

Canadian Farmers To Share Expertise with Farmers from Developing Countries

Agriculture worldwide is going through difficult times. Farmers are affected, among other things, by declining incomes and loss of market power. In many developing countries, where agriculture is crucial for the subsistence of millions of people, the farmers' situation is disastrous. According to many experts, reduction of poverty in those countries can not be achieved without a strong agriculture sector. In that context, sharing expertise between the North and the South, through international development programs could play a key role.

Farmers in Quebec have been involved in international development since the creation of UPADI in 1993 (Quebec Farmers Organization, international development). Now farmers across the country will get more intensely involved in international development programs. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) announced recently its participation in a three-year pilot-project in collaboration with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), Agri-Cord and UPA-DI to help build farm leadership capacity in developing countries.

The program, entitled: *Organizational Capacity Building of Professional Agricultural Organizations of Developing Countries within the IFAP*, aims to strengthen professional agricultural organizations in developing countries so they can play an active role in the fight against poverty, at home and at the international level, and contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of farmers. More than a dozen projects should be selected among those submitted by farm organizations from IFAP members' developing countries to receive financing by this CIDA's program, under three sections: Organizational Leadership Development; Building Organizations' Economic and Management Capacity; and Implementation of knowledge and technical, economic and commercial information networks

"CFA has agreed to participate in the program to offer a Canadian dimension to the project, by providing members' experience and knowledge, in an effort to help reduce poverty and empower farmers", said the President of the CFA, Mr. Robert Friesen. He added: "The CFA firmly believes in the benefit of sharing expertise and knowledge with developing countries on systems and structures that provide a strong voice for farmers."

An important part of the program is to sensitize the Canadian public, most particularly in the rural communities, to the situation of farmers and agriculture in developing countries. To that effect, several articles will be published in the next year on the problems faced by producers in the developing countries. Canadian farmers will also be encouraged to share expertise with their colleagues from the South.

Indeed, farmers from developed countries, such as Canada, are well-equipped to help farmers in developing countries. It is a question of showing support and solidarity. A story to be followed closely in the coming months.

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