



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
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联合国
粮食及
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et
l'agriculture

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

CONFERENCE

Thirty-third Session

Rome, 19-26 November 2005

International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development

1. The preparations for the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development continue. Several fundamental preparatory activities for the Conference have been completed, and other complementary activities are under way.

Background

2. The Council, at its 128th Session (20-24 June 2005) endorsed the proposals (previously approved by the 19th Session of the Committee on Agriculture) to organize an “International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD): New challenges and Options for Revitalizing Rural Communities” to be held in 2006. It stressed the importance of agrarian reform and rural development for poverty reduction and for the achievement of the World Food Summit Plan of Action and the Millennium Development Goals. The Council approved the Calendar and the proposal that a Steering Committee composed of representatives of regional groups, with the full participation of the Host Country, be established immediately to support the organization of the Conference. The Council welcomed Brazil’s offer to host and contribute to the financing of the Conference.

ICARRD’s contribution to global commitments

3. ICARRD will directly support the Millennium Development Goals, principally MDG-1 (Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty), MDG-3 (Promote gender equality and empower women), MDG-7 (Ensure environmental sustainability) and MDG-8 (Develop a global partnership for development). It will also contribute to the implementation of the 2003 ECOSOC Ministerial Declaration on “Promoting an integrated approach to rural development”.

Schedule for the preparation of the Conference

4. The following schedule of activities for the preparation of the Conference has been proposed:

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Preliminary identification of topics:	July-September 2005
Consultation with regional groups (Steering Committee):	September 2005
Preparation of reporting format and guidance for preparation of national reports:	September 2005
Preparation of issues papers:	September–November 2005
Regional Groups, Civil Society Organization (CSO) and e-mail consultations on issues papers and stocktaking:	October - December 2005
Finalisation of issues papers:	January 2006
Collation of technical (case studies) and national reports and stocktaking exercise:	January - February 2006
International Conference	7-10 March, 2006

Steps taken in preparation of ICARRD

5. i) FAO has established a Global Trust Fund (GTF) to handle the finances for the Conference. The Government of Brazil provided \$ 250 000 to the GTF in order to begin the preparatory activities of the Conference.

ii) The following bodies have been established for the preparation of the Conference:

a) Steering Committee:

The Steering Committee has the overall responsibility for directing the substantive and technical content and structure of the Conference, including guidance, support, review and clearance of: (i) the Conference agenda and related events; (ii) the letter of invitation and list of the invitees; (iii) guidelines for the preparation of national case studies and national reports (which countries may wish to submit to the Conference); (iv) the three Conference issues papers; (v) other official outputs, including the Conference proceedings and structure and modalities of operation of the Lasting Platform¹.

The Steering Committee (SC) is composed of: (i) up to three members for each of the seven representatives from Regional Groups; (ii) One representative from the host country (Brazil); (iii) Executive Secretary (Director SDA). Consultations and exchange between CSO/NGO and the Steering Committee prior to and/or after the Steering Committee meetings will be held.

The Steering Committee held its first meeting on 8 September 2005 at FAO Headquarters in Rome.

¹ Lasting platform is a mechanism of understanding, learning and dialogue on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, and rural poverty issues, supported by an International Observatory Panel.

b) Executive Secretariat:

The Executive Secretariat is responsible for the day-to-day organization of the Conference including the drafting of all documents to be considered by the Steering Committee as well as the letters of invitation by the Director-General and the Memorandum of Understanding with Brazil.

The Executive Secretariat is composed of the following members:

- The Director, Rural Development Division (SDA),
and a small group of professionals and resources persons from SDA. It is supported by the following Panels:

-Technical Panel

The Technical Panel provides technical inputs and guidance on the Conference documents and national reports and briefs for discussions with the Policy Panel and the Steering Committee. It is composed of thematic working groups and meets at least once a month.

-Policy Panel

The policy panel is responsible for providing policy and decision-making guidance and meets prior to and after the Steering Committee meetings.

iii) The Secretariat has prepared the Terms of Reference for the Issue Papers

a) The Issue Papers will: (i) address the key issues to be discussed by ICARRD, and (ii) review the current state of knowledge and action on the proposed topics.

b) The Issue Papers will cover the following:

Issue Paper 1: Policies and practices for securing and improving access to land;

Issue Paper 2: Building capacity to improve access to land, water and agricultural inputs and agrarian services;

Issue Paper 3: New opportunities to strengthen rural producers and communities - facilitating people's choices in rural development.

Issue Paper 4: Agrarian reform, social justice and sustainable development.

c) The authors and organizations that will prepare the Issue Papers have been identified and the contractual procedures are under way.

iv) The Secretariat is in the process of creating a Website for the Conference. An electronic conference to serve as a forum on the issues for the conference is under development.

v) A series of technical discussions for the selection of Country Case Studies to be proposed to the Steering Committee has been conducted; countries have been selected on the basis of geographical balance and representativeness with respect to the diversity of experiences and lessons to be learned.

vi) A set of National Guidelines to be submitted to the participating Governments for the preparation of the voluntary National Reports has been drafted. The National Reports are expected to: (i) describe the state of national policies with regards to agrarian reform and rural development; (ii) outline the relationship of these policies to the broader development goals; (iii) present the results and lessons learned of the Governments' policies; and; (iv) detail the current agrarian reform and rural development priorities.

vii) The following steps to initiate stakeholder consultations have been undertaken:

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- a) The FAO-Accredited networks of NGOs and CSOs to participate in the discussions on the technical issues to be discussed by ICARRD. The International Land Coalition has likewise been contacted.
 - b) The Executive Secretariat has held several meetings with the Resources and Strategic Partnership Unit (TCDS), Action Aid International (AAI) and the International Planning Committee (IPC) to discuss their role in organizing CSOs and NGOs for ICARRD. Their involvement in the technical preparation and selection of CSO/NGO participants for the conference has been confirmed.
 - c) FAO Representatives in all FAO member countries have been requested to notify local FAO counterparts of the goals and scope of ICARRD and inquire about their possible participation.
- viii) Draft Rules of Procedures for ICARRD are being developed, and these will be submitted to the Steering Committee for discussion and approval.
- ix) Candidates for two posts of national consultants who will act, in close collaboration with the Executive Secretariat, to support the Brazilian National Secretariat, have been identified.
- x) Contractual procedures are under way to identify an author for an internal stock-taking paper on FAO's role in agrarian reform and rural development since WCARRD.