

# Foreword

*Sustainable agriculture and equitable and effective rural development cannot be pursued without explicit recognition of the substantial contribution of rural women. In an atmosphere of increasing poverty, food insecurity, rural out-migration and environmental degradation, women continue to provide food for their families despite limited access to land, credit, capital and technology, lack of education, training and information, and an unfavorable legal and policy environment. The perseverance with which rural women confront these obstacles signals the vast untapped potential that could be released to benefit both this and future generations.*

*FAO is committed to mainstreaming the concerns of rural women into its operations, and significant steps have already been taken to accomplish this. The FAO Plan of Action for Women in Development (1996-2001), adopted by the FAO Conference in 1995, presents a framework for ensuring that gender issues become an integral part of the Organization's work, both normative and operational. As gender is a cross-cutting issue and requires organization-wide responsibility, the Plan was prepared using a highly inclusive and participatory approach in order to secure a strong staff involvement in the Plan's implementation, and an adequate allocation by management of resources toward this end.*

*The result has been that, for each of the technical areas for which FAO is responsible, 'Programmes of Action' for the advancement of women have been developed by the staff members who work in those areas. These Programmes seek to strengthen the technical, professional and resource capacities of FAO to address issues of gender, and to diffuse responsibility for integrating such issues among all those working in the development arena. This will help ensure that FAO's commitments to the advancement of women are translated into concrete achievements. The Programmes form the core of the FAO Plan of Action, a summarized version of which is presented in this publication.*

*The Introduction presents the broad conceptual framework for analyzing the implications of gender for sustainable agriculture and rural development, including what development needs from women and what women need from development. The second section, "From Words to Action", shows how FAO is transforming these ideas into strategies and actions, specifically in the areas of natural resources, agricultural support systems, food and nutrition, and improved policy-making and planning. The final section, "FAO Institutional Arrangements", identifies the administrative mechanisms to monitor and evaluate progress both for implementing the Plan and promoting equal employment opportunities for women throughout the Organization.*

*As the United Nations Agency responsible for agriculture, forestry and fisheries worldwide, and with the mandate to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development as well as food security for all people, FAO will carry on and further its mission to ensure that women, in addition to men, have the support and access to resources they need to pursue sustainable livelihoods and an improved quality of life. Through the Plan of Action, the Organization will ensure that this pledge is carried forward to the next millennium, with all the resources and creativity it has at its command.*

**Jacques Diouf**  
*Director-General*

# Contents

## INTRODUCTION

### **2 A New Framework for Development**

#### FROM WORDS TO ACTION...

### **5 Gender and Natural Resources**

Land and Water

Plants

Animal Resources

Forests and Trees

Fisheries

### **15 Gender and Agricultural Support Systems**

Rural Finance and Marketing Services

Rural Groups and Organizations

Agricultural Research and Technology Development

Agricultural Education and Extension

Communication

### **23 Gender, Food and Nutrition**

### **26 Gender, Policy and Planning**

Data Collection, Research and Analysis

Legislation

#### FAO INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

### **31 Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Coordination Affirmative Action**

### **32 SELECTED DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES**

*The FAO Plan of Action for Women in Development (1996-2001) is the Organization's continuing response to the global events of the 1990s as well as the recommendations of recent international fora including the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Nutrition, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the World Food Summit. It also represents the FAO framework for assisting Member Nations in implementing the Platform for Action, a global blueprint of actions to promote the advancement of women that was the major outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in September, 1995.*

