**Concept Note   
Establishment of the Working Group on  
Common Criteria for achieving definitions and typologies on Family Farming**

**Background/Rationale for the Working Group:**

The Regional Dialogues Outcome Reports of the IYFF stressed the demand for better understanding of the dominant characteristics and diversity of family farming in the current context of agricultural transformation. Furthermore, participants pointed out that effective family farming-targeted policy making has been hindered by the lack of adequate definitions and characterization at national and regional level and limited statistical data at holding level, resulting in identifying family farms as the smaller holdings based on use of land size thresholds, as available in many agricultural censuses.

Major concerns include both the ‘invisibility’ of women’s participation in agricultural activities, income and tenure/property and the lack of common criteria to set the amount of non-family labour used for farms and more broadly how to adequately capture the commonalities and diversities of family farms operating in various agro-ecological regions and social, economic and cultural contexts, as well as their diversity vis-à-vis patronal and corporate farms.

The definition proposed in the IYFF Master Plan has proven valid as a starting point for facilitating policy dialogue so far. Yet, consensus has emerged that the IYFF provides momentum for a qualitative step forward for policy and analytical purposes through, for example, achieving common international criteria to facilitate definitions and typologies of FF at country and regional level.

This step would enable various actors to align their objectives and would facilitate the identification of effective ways to support FF in their diversity. Similarly, clear criteria are required to enable the gathering of adequate statistics on the economic and demographic dimensions of family farming in order to enhance pro-FF policy initiatives that may require the selection of targeted beneficiaries and typologies. Currently, the participation of family farmers in food, feed, fibre and fuel production and their contribution related to ecosystem services and carbon footprint cannot be fairly estimated.

In addition, this gap is a constraint when making international comparisons and estimates using agricultural census data. For example, recent FAO studies find that at least 90 percent of more than 570 million farms in the world can be considered as family farms (a conservative estimate) and occupy approximately 70 percent of the world's farmland. Better estimations could be made if agricultural census essential data would include similar criteria to identify the family farms’ sector.

More effective harmonization of agricultural data in the context of relevant UN agencies will be highly beneficial for improved interagency coordination.

Recognizing the urgency of addressing the question of FF definitions and typologies at national and regional level and its crucial importance for outputs of the IYFF beyond 2014, FAO will host a technical working group, which will build on work achieved throughout the IYFF and ongoing extensive work achieved by the World Agricultures Watch initiative on typologies of agricultural holdings as well as other initiatives such as the regional criteria and national registers of family farms achieved by the Specialized Meeting on Family Farming of the Southern Common Market.

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| **Importance of Common Criteria**   * Enhanced policy planning tailored to FF needs and diversification of FF-focused programs and policies based on the FF typologies * More accurate monitoring and reporting of policy implementation and outcomes * Enhanced capability to produce statistics on FF at national and regional level in order to provide a broader base of homogeneous data * Better tailored research initiatives that respond to the specific challenges facing family farmers * Better targeted extension and rural services for family farmers * Better targeted public support for innovation, taking into account the specific characteristics of family farming at the national/regional level * Harmonized efforts of development agencies and other stakeholders engaged in family farming |

**Mandate of the Working Group**

The main goal of the working group is to develop criteria and guidelines to support countries for establishing and characterizing clear FF definitions and typologies at national and regional level. The criteria are expected to be encompassing enough to provide a range of characteristics that are applicable to multiple family farming contexts – shaped by historical, cultural and economic factors, user oriented and practical enough to be informed through regular data collection, including existing statistics.

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| **What it is not** | **What it is** |
| Intergovernmental panel | Working group of technical experts |
| A working group to create an international definition for family farming | A working group to establish international common criteria useful for definitions and typologies at national/regional level |

**Composition**

The working group will be composed of the following:

* Designated staff members of FAO, the other RBAs and development agencies
* Experts and researchers from various institutions, fields, covering all the regions

The group will be gender balanced and represent different areas and areas of expertise. Technical experts and practitioners from civil society and governments will be extensively consulted throughout the process.

**Deliverables**

* A compilation of the definitions and methodologies used at country, regional and international level to define and characterize family farming/smallholder farming in their diversity,
* Common criteria and respective methodologies to adapt at national and regional level
* Recommendations for improved data collection at holding and household level to characterize such typologies, from existing dataset (such as census, LSMS) and best practices from countries

**Tentative Timeline**

1. May – formulation of the working group
2. 2 Technical Consultations completed by October
3. Presentation of the working group’s results during the Global Dialogue