



NURTURING OUR FAMILY FARMS

You might not even have thought about it as you bit into your sandwiches at school, but on October 16 World Food Day was celebrated all around the globe. This year's activities, in particular, paid homage to the importance of family farms in producing food.

So what is family farming then? As the name implies family farming includes all agricultural activities that are undertaken by families – it can be a small home garden or a commercially-sized affair. It is not just limited to growing fruits and vegetables, but may also include keeping livestock and fish farming (aquaculture) – any farming activity that is managed and operated together by a family.

What many people do not know as that in many countries, most of the food is grown not by huge company farms, but by families. And it is important that we protect these family farms too, not only do they help to feed the world, they also preserve traditional food products (like indigenous

crops). Many family farmers are more productive per hectare than industrial monocultures – despite receiving lower subsidies and using fewer chemical and fossil fuel inputs.

At the same time, these farms contribute to a balanced diet while playing an important role in protecting the world's agro-biodiversity and improving sustainable use of natural resources (like water!). For many families, farming is an important income, while creating jobs – not only on the farm but also in other related industries.

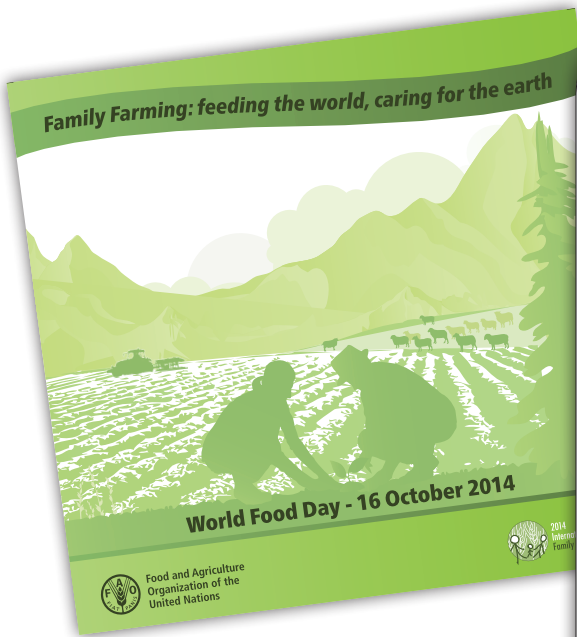
In fact, family farms are so important that the United Nations declared the whole year 2014 the International Year of Family Farming. At a special event UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that governments can empower family farmers, especially women and youth, by creating laws that help to protect them.

Unfortunately there are a lot of things challenging the future of family farms. This includes climate change, which may worsen droughts or floods in areas where these farms are. Family farms also face

Family farmers around the world

- There are over 500 million family farms
- They make up over 98% of farming holdings
- They are responsible for at least 56% of agricultural production





increasing competition for land and water from, for example, expanding towns and cities. Many of these families also have limited access to financial resources, technology, training, research, advisory services and education to make their enterprises bigger and better. They might also struggle to get a market for their produce.

So why not find a family farm in your area that you can support?

- Why is family farming important? Watch the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TS_V8CUZX10&index=28&list=PLzp5NgJ2-dK73v2oT-0MG5N6i_K9wPT6QnJ



START YOUR OWN FAMILY VEGETABLE GARDEN IN 1-2-3

Why not start your own mini-family farm in the backyard? You don't even need a big yard, some containers on your patio or terrace will do. Just follow these five easy steps:

1. **Stock up on supplies.** While it is fun to get your hands dirty you will need some equipment, like shovels rakes and hoes. Depending on the type of garden, you might also need some pots and soil.
2. **Find a location.** You need a big yard to have garden. Don't have a yard? Get together some pots and start a container garden.
3. **Pick your plants.** To give your garden the best chance of survival, make sure you choose the right seeds for your location. Your local nursery should be able to give some advice on this. Crops such as tomatoes, radishes, green beans, and sweet peppers are typically easy to grow, while cauliflower and maize might be more of a challenge. If planting from seeds seem daunting to you why not try some seedlings?
4. **Start planting.** Now we get to the exciting part, the planting! Be sure to label each row of vegetables as you plant and take pictures to track the progress of your crops.
5. **Take care of your garden.** Planting seeds is only the start. A garden needs to be tended to, weeds pulled, plants watered. Be sure to read up on the crops you are planting as they might each need different care. Your local library can provide some free reading if you don't have access to a computer with Internet access. Once your vegetables come in be sure you pick them at the right time.

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