sector is included within the overall mission of these organisations. It is sometimes a major concern, as for ROPPA, but the mission does not always take the specific features of family farming into account, especially the marked ‘asymmetries of power’ between family farmers and the outside world, as highlighted by Frédéric Apollin, director of the French NGO Agronomes et Vétérinaires sans frontières.

Farmers’ organisations still do play a major role, especially in pricing, when administered. The point is not so much to have fixed prices but rather to ensure that they are sufficiently profitable to cover farming family needs. When prices are not administered, then it is up to governments and corporations to boost awareness, especially among emerging middle classes, on the importance of purchasing local food products in order to sustain local farming families. The authorities may also intervene on product marketing costs by introducing, as in the Caribbean, public infrastructures to facilitate product marketing.

A complete toolbox

Public authorities can also help family farmers obtain effective tools to enable them to develop their farms and manage risks, including establishing or facilitating market information systems and warehouse certificates. Meanwhile, despite being introduced over 200 years ago and proven effective in the US, the EU and more recently Brazil and India, agricultural insurance is still in its infancy in ACP countries. “Africa is lagging behind, representing only 0.5% of the global value of agricultural insurance premiums,” says Jean-Christophe Debar, director of the Farm Foundation. “But an agricultural policy that does not have a risk clause will not be viable.”

Government support in this matter may be in the form of premium assistance or reinsurance coverage. There is a clear correlation - in Africa, only 3% of agricultural insurance premiums benefit from public financial support and the agricultural insurance market represented only US$180 million in 2010, as compared to 73% and US$13.6 billion, respectively, in the US. But many initiatives are under way in Africa, including the Nigeria Agricultural Insurance Scheme launched in 1987 and, more recently, the Assurance mutuelle agricole du Bénin, the Compagnie nationale d’assurance agricole du Sénégal, the Assurance récolte du Sahel, the Ghana Agricultural Insurance Program and PlaNet Garantee. Kilimo Salama, launched by the Syngenta Foundation in Kenya in 2008, prides itself in encouraging youth to take up family farming, which now seems less risky. Insurance can also target family farming activities that are mainly carried out by women. Insurance schemes of this type are being studied in Jamaica and Papua New Guinea.

Finally, to offset the growing presence of multinational corporations on the agricultural scene and preserve family farming in this changing setting, “We can expect governments to rebalance the power relationship, especially by the introduction of public procurement policies whereby part of harvests are purchased at a set price, by the regulation of seller-buyer relationships, or by the protection of resource access via land laws,” says Olivier De Schutter, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food.

Hence the clarion call of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, in March 2014 in Budapest during the Global Forum on Family Farming: “Governments can empower family farmers, especially women and youth, by creating policies conducive to equitable and sustainable rural development.”

Bénédicte Châtel
Innovative policies in practice

From North Africa to South America, family farming is a key concern of governments, with some of them implementing highly innovative initiatives. A brief overview of the actions implemented in North Africa's Atlas mountains, the South American Pampas plains and the Wallonia region of Belgium, is presented.

The Green Morocco Plan launched in April 2008 has inspired other African countries. At the National Agriculture Conference held in late April in Meknes, Morocco, the Guinean President, Alpha Condé, and the representative from Côte d'Ivoire indicated that they would like to emulate this plan, especially regarding the promotion of geographical indications and local products. The Malian President, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, was particularly interested in the irrigation aspect.

One of the bold measures taken by the Moroccan government is promoting the conversion of some cereal cropping areas that were deemed uncompetitive with respect to global supply. “A comprehensive programme was developed for family farming in order to switch the focus in some areas from cereal crops to other added value local crops, such as olives, almonds and prickly pears,” says Soufiane Larguet, director of Strategic Affairs in the Moroccan Ministry of Agriculture. “The state intervenes by providing the entire required budget, assembling farmers in cooperatives and providing technical assistance to train farmers so that they can become self-sufficient in their market interactions, and in turn become effective entrepreneurs.”

The Green Morocco Plan promotes local produce. Below, a field of prickly pears near Marrakech
A programme was set up in collaboration with the stakeholders. “We went out into the field to assess farmers’ thoughts about this type of programme. Were they interested in converting their fields to other crops? If so, to what types? In this way, family farmers are involved in making decisions regarding the sector, the varietal profile, etc., and the explanation of the action plan. No initiatives are taken without farmers’ full approval,” specifies Larguet. Particular attention is paid to young people and women. “In Morocco, there are many women’s cooperatives in promising sectors with comparative advantages, such as argan and saffron. Women may be supported by bolstering these sectors, especially by developing protective geographical indications,” Larguet adds.

Generating a regional force
In Latin America, the region’s leading trade bloc, Mercosur (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela and six associated countries), took up family farming in 2004 by creating the Specialized Meeting on Family Farming (REAF) to strengthen public policies and facilitate regional trade of family farming products. In 2007, a common definition of family farming was drawn up to set it apart from the rest of the agricultural sector, which is sometimes highly capitalistic in this region. By focusing on this issue, Mercosur aims to facilitate dialogue between member states and develop policies that will enable family farms to fully benefit from this regional market.

REAF established a common position on land access, facilitating land acquisition and the setting up of family farms, a key constituent of the Fome Zero programme in Brazil (see p 33, A holistic approach to family farming). Meanwhile, Uruguay created community rangelands for livestock grazing. Moreover, these two countries began enhancing rural infrastructure, e.g. restoring secondary roads, setting up credit plans for rural farmers, and developing water storage and distribution infrastructures for family farmers. In Chile, three financial instruments were secured to support family farmers (subsidies, direct credit, and credit associated with bank loans).

An agricultural code dedicated to family farming
Wallonia is no exception. On 26 March 2014, the parliament of this Belgian region ratified an Agricultural Code which, in its founding Article 1, stipulates: “To preserve the diversity and multi-functionality of its agriculture and ensure sustainable development, Wallonia promotes human scale, cost effective and employment generating family farming, as well as progress towards ecologically intensive agriculture.”

Through this Code, Walloon authorities are facilitating youth farming initiatives, promoting energy independence of farms, as well as reconnecting producers and consumers to facilitate marketing. Wallonian products are promoted while developing organic agriculture. And importantly, all services offered to farmers will be networked – an alternative way to approach agriculture.

Bénédicte Châtel
A holistic approach to family farming

Closely involved in the implementation of Brazil’s Fome Zero (Zero Hunger) programme which aims to eradicate hunger, FAO’s José Graziano da Silva states that family farmers are an important part of the solution to achieving food security and sustainable development.

In what ways has Fome Zero influenced policies on family farming?

When we started Fome Zero, family farming in Brazil received credit through the National Program on Family Farming (PRONAF), but resources were limited and the interest rates were very high. Since 2003, the government has increased PRONAF funding by 10 times and interest rates have declined to the extent that they have become negative, especially for the poorest farmers. An insurance programme (Garantia Safra) to protect farmers in Brazil’s semi-arid region against the drought has also been expanded. In addition, specific actions to tackle weather impacts were initiated, such as the construction of water tanks for poor rural families.

All those policies have helped to boost production. At the same time, Fome Zero worked to strengthen and create new markets for family farmers. This was achieved, for example, through the local food purchase program (PAA). Today, at least 30% of the food bought by public schools for school meals needs to be purchased locally from family farmers. The PAA has been expanded in many Brazilian cities and states to cover not only school meals but also food for hospitals and other public institutions. This has been such a success that is being adapted by African countries through the Purchase from Africans for Africa programme.

Back in Brazil, while boosting production and supporting market access, it was also necessary to regulate land tenure and ensure access to land for the poorest families. In 10 years, 50 million ha of land have been allocated to more than 600,000 landless families, and quilombola communities (descendants of runaway slaves) were recognised.

A gender approach was also taken from the beginning. For example, task forces provided documentation for women, without which women could not benefit from the new policies. Thanks to this effort, more than 1 million women are now benefitting from different public programmes.

What lessons can be drawn that would be useful for ACP countries in implementing and reinforcing policies to strengthen their own family farming systems?

In order to address family farmers’ needs and enhance their potential, policies should not be implemented by one institution alone. Policies must be multi-sectoral and should not exclusively focus on agriculture or social assistance, but include cash transfer mechanisms and other emergency aid systems.

Fome Zero has turned out to be a means to ensure access to food to poor families, apart from supporting family farming programmes, health and nutrition monitoring systems, and local food supply arrangements. In this two-fold approach to food security, one element supports the other and ensures that part of the increased demand for food created by the cash transfer programme, for example, is met by small farmers. This win-win solution is now being implemented by countries that are looking to expand their food security initiatives to include not only agricultural intensification but also social protection. The PAA and other efforts to link family farming and school meal programmes in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa are examples of how this can be done.

How should these new priorities be articulated to reinforce family farming in ACP countries?

Family farming projects could be reinforced in ACP countries by means of south-south cooperation. Those partnerships are mutually beneficial, especially among regions that have similar development challenges as well as geographic, climate and social characteristics. FAO is committed to strengthening and channeling exchanges between developing countries aiming to adopt, adapt and broaden best practices that simultaneously promote family farming, food security and agricultural development. FAO is a firm believer in south-south cooperation that is based on solidarity and breaks the traditional dichotomy between donors and recipients. Our role in this process is to facilitate cooperation among member countries. This is an area that we have been working on since 1996 and on which we are now increasing our efforts.

Bénédicte Châtel and Susanna Thorp
In 2014, CTA has joined forces with FAO and the World Rural Forum – the international coordinators of the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) – alongside many international, national and regional organisations, to celebrate and learn from this special year.

The IYFF represents a unique and long-sought opportunity to highlight the contribution of family farms to global agriculture in an ever-changing setting. To this end, CTA is committed to helping family farmers enhance the profitability of their farms so that they will be better prepared to meet the many challenges they face.

For example, in Africa, CTA experts in value chains and ICTs are supporting the set-up of a network to enable different market information services to share their experiences and build their capacities. In the Caribbean and Pacific regions, CTA is working with small-scale women entrepreneurs to share information about their products. The Centre is also working with farmer organisations to improve their knowledge of contract farming and other key value chain topics. And, to promote dialogue and institutional support, CTA is supporting regional farmers’ organisations and several multi-stakeholder fora in ACP regions to help influence policies and ensure more effective participation of family farmers in modern value chains.

In addition, CTA has commissioned a series of case studies of successful ways in which small-scale farmers and companies have linked together, in order to share these experiences in ACP regions. The case studies demonstrate the great diversity of agricultural value chains in terms of structure and practices. Despite such differences, they show that integration of small-scale farmers into value chains can have mutually beneficial outcomes for the farmers themselves and for other value chain participants.

**Family farming for the future**

With regard to the development of new ICT applications by young entrepreneurs, CTA and partners support the promotion of an enabling environment for effective development and use of ICTs as well as scaling up, adoption and utilisation of the applications by a variety of stakeholders. The Centre is also helping to build stakeholders’ capacity, including family farmers, to use the applications to improve their productivity and marketing of their produce. As part of the efforts to encourage engagement of family farmers in policy processes that are favourable to them, CTA is also collaborating with ACP producer organisations to develop curricula for training leaders on policy analysis, articulation and advocacy of pertinent policy positions, analysis and monitoring of implementation of national budget allocation to agriculture, and alternative models for agricultural financing for family farmers.

As many small-scale farmers continue to face difficult financing conditions, a key focus for CTA in recent years has also been to promote agri-value chain finance across ACP countries. For example, in collaboration with the Eastern Africa Grain Council, CTA has strengthened the capacity of its partners on structured grain trading, which includes use of agreed standards, certified warehouses, inventory credit and commodity exchanges (see *Spore* Special Issue 2013). CTA is also working with the African Rural and Agricultural Credit Association and others, in building capacity and sharing knowledge on agri-value chain finance best practices, as well as on the design of policies that will help to scale up success practices. Further lessons (to be reported in *Spore* 172) on how to upscale best practices for agri-finance will emerge from the 2014 CTA conference on ‘Revolutionising finance for agri-value chains’ which was recently held in Nairobi.

Finally, as well as being the IYFF, 2014 is also the International Year of Small Island Developing States. To showcase and pay tribute to the vitality and dynamism of family farmers in small island developing states, particularly in the Caribbean and Pacific, CTA has recently launched a mini website (http://cta.int/en/news/iyff.html). The Centre presents the viewpoints of its experts with the aim of reviving and bolstering family farming, while providing food for thought on the many opportunities for potential cooperation.

Susanna Thorp
How can we rejuvenate family farming?

Discover 4 routes to success proposed by the experts at CTA

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