

THIS SEMINAR IS THE SIXTH IN A SERIES BEING INITIATED BY THE IIED/HIVOS KNOWLEDGE PROGRAMME: SMALL PRODUCER AGENCY IN GLOBALISED MARKETS

Rural youth today, farmers tomorrow?

WHY THIS 'PROVOCATION'?

A rising number of rural youth in developing and emerging economies are turning their back on small-scale agriculture. Limited access to markets, assets, finance and infrastructure in rural areas, coupled with perceived employment opportunities in urban areas increasingly makes cities the preferred choice in the search for a better life. Yet small-scale farming remains a key source of livelihood and employment and will be critical to future food security. Engaging rural youth in agriculture is key in an era of rapid rural change. But are today's policies and institutions up to the task?

Join the debate

Venue:
Idazaal
Prinsestraat 37
The Hague
The Netherlands
www.idazaal.nl

24 May 2012
09.00–12.00
(Central European Time)



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Rural youth today, farmers tomorrow?

In rural areas of many developing and emerging economy countries, the number of young people is falling or expected to do so within the near future. The exodus of rural youth means fewer small-scale farmers tomorrow, potentially drastically changing the profile of farming. For many of those who stay behind, the prospects of finding decent non-farm work are limited. Many are unemployed or work informally — often in unpaid, low-skilled, insecure and sometimes hazardous jobs. Faced with little or no access to land, markets, finance and education, rural youth struggle to make small-scale agricultural activities profitable.

But this is not just a local employment and livelihood issue. It is also a global food security one — if today's rural youth cannot or do not want to become tomorrow's farmers, how can we hope to feed a fast-rising world population?

Do policy and investment interventions recognise these transformations taking place and target interventions accordingly? Are they addressing the challenges of demographic transition, rural (youth) employment and food security? Common interventions aimed at small-scale farming tend to focus on production and adopt a 'one-size-fits-all' attitude. However, such an approach does not do justice to the heterogeneity and dynamics of small-scale farming and fails to accommodate the needs and aspirations of the next generation of smallholders.

Some development actors have begun calling for a new vision of small-scale farming — one that takes better account of the perspectives of both this generation and the next. At a special session of the Farmers' Forum global meeting at IFAD in February 2012, representatives of young small-scale farmers from Africa, Asia and Latin America emphasised the need to give rural youth more access to finance, knowledge, markets and natural resources, as well as a stronger say in the decisions that affect them. These are some of the priorities of young farmers today. So how can we meet them?

THE PROVOCATION IN PRACTICE

The provocation will bring together policymakers, academics and practitioners working on agriculture and intergenerational change to discuss the perspectives of small-scale farmers and the future of

farming, against a backdrop of rising unemployment, food insecurity and falling motivation among young people to choose smallholder agriculture as a livelihood option.

It will aim to address the following:

- **What are the realities facing tomorrow's small-scale farmers and to what extent do existing policies reflect those?**
- **What is the role of small-scale farming in providing livelihood and employment opportunities for rural youth?**
- **How do the attitudes and aspirations of rural youth to small-scale agriculture differ from those of today's farmers?**
- **What does this mean for the institutions that support small-scale farmers, and for the businesses that trade with them?**

SPEAKERS

- Felicity Proctor, consultant, United Kingdom; and lead author of Hivos/IIED research paper *Small-scale farming and youth in an era of rapid rural change*.
- Xiaobing Wang, Chinese Academy of Social Science, China; and co-author of Hivos/IIED research paper *Small-Scale Chinese farmers in the face of modernisation and globalisation*.
- Philippe Remy, West and Central Africa Division, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Italy
- George Dixon Fernandez, MIJARC (International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth), Belgium
- **Facilitator:** Carol Gribnau, Hivos, The Netherlands

HOSTING PARTNERS

Hivos (Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation) and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

LIVE STREAMING



The seminar will be broadcast as a live video stream on the IIED website (www.iied.org/provocation6), and also recorded and posted on the site for later viewing. Viewers of the live stream will be able to submit their own perspectives and ask questions in real time. The seminar will be conducted in English and broadcast in collaboration with One World Media.

For further information on the event and registration, please email info@hivos.net.

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