

# International Federation of Agricultural Producers

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## Rural Women at the Heart of Innovation

**October 12, 2009, Paris** – *World Rural Women’s Day (WRWD) takes place annually on October 15 and offers recognition and support for the multiple roles that rural women play. This year’s theme “Rural Women at the Heart of Innovation” places emphasis on blending traditional knowledge and advances in agricultural sciences by forging links between rural women and researchers so as to exploit the full potential of innovative opportunities in agriculture.*

“Women farmers consist of one fourth of the world’s population and are an essential resource base for agriculture,” said Karen Serres, President of the IFAP Committee of Women Farmers. “Humanity currently faces two major global challenges: population growth and climate change - both of which are being countered by rural women’s use of diverse farming practices. The marginalization of rural women as producers, however, has caused a significant loss for development in farming and in rural society. The direct involvement and their accumulated experience in evolving farming practices through centuries of changing climate, political, social and financial situations is a rich fountain for solutions to the challenges that both men and women farmers are faced with,” Karen Serres emphasized.

The active role of women needs to be a deliberate part of an organization’s agenda and properly mainstreamed. Meeting a quota number of women participants in a meeting, for example, is important; however, it is not sufficient in itself. IFAP suggests measuring the success in the inclusion of women in key meetings through considering the following questions: Are women actually speaking in meetings? Are they taking leading roles? Are they making decisions?

“Rural women’s limited access to resources and policy-making processes is a substantial detriment to generating solutions for food security. We urge governments at all levels, international bodies and farmers’ organizations to actively integrate women representation and perspectives into their activities and decision making and implementation processes,” noted Ajay Vashee, IFAP President.

IFAP advises national governments to foster learning processes and access to technology for rural women. It is important to facilitate the blending of traditional knowledge and advances in agricultural sciences in order to implement sustainable farming innovations. IFAP also calls upon donor agencies to institutionalize gender specific planning and budgeting for empowering women. Projects that are gender friendly need to be financially sustained.

Rural women often lack the necessary training and little access to information. Their resources and skills are thereby, often undermined. Despite these difficulties, women farmers have established many systems of mutual support through women-led associations, cooperatives and micro-credit schemes.

Within the IFAP network, farmers' organizations around the world will be celebrating World Rural Women's Day. We encourage you to join us in maximizing the impact of this message for a more sustainable future for all.

Materials:

To view a copy of the Recommendations from IFAP Committee of Women Farmers:  
[http://www.ifap.org/en/issues/documents/WRWD2009\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ifap.org/en/issues/documents/WRWD2009_EN.pdf)

To view a video message from the President of the IFAP Committee of Women Farmers, Mrs. Karen Serres for World Rural Women's Day: <http://vimeo.com/6994612>

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*IFAP is the world farmers' organization, representing 600 million family farmers grouped in 120 national organizations in 80 countries. It is a global network in which farmers from industrialized and developing countries exchange concerns and set common priorities. IFAP has been advocating farmers' interests at the international level since 1946 and has General Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. [www.ifap.org](http://www.ifap.org)*