



**Launch of International Year of Family Farming – 2014
on Friday, 22nd November 2013 at IAT, Bangalore**

Highlights of the event

We are happy to share that we had an excellent launch programme of the **International Year of Family Farming 2014 at Bangalore, India**. It was a farmer centric event. It was attended by farmers who are small holders representing drought prone dry land regions from **three southern states – Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh**. The event was jointly organised by **AME Foundation, Bangalore, Karnataka Science and Technology Academy, Bangalore, Institution of Agricultural Technologists, Bangalore and UAS Alumni Association, Bangalore**.

Special guests for the occasion included experts from various backgrounds who interacted with the farmers. Also, Media were invited to cover the event. Some of our esteemed NGO partners have sent their farmer representatives (DDS, Hyderabad). Dr. Malla Reddy, ED, Accion Fraternal, Anantapur attended the meeting as one of the special guests.

The **purpose of the programme** was not only to celebrate the launch of the year which was celebrated globally on that day, but also to listen to farmers' experiences, seek suggestions from experts on how family farming could be strengthened, through better policy support. It provided a great opportunity to all to hear farmers share how the family farms meet their **multiple needs (food, income nutrition), how their ecological farms bring down costs of cultivation and dependencies on external inputs**. Also, it was a beginning for exploring **policy enabling mechanisms** to support the small holders as a first step towards better conditions for family farming.

The program began with a **prayer by a woman farmer**. Shri Devendrappa, Secretary, IAT, welcomed the Chief Guest and special guests.

The panel of guests invited included: **Shri Chiranjiv Singh**, former Development Commissioner, **Dr. R. Dwarakinath**, Chairman, AME Foundation and former VC, UAS, Bangalore, **Dr. Premnath**, Chairman, PNASF, Bangalore, **Dr. N Nagaraja**, DE, UAS, Bangalore, **Dr. Y V Malla Reddy**, Director, Accion Fraternal, Anantapur, **Dr. Narayana Reddy**, Organic farmer, **Prof. V Veerabhadraiah**, President, UAS Alumni Association, and **Dr. T M Thiagarajan**, former Dean TNAU.

Inauguration by watering a plant: The inauguration of the launch of the IYFF was done by watering a potted plant.

After the ceremonial inauguration, Mr. K V S Prasad, ED, AMEF, shared the genesis of the IYFF efforts, its relevance for Indian context, and the support the campaign is receiving globally. He cited the findings of the several UN and other international studies which are highlighting the need to support small holders, the



multifunctionality of small farms, and India's challenges with regard to development indicators. It was important that India which is still primarily farm based, that too small holders, has to be on the forefront to support farming communities to deal with threatened livelihoods and ecologies.

Sharing by farmers: The formal programme began with farmers sharing compelling evidence how family farming is supporting their livelihoods. Farmer groups shared how their family farms are supporting their multiple needs of food, income and nutrition.

One farmer group from Kolar (drought prone dryland region in Karnataka) **depicted their farm on the floor.** Women farmers from Dharmapuri (another drought prone area in Tamil Nadu) brought the **vegetable produce** which they have been cultivating in their homestead gardens as a supplementary nutritional produce. A film was shown from Dharmapuri highlighting how the dry land farmers are managing higher productivity and incomes through better management of in situ rain water, creating surface water bodies, on farm vegetation as a source for organic manures, and eco cultivation methods. They shared that they get farm income from multiple sources – main crop, trap crop, border crop, savings on fodder, and livestock – thus highlighting the multi-functionality of a family farm.

Launch programmes were also organised by DDS in Zaheerabad in Andhra Pradesh, where 500 women peasant farmers attended. All members of six farmer families were honoured. Representatives from top academic institutions, like DG, NAARM and State Agri Univ. attended and appreciated the efforts, promised to highlight their efforts in their regular academic situations. SEWA, Gujarat has organised a meeting of women farmers representing 9 states to celebrate the launch (More details awaited).



Sharing by panel of experts: The panel felt that family farming needs to be supported, strongly. The need for giving high priority to family based farming was emphasized as it provides an answer to multiple challenges in a vastly populous nation where majority of the livelihoods are rural and farm based. It was also mentioned that the basic health and nutritional aspects of farm families cannot be undermined. They observed that the present leaning of policy is towards corporate agriculture rather than supporting family farming.

Neglect of special needs of the small holders who constitute the farming majority in terms of knowledge support and guidance, forward-backward linkages, extension system, access and timeliness of services and the problems of labor shortages were discussed. The critical elements like fragmentation of landholdings, the absence of local market infrastructure to handle local produce, local post harvest storage were mentioned. The farmers expressed the need for better management guidance as well as guidance on simple farming alternatives.

The need for collectivization, the need for policies which incentivise ecological approaches were highlighted. The use of flagship schemes like NREGA to recognize mechanisms to support creation of productive assets, importance of small implements, shared labour and SRI were mentioned as possible opportunities to strengthen family farming. The use of flagship schemes like NREGA to recognize mechanisms to support creation of productive assets, importance of small implements, shared labour and SRI were mentioned as possible opportunities to strengthen family farming.



Vote of Thanks: Prof. V Veerabhadraiah, President, UAS Alumni and Vice President, IAT thanked all the guests, farmers and media for their active participation and contributions on behalf of the organizers. The guests were given a **potted plant** and the farmers a **calendar of year 2014** as a souvenir.



Messages from FAO and GEF

Dear Prasad,

Thank you very much for the kind invitation to the launch event which unfortunately I cannot attend due to previous commitments. I was delighted to see your active engagement in the International Year of Family Farming. The AME Foundation and your partners in the launch have long been engaged in promoting the themes of the UN IYFF. I am certain that many will benefit from the wider dissemination of these experiences from this event and others throughout the year.

Dr. Daniel Gustafson, Deputy Director-General (Operations), FAO, Rome

Dear Mr. Prasad,

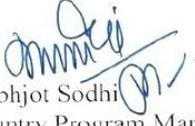
We thank you for your message inviting us to participate in the Launch Program for the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) on 22nd November 2013.

The occasion of International Year of Family Farming declared by the United Nations should be celebrated for togetherness of men, women and family members for the common cause of sustainable development. We hope AME Foundation who are on the forefront of developmental activities in their area will celebrate this special occasion with this zeal and take it up as a movement for sustainable initiatives for the overall benefit to communities.

We are all the more happy to know that you are celebrating this Event in collaboration with Karnataka Science & Technology Academy, Bangalore and the Institution of Agricultural Technologists along with the UAS Alumni Association, Bangalore.

It would have been my pleasure to be with you on this important occasion. Due to pre-occupation, much against my wishes I will not be able to share the joy of being with all of you. However, kindly accept our greetings and good wishes for the success of the movement that you are starting on this Day.

With kind regards!


Prabhjot Sodhi
Country Program Manager
GEF/UNDP Small Grants Program