



منظمة الأغذية  
والزراعة  
للأمم المتحدة

联合国  
粮食及  
农业组织

Food  
and  
Agriculture  
Organization  
of  
the  
United  
Nations

Organisation  
des  
Nations  
Unies  
pour  
l'alimentation  
et  
l'agriculture

Organización  
de las  
Naciones  
Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## THIRTIETH REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Brasilia, Brazil, 14 to 18 April 2008

### ROUND TABLE: FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AGRARIAN REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN (ICARRD)

#### I. BACKGROUND

1. The International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development<sup>1</sup> (Brazil, 2006) was held almost three decades after a world conference on the same topic in Rome in 1979. Participating this time were 96 countries and more than 150 representatives of civil society organizations from around the world. Three days of discussions and a series of recommendations served to reiterate the "essential role of agrarian reform and rural development in promoting sustainable development, which includes, *inter alia*, the realization of human rights, food security, poverty eradication, and the strengthening of social justice".<sup>2</sup>

2. The final report of the 29<sup>th</sup> FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (Caracas, 2006): (i) "endorsed the recommendations included in the Final Declaration of the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development"; (ii) "welcomed the proposals to promote the holding of subregional seminars and discussion panels organized by country groups, with the broad participation of social movements"; (iii) "declared that institutional frameworks for land tenure and use were fundamental for agricultural and rural development"; and (iv) "recognized that land distribution needed to be accompanied by support measures, including technology transfer, credit and finance, systems of innovation and management, and other mechanisms to facilitate the modernization of farmers' production processes and their integration into trade channels".<sup>3</sup>

3. The Regional Conference recommended: (i) "that the relevant FAO bodies took the necessary actions to implement the recommendations included in the Final Declaration of ICARRD"; (ii) "that it was fundamental for the Region to be able to follow-up on ICARRD in the Committee on World Food Security and the FAO Council, including the possible formulation of Voluntary Guidelines for the National Implementation of the Right to Land"; and requested that

<sup>1</sup> [www.icarrd.org](http://www.icarrd.org)

<sup>2</sup> Final Declaration, paragraph 1

<sup>3</sup> Paragraphs 47-50. Report LARC/06/REP

For reasons of economy, this document is produced in a limited number of copies. Delegates and observers are kindly requested to bring it to the meetings and to refrain from asking for additional copies, unless strictly indispensable.

Most FAO meeting documents are available on Internet at [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

(iii) FAO, through the Technical Secretariat of ICARRD and under the coordination of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, convene and conduct seminars and panel discussions, organized by groups of countries and with the broad participation of social movements, to lay the groundwork for a plan of action that would help resolve, on a voluntary basis, the more urgent problems identified by ICARRD".<sup>4</sup>

4. The FAO Council, Committee on World Food Security and Committee on Agriculture have, as an agenda item, the discussion of possible follow-up actions to ICARRD. They have put forward a number of proposals and requests, including the development of a Special Initiative on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development. However, member countries have so far failed to reach consensus, which has prevented the formulation of a plan of action to implement the recommendations in the Final Declaration. For its part, despite these restrictions and acting upon the recommendations of the 29<sup>th</sup> Regional Conference, the FAO Regional Office has followed up on ICARRD by pursuing the actions outlined in Section IV below.

5. Given the background situation, this paper suggests that participants discuss the matter on two levels: (a) from a conceptual perspective: *what factors should be considered in a new generation of agrarian reform and rural development policies that can contribute substantively to the development of rural territories?* Section II introduces this topic with a brief historical summary of agrarian reform policies in the Region. Section III lists the topics that ICARRD considered essential for a new approach to such policies in the twenty-first century; (b) participants present their positions on *the main work streams to be included in a plan of action to follow up ICARRD in the Region*. To start the discussion, Section IV relates the actions of the Regional Office in 2007, while Section V proposes actions for the period 2008-2010.

6. It is important to note that this document does not set out to unify discussion under a "correct position" that leads to a recommended single agrarian reform and rural development model. Rather, it sets out to discuss conceptual and practical foundations for the formulation of a proposal that can and should be specified by subregions, countries and local realities, according to their respective institutional frameworks.

## II. AGRARIAN REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

7. Pioneering agrarian reforms in the context of broader radical reform in Latin America began with the Mexican Revolution (1910) and continued with the Bolivian revolution (1953) and the Cuban agrarian reform (1959). Such reforms with their varying intensity and pace were a feature of the Region in the twentieth century. The general rationale for agrarian reform was that action was needed to counter an agricultural sector that was economically inefficient and socially unjust, and the primary objective was to modernize the rural sector, by organizing production along entrepreneurial lines and increasing productivity.

8. Agrarian reform was presented at the time as a way of combating rural poverty and economic inertia, by redistributing idle large estates to smallholders and landless labourers. The agrarian reform strategy was to transfer productive assets by expropriating large amounts of land for redistribution to peasant farmers and wage labourers. The experience however ended by demonstrating that land redistribution alone was not enough to lift rural families out of poverty. Also required was access to other natural and productive resources and to financial and non-financial services.

---

<sup>4</sup> Paragraphs 51-53. Report LARC/06/REP. The document "Report on FAO Activities (2006-2007)" presented at this Regional Conference examines in greater detail the activities conducted in relation to these recommendations.

**Decade 1960-70: Alliance for Progress and the spread of agrarian reforms**

9. During the 1960s, agrarian reform was a widespread phenomenon in Latin America. It received strong continent-wide support in 1961 from the Charter of Punta del Este which was sponsored by the Alliance for Progress. This document identified agrarian reform as a precondition for economic and social development of the Latin American peoples.

10. The United Nations played a decisive role in cultivating a favourable attitude to agrarian change in the Region. From the 1950s, an analytical framework that culminated in the notion of agrarian reform was developed in the UN General Assembly, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), FAO and other agencies. The Inter-American Committee for Agricultural Development (CIDA) was established, which was composed of the Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), ECLAC and FAO, and promoted comprehensive studies in all countries on land tenure and socio-economic development of the agricultural sector.

11. In short, analysis of the context in which agrarian reform unfolded and policy content indicates a favourable environment for its realization. Agrarian reforms in the 1960s and 70s were carried out with broad political support, not only within countries but also, and significantly, externally. This helped forge relative consensus on the type of central policies that were needed for land expropriation and reallocation, including complementary policies of support through credit, technical assistance and marketing. Virtually all the countries issued laws on agrarian reform during this period, although these were applied in different contexts and to different degrees.

**Decade 1980-90: Lower visibility of agrarian reforms**

12. During the 1980s and part of the 1990s, many factors reduced the momentum and effectiveness of agrarian reforms, changing their orientation or reversing their objective: acute social conflicts, low commitment of governments, high cost of reform and funding shortfalls, little or no participation of the population in defining the reform process, hierarchical and centralized State management of reform plans, bureaucratic administration, administrative discontinuity, among others.

13. The opposition of certain influential sectors, who had initially remained silent in the face of the expectations that had accompanied the reforms, resurfaced when the reform momentum weakened, when expectations failed to materialize and when reforms lost the support of peasant farmers and their debilitated organizations. The process of agricultural modernization spawned new capitalistic power groups that exploited the externalities and weaknesses of the reform processes.

14. During these decades, most of the countries of the Region adopted new market guidelines, with a reduction in State intervention, the elimination of subsidies and protection, free trade and macroeconomic adjustments. The consequences of the macroeconomic measures, institutional transformations and programme priorities were felt in the agricultural sector.

15. The reduced role of agriculture in domestic output and employment; the gradual substitution in agricultural production of land and labour with capital and technology; the growing importance of cross-sectoral relations and the agrifood chain; and the dynamics of urban-rural relations were all elements that had been absent or barely present in the boom years of reform, but that came to the fore in innovative approaches.

### III. AGRARIAN REFORM AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

16. Examination of current agrarian reforms in Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Venezuela<sup>5</sup> indicates frequent and varying adjustments based on lessons from traditional agrarian reforms. Many observers therefore consider that current agrarian reform should not be viewed with the paradigms of the past but should be placed in a new perspective of comprehensive policies that embrace the social, political and cultural contexts of each country.

17. The theme of concentration, not only of land but of all rural productive resources, marks a fundamental difference with the situation that prevailed even, before traditional agrarian reform. There are now large agro-industrial complexes using high technology, often associated with transnational corporations and closely linked to global markets. Such structures have little or nothing to do with the land concentration of the past, where their levels of efficiency and living conditions rendered them particularly vulnerable. However, current levels of concentration are perhaps greater than those observed in the past.

18. The picture becomes more complex if we introduce the changes that have taken place in the rural world. For much of the last century, 'rurality' equated agricultural employment with rural population. The current reality, which has been defined as the 'new rurality', is one of a high level of non-agricultural employment and income in rural areas. In addition, there is no longer the correspondence that existed in the past between place of residence and place of work. Urban labour lives in rural areas and rural labour lives in urban areas.

19. The central focus of discussion in ICARRD was agrarian reform and rural development policy, which produced the following vision in its Final Declaration: "Rural development policies, including those on agrarian reforms, should be more focused on the poor and their organizations, socially driven, participatory and respectful of gender equality, in the context of economic, social and environmentally sound sustainable development. They should contribute to food security and poverty eradication, based on secure individual, communal and collective rights, and equality, including, *inter alia*, employment, especially for the landless, strengthening local and national markets, income generation, in particular through small and medium-sized enterprises, social inclusion and conservation of the environmental and cultural assets of the rural areas, through a sustainable livelihood perspective and the empowerment of vulnerable rural stakeholder groups. These policies should also be implemented in a context that fully respects the rights and aspirations of rural people, especially marginalized and vulnerable groups, within national legal frameworks and through effective dialogue".<sup>6</sup>

20. Considering this ICARRD vision and its expression in the Final Declaration, *the Plenary is invited to present its views on central elements to be considered in a new generation of policies that can contribute substantively to the development of rural territories*. A summary of three complementary elements highlighted by ICARRD follows in order to facilitate discussion: (a) participation as an essential principle for the design and implementation of rural development policies; (b) access to and sustainable management of natural and productive resources; and (c) specific policies for women, youth and indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. A Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development (PNTD) approach is then suggested as a means of weaving these topics into the discussion.

---

<sup>5</sup> Cases presented at the "Expert Consultation on Agrarian Reform in Latin America" (Santiago, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Paragraph 28, Final Declaration.

## Central elements for a new generation of policies for development of rural territories

### *(a) Participation: key principle for the design and implementation of rural development policies*

21. One of the clearest elements to be reiterated in the Final Declaration is the importance of main actors participating in the design through to the implementation of policies affecting rural communities. Stressed is that "agrarian reform and rural development policies, laws and institutions must respond to the needs and aspirations of rural people, taking into consideration gender, economic, social, cultural, legal and ecological factors, and, therefore, should involve all relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process".<sup>7</sup>

22. The agreed principles set out in the Declaration include: "national and inclusive dialogue as an over-arching mechanism to ensure significant progress on agrarian reform and rural development" and "support for a participatory approach based on economic, social and cultural rights, as well as good governance for the equitable management of land, water, forests and other natural resources within the context of national legal frameworks focusing on sustainable development and overcoming inequalities, in order to eradicate hunger and poverty".<sup>8</sup>

### *(b) Access to and sustainable management of natural and productive resources*

23. There is broad consensus that agrarian policies should not be limited to mechanisms of access to land as the sole asset. Such policies should be accompanied by comprehensive policies of access to a range of natural and productive resources that will enable the family farming sector to participate actively in the market. It is also important to note that there are no recipes for the combination of resources that each case requires. Each country faces particular situations that need to be resolved according to its specific conditions.

24. In this connection, the Final Declaration of ICARRD recognizes the need "to provide enabling policies, legislation and services, in particular those related to rural production and commerce, technical assistance, financing, capacity building, health and educational measures, infrastructure and institutional support, in order to obtain the fullest possible integration of rural areas into national development efforts".<sup>9</sup>

25. The Declaration also reaffirms "that agrarian reform and other efforts towards the eradication of rural poverty should take into account the preservation and conservation of land, water and other natural resources, and not result in the loss of those resources, particularly for indigenous peoples, such as pastoralists, shepherds and nomadic peoples, nor in the assimilation and erosion of their cultures".<sup>10</sup>

### *(c) Specific policies for women, youth and indigenous and Afro-descendant groups*

26. Discussion forums constantly underscore the importance of giving priority to the poorest individuals and selected specific groups. The Final Declaration underlines "the importance of traditional and family agriculture, and other smallholder production, as well as the roles of traditional rural communities and indigenous groups in contributing to food security and the eradication of poverty". It also reaffirms "that wider, secure and sustainable access to land, water and other natural resources related to rural people's livelihoods, especially, *inter alia*, women, indigenous, marginalized and vulnerable groups, is essential to hunger and poverty eradication, contributes to sustainable development and should therefore be an inherent part of national policies".<sup>11</sup> The following three specific groups are suggested for discussion of priority.

---

<sup>7</sup> ICARRD, Paragraph 16

<sup>8</sup> ICARRD, Paragraph 29

<sup>9</sup> ICARRD, Paragraph 22

<sup>10</sup> ICARRD, Paragraph 27

<sup>11</sup> ICARRD, Paragraph 6

*i) The need to generate conditions to rejuvenate the rural world*

27. Predominant among the Latin American rural population are relatively elderly groups with cultural values that prevent the transfer of productive resources to younger populations until the death of the head of household. Policies on access to resources, including land, need to target the young in order to rejuvenate the rural sector, reduce rural outmigration and give sustainability to the rural world.

28. While the young were not singled out in ICARRD, the MERCOSUR Specialized Meeting on Family Agriculture set up a thematic group on differentiated policies for rural youth. Mexico and Brazil are developing programmes to include youth in rural development processes, one notable example being the Young Rural Entrepreneur and Land Fund of Mexico's Secretariat for Agrarian Reform.

*ii) Gender equality and access of women to land*

29. The reality of women acting as heads of rural household needs to be quantified and addressed. The difficulty that rural women face in accessing land, water, credit, extension and training services, and technical assistance is a core problem. Their lack of access to these key resources is partly because of the invisibility of their input to the household economy. In the case of land and productive resources, ownership is generally in the name of the husband, father or brothers, which excludes women from official sources of finance or support for production.

30. Women's access to land is more restricted than that of men in all developing countries, including under many traditional systems of land tenure. The laws often discriminate explicitly against women, in terms of rights to possession and inheritance of land. Five types of approach are recommended to overcome the legal, institutional and attitudinal barriers to women accessing land: reform of legal codes and regulations; specific financial support; gender analysis in the formulation phase of rural development projects and programmes; training and advocacy among civil servants, especially those working on land registers and agrarian reform programmes; and public education campaigns. The adoption of just one of these approaches is not sufficient; they need to be applied collectively.

*iii) Policies addressing the specific characteristics of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities*

31. The particularity of indigenous reality is common to countries in which "land" is not just a productive resource but is rooted in indigenous origins. Land ownership often carries a sense of historical identity that goes beyond its production capacity. Access to land and other resources must satisfy these two dimensions.

32. At the same time, a signal is needed for the Afro-descendant communities that have been excluded from the political and economic sphere, and that lack cultural recognition. Processes of national territorial demarcation have often ignored the rights of these communities. Laws and even the constitution (in the case of Colombia in 1991) have sometimes been amended to resolve this state of inequality.

**Emergence of the territorial approach to rural development in Latin America and the Caribbean**

33. The territorial approach to rural development has emerged forcefully in recent years. Some practitioners see territorial development as concurrent institutional and productive change in selected localities that permits progress in overcoming poverty. With its reappraisal of the spatial dimension to socio-economic factors, the territorial approach is becoming increasingly accepted as a possible route around the limitations that impede rural development. However, what is occurring is rhetorical renovation that is still not reflected in institutional change or in the methods and instruments used to implement this approach.

34. Rural communities, vulnerable groups and people in poverty live in territories where the organization and dynamics of the inhabitants determine quality of life. If we consider the territory as a socially constructed space, the management of territorial development or the elaboration of any form of local development needs to consider cultural heritage and local knowledge and tools, and needs to consult all stakeholders. In terms of methodology, different non-exclusive perspectives can be adopted to analyse the territory: a sectoral dimension that focuses on locating the physical-spatial, socio-economic and technical-productive components, and a systemic, historical dimension that is shaped by the visions of all the actors involved.

### **Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development (PNTD)**

35. The methodology proposals drawn up by FAO on intervention methods based on social dialogue through negotiation are particularly relevant, notably Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development (PNTD)<sup>12</sup>. In response to growing competition between actors for resources and territory and the role of public administration, this approach seeks to establish and maintain a social dialogue within a territory and to restructure and/or strengthen the territorial institutions.

36. The PNTD approach seeks to reduce asymmetries by supporting negotiation and socially legitimized agreements that include all development stakeholders. The complexity of the territorial system is thus incorporated, both in its national and supranational context and in its diversity of interests and strategies, with efforts to involve all stakeholders in decision-making.

## **IV. ICARRD FOLLOW-UP IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

37. The first follow-up by the FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (FAO/RLC) was to convene an Expert Consultation on Agrarian Reform (Santiago, December 2006), in which officials, academics and heads of government institutions of Chile, Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, Venezuela and Peru, associated with the topic of land, met to discuss the challenges of agrarian reform in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. One aspect firmly agreed was that agrarian reform should not be limited to the redistribution of idle land, but should be accompanied by rural development policies with a territorial approach that considers the particularities of each case. There was also consensus that land was not the only resource to be redistributed. There were also water and all the natural resources that generated the conditions for the development of rural communities. Emphasis was placed on policies to facilitate the access to land of women and youth.

38. The Expert Consultation called collaboration between FAO/RLC and the Network of Public Institutions Responsible for the Implementation of Land Policies (Land Network), the body set up under the MERCOSUR Specialized Meeting on Family Farming (REAF).<sup>13</sup> The main objectives of the Land Network are: (i) to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences between countries; (ii) to organize inter-agency collaboration in policy implementation; (iii) to propose policy guidelines and joint concrete actions relating to common problems; (iv) to generate periodic reports and analysis of policy development processes related to the thematic topic of the network.

---

<sup>12</sup> More information on this proposal can be found at:  
[http://www.fao.org/sd/dim\\_in3/in3\\_060503\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/sd/dim_in3/in3_060503_en.htm)

<sup>13</sup> The REAF is made up of government institutions and civil society organizations of the Expanded MERCOSUR (Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina and Venezuela). The REAF is part of the MERCOSUR integration process and aims to strengthen public policies for family farming and agrarian reform and to generate farmer income by facilitating trade. It is made up of national public institutions working in these areas and actively involves social movements and civil society organizations.

39. In collaboration with the Land Network, FAO is involved in the design and methodology support of a research project on "*Land Concentration and Foreign Ownership*" set up to gather information on the extent and trends of this issue to help guide public policies of the REAF countries. Case studies are underway in Brazil, Venezuela, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay acting through their respective land institutes and with the participation of civil society organizations. In parallel, the "*Classification of Land Tenure Regulatory Frameworks*" database is being updated, in collaboration with the national land institutes, to provide a general overview of main land policies and determine legal frameworks in the REAF countries.

40. A Letter of Agreement with the Office of International Cooperation of Brazil's National Institute of Land Settlement and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) led to a programme to develop actions for the exchange of experiences in land policies and agrarian legislation, involving government institutions responsible for agrarian policy in the Southern Cone countries. The programme included internships for technical teams; international seminars and methodology exchanges on agrarian legislation; national registration systems; public policies for family farming; a geo-referenced system; and agrarian management. Exchanges took place between Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina, thus consolidating cooperation initiatives and training organized by INCRA, and resulting in a Brazil/Argentina Working Group on Agrarian Legislation.

41. The Agreement of Understanding between the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock of Paraguay, the Ministry of Agricultural Development (MDA) of Brazil, and the ITAIPÚ Binacional company was ratified in April 2007, with the participation of FAO. This agreement on technical cooperation in agrarian reform and rural development aims to foster cooperation on the ICARRD recommendations and has determined three focal areas: animal health, agroenergy and family farming, and territorial development. Work is also underway on designing a support plan for 25 localities on the border between Paraguay and Brazil, with priority given to strengthening family farming.

42. Guided by the principal ICARRD recommendations on the importance of leveraging the combined experience of countries, FAO/RLC has recently been involved in a project to support countries in implementing training actions based on case studies and exchange of experiences in territorial development and agrarian reform, so that countries, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations can formulate policies and programmes aimed at facilitating access to natural and productive resources and strengthening agreed processes of territorial management.

43. Additional resources are being mobilized to help countries move forward in the implementation of the recommendations in paragraph 30 of the ICARRD Declaration on "international collaboration initiatives". The aim is to further study and disseminate features of interest and lessons from countries that have implemented rural territorial development programmes and/or policies of access to resources (land, water, assets) and to include initiatives that provide access to resource-poor and vulnerable groups, including rural women heads of household, indigenous women and rural youth.

## **V. PROPOSALS FOR FORMULATION OF A PLAN OF ACTION 2008-2010 TO FOLLOW UP ICARRD IN THE REGION**

44. Under the present circumstances therefore, agrarian reform should not be limited to the redistribution of land and natural resources. It should be accompanied by policies that comprehensively address access to and security of tenure of those resources and their administration, drawing upon principles of diversity and participation and giving public and private actors leadership in the development of their respective territories, through mechanisms of consultation and dialogue.

*The following orientations are suggested for discussion by the Plenary which may wish to include other actions it considers necessary in a regional plan of action for 2008-2010.*

45. **Fostering skills for dialogue between actors of different territories**, as a way of generating an enabling environment for implementation of territorial development and agrarian reform policies. Such skills development should enable governments and civil society to formulate, at different levels, actions and programmes designed to facilitate access to natural and productive resources, and to strengthen agreed processes of territorial management and planning as a tool to support the formulation and implementation of public policy.

46. **Promoting the formulation of a new generation of policies, programmes and projects** in countries that prioritize access to and security of tenure of natural and productive resources by subsistence family farming, youth, women and indigenous communities.

47. **Strengthening and promoting subregional and regional networks of dialogue and exchange of experiences** through new methodologies such as learning paths, between civil society organizations, and government and international cooperation institutions, such as the Land Network of REAF-MERCOSUR; at the same time, promoting the instigation of similar initiatives in the Andean and Central American subregions, using already existing collaborative networks.

48. **Supporting the creation of a regional communication platform (info-structure)** that is accessible, dynamic and open to all members and partners of the Region and that considers databank components,<sup>14</sup> thematic groups and a learning strategy.<sup>15</sup>

49. **Establishing and expanding partnerships with agencies specialized in land, including international agencies, institutes and universities** so that, through applied research, comparative studies, programme evaluations and classification of experiences, updated knowledge can be generated on the problems of land and access to resources that face rural communities.

---

<sup>14</sup> We suggest considering existing data platforms such as [www.landtenure.info](http://www.landtenure.info).

<sup>15</sup> Corresponds to one of the priority actions by Land Coalition at regional level [www.landcoalition.org](http://www.landcoalition.org).