

Today marks the launch of the International Year of Biodiversity under the theme Biodiversity is Life – Biodiversity is Our Life. It is a theme of critical interest to farmers since biodiversity and agriculture are interdependent; both are also key elements to address climate change and food security. Conserving biodiversity is a shared responsibility of stakeholders worldwide, and farmers are willing to do their part.

The International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) will be highlighting, throughout this year, the crucial role played by farmers to conserve ecosystems. IFAP will also be challenging national governments and the international community to put in place programs to help secure the planet's biodiversity, while at the same time, ensuring that farmers have the necessary tools to increase food production by 70 percent by 2050 to feed a growing world population.

"The main issue for farmers is gaining recognition for the multiple roles that agriculture is expected to fulfil and identifying appropriate mechanisms in order to achieve them. We need to help and encourage farmers to improve their current practices, while ensuring they can sustain their families and remain competitive in the markets. These efforts all need be undertaken simultaneously, otherwise you will have food security problems or a compromised ecosystem," said Ajay Vashee, IFAP President.

Farmers understand the need to protect and conserve biodiversity, and their role in doing so. At the same time, it is crucial that they maintain the economic viability of their agricultural activities. In 2010, IFAP will strive to find genuine and long-lasting approaches to better conserve and enhance biological diversity that can be implemented by farmers, and will advocate positive and constructive policy approaches to governments and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

"Through such practices as land set asides for wildlife and native species, conservation farming, organic farming, reforestation practices, pastoralism, rotational grazing and rehabilitation of degraded lands, farmers are contributing to the conservation and protection of biodiversity. However, this is a shared responsibility with the rest of society. All stakeholders need to participate. If these efforts are to be expanded on a global scale to reduce biodiversity degradation, appropriate funding, positive incentives for farmers such as payment for ecosystem services, training and policy implementation will be needed to achieve results," concluded Vashee. (...)

The article:

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