



ileia

Centre for learning on
sustainable agriculture

Scaling up knowledge sharing for sustainable family farming



**Policy document
2012 – 2016**

**prepared by ILEIA,
the Secretariat of the
AgriCultures Network**



**The AgriCultures Network at its
2012 Annual International Meeting**

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AGRIDAPE	Revue sur l'Agriculture Durable à Faibles Apportés Externes
AgriProFocus	Dutch public private partnership for agricultural producer organisations in developing countries
AIM	AgriCultures International Meeting
AME Foundation	AgriCulture Man Ecology Foundation, Indian member of the AgriCultures Network
AN	AgriCultures Network
AS-PTA	Assessoria e Serviços a Projetos em Agricultura Alternativa, Brazilian member of the AgriCultures Network
CBIK	Centre for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge, Chinese member of the AgriCultures Network
CDI	Centre for Development Innovation; part of Wageningen University and Research Centre
CTA	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), an ACP-EU institution working in the field of information for development (based in Wageningen)
DGIS	Directoraat-Generaal voor Internationale Samenwerking (Directorate General for International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Netherlands)
ETC-Andes	Asociation Ecologia Tecnologia y Cultura en los Andes, Peruvian member of the AgriCultures Network
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United nation
FM	Farming Matters, ILEIA's flagship magazine
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Canada)
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development (UK)
IÉD Afrique	Innovations Environment Développement, Senegalese member of the AgriCultures Network
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development

IFOAM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
ILEIA	Centre for learning on sustainable agriculture (original acronym: Information Centre for Low External Input Agriculture)
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
ISO	International Standards Organisation
KM	Knowledge Management
LA	Learning AgriCultures, series of educational modules on sustainable small-scale agriculture developed by ILEIA
LEISA	Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MFS	Medefinancieringsstelsel (Co-financing System of the Dutch Government)
PWC	PriceWaterhouseCoopers, auditors
QMS	Quality Management System
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SRI	System of Rice Intensification
WRF	World Rural Forum, Spanish NGO which initiated the Campaign for the Year of Family Farming
WUR	Wageningen University and Research Centre

1 Introduction

Four hundred million small-scale farm families are in the spotlight today. At long last they are gaining recognition for the important contribution they make to address the global food security challenge. They build resilience to shocks caused by climate change and increasingly volatile global food markets, they contribute to arresting the alarming rate of natural resource degradation and the erosion of biodiversity, they create rural employment and are custodians of culture. Several important policy reports published since 2008 converge in their conclusion that small-scale family farmers are *part of the solution*.¹

ILEIA plays a crucial role in the global discussion on food security and the role of family farming. ILEIA is a unique and relevant player on the axis of sustainability and food security, reaching the poorer segments of agricultural producers – namely family farmers – and enabling these to improve their lives and to enter a sustainable development track through information sharing and networking.

ILEIA and the AgriCultures Network have been in the forefront of knowledge building for sustainable family farming for over 26 years. Over all these years the network has made a significant contribution to the documentation, dissemination and upscaling of sustainable agriculture approaches around the world. It demonstrates that small-scale farming, based on ecological principles, forms part of a sustainable development pathway. The AgriCultures Network's role in the documentation and up-scaling of sustainable agricultural practices has been recognised by, among others, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier de Schutter in his recent report on Agroecology and the right to food.²

Sida has been one of ILEIA's long term donors. Sida's crucial support has helped in establishing a strong and steady global knowledge network for sustainable agriculture and we are fortunate to be able to count on Sida support for the period 2012 - 2016. This is a challenging time: there are many opportunities as well as enormous challenges ahead for the agriculture sector as a whole and for the family farming sector in particular. Our motto for the next five years is: *From islands of success to seas of change*.

We foresee a quantum leap in our information sharing role. In 2016 we intend to reach **two million readers of Farming Matters and our regional magazines** (paper and e-version together).

We plan to engage in several new alliances with organisations that support sustainable family farming. Notably Rio+20 and the upcoming 2014 Year of Family Farming offer good opportunities in this respect. ILEIA and the AgriCultures network are moving fast in a transition process from a donor dependent development programme towards a financially steady and uniquely positioned global South-South-Northern network organization with a wide range of institutional and grassroots partners.

¹ See for instance: The World Bank (2008), World Development Report; Agriculture for Development; International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) (2009), Agriculture at a Crossroads; Report submitted by: the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter. Human Rights Council, Sixteenth Session. United Nations General Assembly, December 2010; OXFAM (2011) Who will feed the world? The production challenge; IFAD (2011) Rural Poverty Report; FAO/OECD Expert Meeting on Greening the Economy with Agriculture. Paris, 5 -7 September 2011, Synthesis Document.

² See Olivier de Schutter (ibid.) p.32, paragraph 14.

2 Context

2.1 Global challenges in agriculture

The combined effects of the economic crisis, recurrent food crises and the climate and ecological crisis are devastating, especially for poor people in developing countries. More than a billion people suffer from hunger and malnutrition; 70% of them live in rural areas and cynically enough, most of them are food producers themselves. On top of all this, a dramatic rise in land acquisitions by international investors over the past decade poses unprecedented challenges for small-scale family farmers in many parts of the world, notably in Africa.³

2.2 The importance of family farming for food security

In this highly volatile context, small-scale family farming continues to be the main livelihood for an estimated 1.4 billion people, and it is an major provider of food in their regional food systems. In Brazil for example, small-scale family farmers work only 25% of the agricultural land, but they produce 65% of the country's food. In Africa, over 80% of the total agricultural production is consumed within the region. A large Swedish research programme on food crops in five African countries concluded that 21% of farm households do not sell any agricultural product on the market and that 50% do not have any source of non-farm income. This shows that supporting small scale (semi-) subsistence farmers continues to be crucial for assuring food security at local and regional and even global level, considering the number of people involved.⁴

2.3 The need for information and knowledge sharing

Small-scale family farmers have to manage increasingly complex risks. An adequate information supply and facilities for sharing local experience and information are more crucial today than ever before. But over-all, knowledge institutions do not sufficiently reach out to small-scale farmers, and the knowledge they have to offer is either inappropriate or needs tailoring to diverse farmers' contexts. In most places there are no adequate systems for sharing farmers' innovations with farmers in other areas, hence much of the practical learning that takes place remains localised. The majority of family farmers continues to be deprived of suitable agricultural information, in spite of the fact that today, even in remote rural areas access to internet and mobile phone has enormously increased. There is an urgent need to make improved access to information facilities go hand in hand with a greater availability of information that is adequate and relevant for small-scale family farmers.

2.4 Changing perceptions of key institutional actors

An impressive amount of evidence shows the efficiency and effectiveness of multi-functional family farmers and their relevance in the context of increased global uncertainties.⁵ However, the dominant view among policymakers, scientists, and other key actors continues to be that there is only one way forward in agriculture: farmers have to modernise (although this term is often poorly defined), specialise and integrate into global value chains. It is seen as inevitable and even desirable that many small-scale producers will drop out of this globalised production

³ According to the report *Land and Power*, recently released by OXFAM, as many as 227 million hectares of land, an area the size of Western Europe, has been sold or leased since 2001, mostly to international investors. The bulk of these acquisitions have taken place over the last 2 years.

⁴ Göran Djurfeldt, Agnes Andersson, Hans Holmén and Magnus Jirstrom. *The Millennium Development Goals and the African Food Crisis – Report from the Afrint II project (2007 – 2010)*.

⁵ See the IAASTD report, Olivier de Schutter's report and the OXFAM report referred to in footnote 1. See also: Jan Douwe van der Ploeg (2008), *The new peasantries. Struggles for autonomy and sustainability in an era of Empire and Globalisation*. Earthscan.

system. There is an unfounded assumption that they will be able to find worthwhile employment in the cities. These views must be challenged: policymakers need to be sensitised to alternative perspectives and supporting evidence showing that sustainable multi-functional family farming is a viable strategy and forms part of a larger sustainable development pathway. A combination of well-founded information and public pressure may lead to a change in their mindset.

2.5 Small-scale family farmers as assets

Family farming has been gaining recognition as a viable model for the future of agriculture (IAASTD 2009; de Schutter 2010). Important innovations in farming methods have been achieved which are often the result of a blend of scientific insights and local knowledge. Extending these knowledge building processes beyond small communities can bring about significant improvements in the lives of large numbers of family farmers.⁶ This process of integrating local and scientific knowledge is referred to as **agroecology**.

A strategy of mixed farming that builds on ecological resilience is the right answer to major global challenges – climate change and hunger. Family farming offers a way forward in agriculture that is a viable alternative to specialised agri-business. Swift, concerted action and political will are needed to improve the situation of 400 million farm families. They need secure access to land, fairer (international) trade conditions and know-how on adaptation to climate change. Critical consumers, dynamic farmers' movements and smart use of ICTs can play a catalytic role in strengthening family farming.

2.6 Women family farmers: drivers of development

Women farmers play a vital role in family farming. Yet, the majority of the world's rural poor and chronically hungry are women. What applies to family farmers as a category, applies to an even greater extent to women farmers. In addition to being marginalized as family farmers, they face an additional **gender gap**. If women farmers were to have access to the same inputs and support as their male colleagues, they could boost their yields by 20 – 30%; and this could reduce hunger in the world by 12 – 17 %.⁷

There is a risk of the gender gap increasing, with a stronger focus on commercial agriculture. Generally men tend to take over cash crops once they become more profitable. Women do participate in new export crops and markets, however this is often accompanied by more precarious working conditions.⁸ Global value chain approaches that aim to incorporate small scale farmers into global markets often have a highly instrumentalist gender perspective, disregarding the multifunctionality of women's work, their food security strategies and wealth of ecosystems knowledge.

Women as beneficiaries and agents of change

Closing the gender gap begins by recognizing the important role women play in agriculture and by taking women farmers' aspirations more serious. Women need to be involved both as beneficiaries and as agents of change. Women want to be better informed and to have their own knowledge, experiences and ideas valued and organized into voices of change⁹. Their in-depth practical knowledge needs to be valued, shared and systematized. Measures must be

⁶ The vast spread of the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), now practiced by millions of farmers, is a good example. ILEIA was among the first to report on this method of rice production which significantly reduces the amount of water and seed required (see Farming Matters 25.4).

⁷ FAO (2011), State of Food and Agriculture. Women and agriculture: closing the gender gap for development. FAO, Rome.

⁸ FAO/IFAD/ ILO (2010), quoted by Spieldoch (ibid).

⁹ Tandon (2010), quoted by Spieldoch (ibid.)

taken to end discrimination; investments in women farmers are essential (e.g. labour saving technologies and gender sensitive saving and credit systems). Women farmers' leadership needs to be promoted.

Women as custodians of agricultural knowledge

Women have detailed knowledge about traditional crop varieties which is helpful in designing climate resilient production strategies. Women do have refined observations skills which makes them perfect ecosystems managers; in Farmers Field Schools the attentiveness of women stands out and is in many situations the key to success of non pesticide crop management (NPM) approaches. As **custodians of knowledge** about ecosystems, seed conservation and traditional farming techniques women play an important role in passing on knowledge to future generations. They need to be recognized as leaders who bring a wealth of knowledge, expertise and skills relating to agriculture and natural resource management, food production and provision. ILEIA and AgriCultures can play a strategic role in closing the gender gap by highlighting the value and significance of women's role as knowledge custodians of agricultural knowledge.

2.7 Youth: the future of family farming

Family farming is a sustainable proposition only if it can attract future generations of farmers. The reality of today is that youth, in large numbers, turn their back towards agriculture. They hope to escape from rural poverty and find a better future outside agriculture. Many rural areas are confronted with a fast greying population. In Chile for instance, the average age of farmers today is 57 years¹⁰. "Our villages have turned into old age homes" is an often heard remark in the dryland regions of South India. Rural to urban migration is not a new phenomenon; it has been going on since the 1950s, all over the world, side by side with mechanisation and modernisation of agriculture.

"We can take the lead"

In spite of the demographic facts that show a strong tendency of younger generations to move out of agriculture, there are also signals that point into a new direction. These indicate the beginning of a new 'movement': there are young people all over the world who are developing a different perspective on their own future and that of agriculture. Research shows that young people are concerned about environmental problems threatening the future of agriculture¹¹. Coupled with this there is an overwhelming support for the principles of sustainable agriculture and the expressed need to reconnect with food and agriculture. Young people can become a driving force in changing the global food system, as sustainable producers and consumers. Education has to play an important role in teaching rural and urban youth about food choices and sustainable agriculture.

ILEIA and AgriCultures can nurture the interest of youth in sustainable family farming. Knowledge sharing, good education and effective communication strategies can play an important role in the *conscientisation* of youth about the potential of sustainable agriculture. The number of young readers of Farming Matters (notably the digital edition) is growing fast. We need to ride on this wave and find ways to draw more attention of young people. This can be through specific youth sections in the magazines and creative use of social media. Young people should not only be approached as target group, but can be involved as change agents.

¹⁰ Martine Dirven, personal communication.

¹¹ Laura Anne Sanagorski: Youth's perceptions are the starting point. in: Farming Matters 27.1, March 2011.

2.8 The need to scale up agroecological approaches

Triggered by the 2008 food price crisis, investments in agriculture have considerably increased. However, as Olivier de Schutter points out in his recent report the most pressing issue is not *how much*, but *how* to invest.¹²

De Schutter argues for a reorientation of agricultural systems and concludes that the scaling up of agroecological experiences in family farming is the main challenge today. Public policies should reinvest in agricultural extension, in decentralized participatory research and dissemination of knowledge. They should encourage social organization, farmers' innovation networks, empower women, create a macro-economic enabling environment and connect sustainable farms to fair markets.

The AgriCultures Network has gone a long way in capturing, validating and disseminating experience of family farmers; to connect those who are willing to engage in a new technique with those who have already experienced it and to train those who are working with family farmers in the field how to integrate innovation and sustainability into a comprehensive development track. The challenge ahead is to reach more family farmers and to show the relevance of agroecological practices in today's context of climate change and food crisis to national and global decision makers.



¹² Ibid, p. 35-38.

3 ILEIA and the AgriCultures Network

3.1 History of ILEIA

For the past 27 years, ILEIA has built and shared knowledge on sustainable agriculture with small-scale farmers (men and women) and their organisations, with agricultural professionals (fieldworkers as well as teachers, trainers and researchers) and decision makers at local, national and global levels. ILEIA was among the first to recognize the importance of blending 'local' and 'scientific' knowledge as a route to viable innovation in family farming. It gradually evolved as a bridge building organisation, making connections between many different stakeholders in sustainable family farming. Together with local groups, researchers and extension workers, ILEIA succeeded in delving up and documenting thousands of inspiring experiences, and thus to provide legitimacy to small-scale family farming. ILEIA's magazine *Farming Matters* has been a highly valued platform for sharing these experiences and its online database of validated experiences forms a unique treasure house of agroecological knowledge.

ILEIA: a global knowledge broker

In 1984 ILEIA started as a pilot project to build knowledge about low external input agriculture, as an alternative approach to Green Revolution agriculture. Gradually people began to recognize that the Green Revolution made many farmers more vulnerable, with inadequate social safety nets and exploiting the natural environment. ILEIA was among the first to identify this emerging crisis, and crafted the term LEISA: Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture. This new concept was informed by the conviction that Green Revolution approaches were not appropriate for most small-scale farmers, particularly for those in culturally and biologically diverse but ecologically fragile dryland areas. ILEIA saw the need for a farmer centred and knowledge intensive approach to agricultural development. The hypothesis was that there is a wealth of knowledge 'out there', but it will remain local and scattered unless a forum can be created that encourages people to share their experience with others working in similar conditions elsewhere. Local agricultural knowledge would have to be unearthed and, if necessary, blended with 'external' knowledge about suitable technologies and approaches. ILEIA started publishing a newsletter and encouraged agricultural practitioners to share their experiences through this newsletter.

3.2 The AgriCultures Network: Locally rooted, globally connected

Gradually the magazine gained recognition, and the number of readers increased from a few hundred to several thousands. From 1997 onwards, regional editions were launched in order to address growing demand of readers to share knowledge in their own language. Successively a Latin American edition (*LEISA Revista de Agroecologia*), an Indian edition (*LEISA India*), a West African edition (*AGRIDAPE*), an Indonesian edition (*Petani*), a Brazilian edition (*Agriculturas*), a Chinese (*LEISA China*) and an East African edition (*Baobab*) were established by partner organisations in the concerned regions. Together, they now reach more than 200,000 readers. Over the years, the magazines have become a respected forum for knowledge sharing among all those searching for sustainable solutions in agriculture, in a non-dogmatic and inclusive manner, bridging between 'scientific' and 'local', 'alternative' and 'mainstream' approaches.

The various organizations that became involved in making the regional editions of the magazine, gradually developed into a full-fledged global knowledge network, called *the AgriCultures Network*. The Network members actively share knowledge and experiences among

themselves, while each of them is also rooted in their own regional environment. The AgriCultures Network thus serves as a linking pin between local, regional and global knowledge networks in the field of sustainable agriculture and family farming.

Since 1984, ILEIA and the AgriCultures Network have published more than **350 issues** of the network's flagship magazine, in different editions and languages¹³, informing and inspiring millions of farmers and other stakeholders in agriculture, in almost every country in the world. The paper editions of the magazine together have more than **300,000 readers**.

Our latest records show that the electronic edition of *Farming Matters* draws **300,000 unique visitors per year**, who download one or more articles each. This shows not only that the magazines (in paper and electronic versions) have a very large outreach, but also that there is a spectacular growth in the number of readers of the e-version. White collar professionals and policymakers tend to refer more frequently to the e-version whereas many fieldworkers and farmers continue to prefer the paper editions. The www.agricultures.info web portal, one of the most comprehensive and informative websites on sustainable agriculture, draws over-all **more than half a million visitors from 194 countries** per year.

Main findings of the 2010 readers' survey

86% of respondents say that FM plays an important role in work related decisions
62% of respondents make practical use of information shared through FM
60% discuss contents with friends, colleagues and others stakeholders
60% share FM for training or educational purposes
51% use FM as a source of inspiration for research
50% forward FM articles to colleagues, friends and others
42% use FM information to formulate and develop programmes
30% use FM for networking
30% use FM as source of information for debate and advocacy
11% translate parts of FM into another language so that it will reach a wider audience

Our regular readers' surveys show these knowledge sharing efforts have a substantial spin-off and practical impact on the ground. Many farmers have actually applied practices which they read about in the magazine. The magazine serves as a source of inspiration for many others – in teaching, research, business or private business. The magazines have thus directly contributed to the spread of eco-friendly production methods, poverty alleviation and increased gender equality (many readers say they have been gender sensitised by the magazine). They have also contributed to an increased overall awareness among civil society actors, policymakers and politicians: one Tanzanian MP told ILEIA that he frequently quotes *Farming Matters* in Parliament.



¹³ The global edition has been renamed as **Farming Matters**. Regional editions are: **LEISA Revista de Agroecología** (Latin America); **Agridape** (Francophone Africa); **Baobab** (Anglophone Africa); **Agriculturas** (Brazil); **LEISA India**; **Petani** (Indonesia); 可持续生态农业 (China).

4 Objectives and Strategy 2012 – 2016

4.1 Scope of the proposal

In a consultative process involving all partners we formulated a Vision and Mission, which forms the basis for the ILEIA – AgriCultures Network Programme Objectives and Strategy 2012 – 2016. As this ambitious strategy requires organisational stability, we have chosen to work with a five year time frame. We request Sida to provide core support, which will be of great help in putting the strategy firmly in place.

Vision

ILEIA and the AgriCultures Network envisage a world in which sustainable family farming is widely practiced and duly recognised as key foundation for resilient rural livelihoods, global food security and a green economy.

Mission

By facilitating practice-based knowledge sharing and widely disseminating information among stakeholders at local, regional and global levels, ILEIA and the AgriCultures Network will contribute to a massive upscaling of sustainable agricultural practices, resilient regional economies and global recognition of the rights and significance of family farmers.

4.2 Programme Objectives

The problem analysis presented in section 2 led to the formulation of the following programme objectives and expected results for the period 2012 – 2016 (see also the log frame in annex 2).

Goal

Family farmers around the world are part of a sustainable development pathway and are recognised for their contribution to food security.

Development objective

An enabling environment has been created for sustainable family farming.

Results

1. Two and a half million stakeholders at the field, institutional and policy levels have accessed AgriCultures Network publications on sustainable family farming.
2. Practitioners in agricultural institutions, active members of farmers', women's and youth organisations and rural journalists have systematised, documented and shared their practical experiences in sustainable family farming.
3. More and better trained agricultural educators and students are able to analyse small-scale family farming systems.
4. Policymakers recognize the development relevance of small-scale family farming.
5. A vibrant and sustainable global knowledge network is in place.

The **component activities** of our strategy to achieve these objectives are:

- Information sharing
- Capacity building for documentation and systematisation
- Knowledge building
- Alliance building
- Policy advocacy
- Network strengthening

One **cross-cutting issue** runs through our entire strategy: women's and youth's concerns have to be integrated in all activities.

In the paragraphs below we will elaborate for each result the approach that will be followed to achieve the result. We will describe the specific mix of activities being chosen for achieving each result.

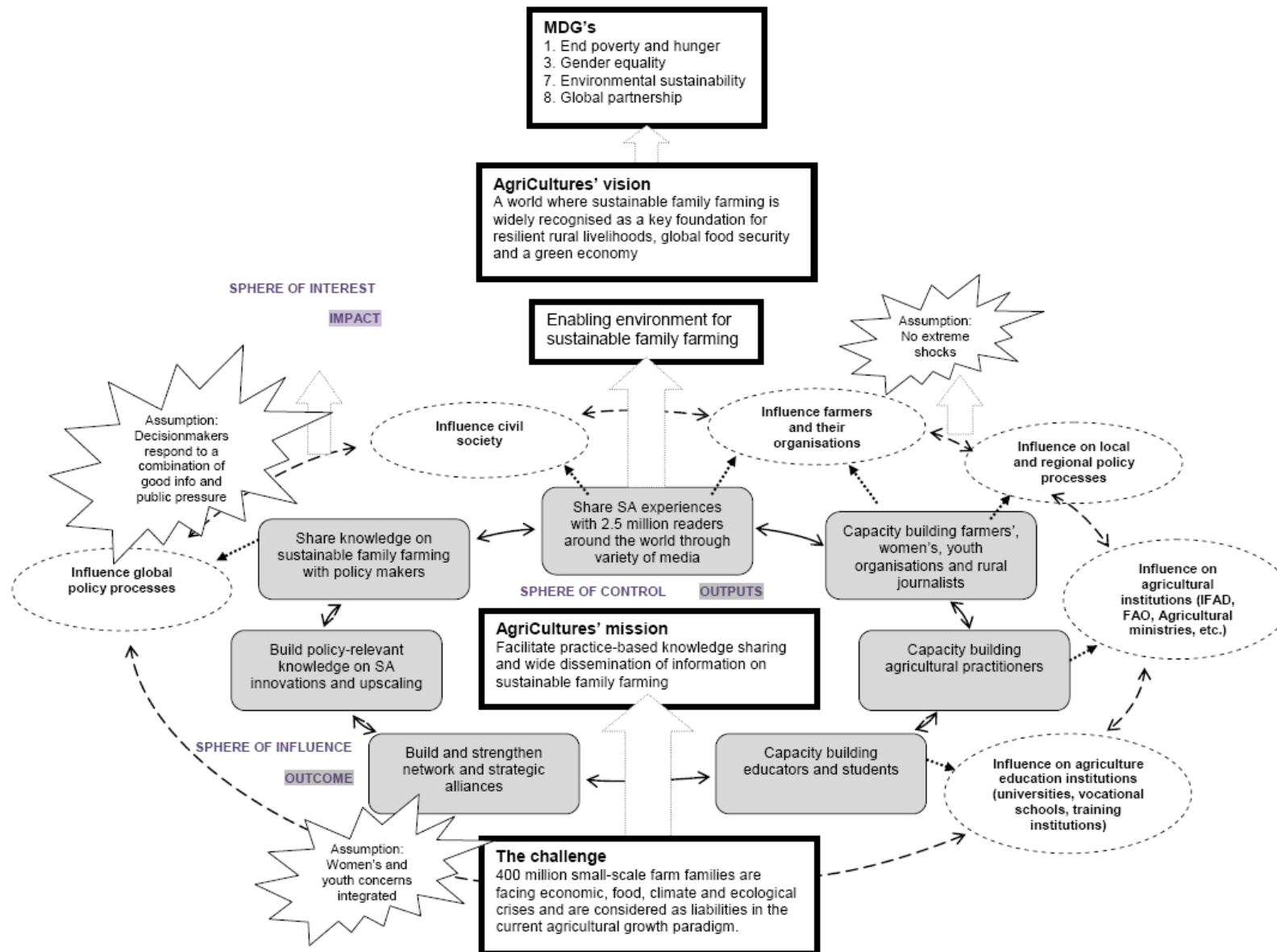
Theory of Change ¹⁴

In addition to formulating the logical framework we have visualised the change process we envisage to take place in a **theory of change**. It should be read as a semi-structured map that links our strategic actions to process results that we would like to contribute to. These results again link to larger development objectives. The map also shows our assumptions and projections regarding how we believe reality could unfold in the next five years, based on a realistic assessment of the current context, and a self assessment of the existing knowledge network and its capabilities and alliances. This Theory of Change is complementary to the programme log frame, with stronger focus on the process of change and its links to the larger development context, rather than on the envisaged outputs and outcomes alone. The map shows our perspective of today; regular revisiting of this map will help us revise and improve our strategy and check our assumptions. This is essentially the adaptive management approach that we will follow in implementing our 2012 - 2016 strategy.

Theory of Change 2012 – 2016: linking actions to outcomes and impact

The **Theory of Change** shows how we visualise the links between the activities, outputs, outcomes and impact. For instance, when we build capacities of project officers of IFAD we see as direct result that these officers are better able to document project experience. This is the output level (within our **sphere of control**). In the medium term we envisage that these capacity building efforts contribute to s towards a greater alertness within the IFAD organisation to the potential of family farmers and the need for knowledge management that includes farmers' experiential knowledge. These are envisaged outcomes (within our **sphere of influence**). In the long term, such institutional changes in IFAD will contribute to a more enabling global environment for family farming. This is the impact level (**sphere of interest**).

¹⁴ This is based on Theory of Change thinking. See: Iñigo Retolaza Eguren. Theory of Change. A thinking and action approach to navigate in the complexity of social change processes. HIVOS, Democratic Dialogue and UNDP, 2011.



Result 1: Increased access to AgriCultures Network publications

Main ambition

Increase global readership of *AgriCultures* publications from 1 million in 2012 to 2.5 million in 2016.

From 1 million to 2.5 million information users

The AgriCultures Network will increase its influence by a growing exposure of knowledge and activities through our main media channels. By the end of 2016 the total exposure of the network publications will be two and a half million readers. As the costs involved in printing and distributing paper editions are high, we have decided to only distribute paper copies (1) if they are paid for, by individual subscribers, sponsors or donors; or (2) if readers do not have dependable internet access and hence are not able to download a PDF.

The *AgriCultures* web portal continues to grow. It presently draws almost 50,000 unique visitors from some 150 countries per month. It houses an interactive platform which includes blogs, debates, a forum, etc. This is linked to social media which increases the possibilities for communication and interaction between readers. We will increasingly use multi media approaches to convey more information and reach more target groups.

Content of the magazines

In our publications we address two distinct target groups: those with primarily practical information needs, and those with more strategic information needs, at field, research or policy level. The magazine aims to bridge the gap between practical and strategic needs, and between policy and practice. A good balance between different types of information is what we strive for. The readers' surveys will monitor whether we are successful in maintaining this balance.

Information about practical methods will continue to be published in *Farming Matters*, notably on methods to increase productivity of family farms; to enhance efficiency of resource use (e.g. water); to strengthen resilience to climatic shocks; to conserve seed; and to reduce drudgery – especially for women. Strategic information that will find a place in *Farming Matters*: farmers' strategies of resisting large scale land acquisitions; news from farmers' organisations; methods of acquiring CO2 credits; debates on agriculture and green economy; the year of Family Farming; food sovereignty; urban-rural linkages and agro-ecotourism. Women farmers' and youth initiatives will get special attention; and we will encourage women and youth to write and share their experiences and perspectives.

Magazines as tools to reach the poorest and 'un-connected'

Farming Matters and the respective regional editions of the magazine continue to be an important tool to share information with a wide range of actors. The magazines reach out to the **capillaries of the global agricultural knowledge system**: farmers and grassroots level workers who have scanty access to information on agriculture that is of good quality. Our own interactions with farmers and fieldworkers during field visits, corroborated by readers' survey data¹⁵, suggest that for many field-based readers of *Farming Matters* the main alternative source of information is the local pesticide shop. *Farming Matters* is recognised as a respected information platform for sharing and legitimizing field-tested agricultural knowledge.

¹⁵ The readers' surveys conducted by ILEIA in 2007 and 2004 show this pattern.

It also connects the authors of the articles with the readers; per year at least 500 authors have an opportunity to share their experiences in one or more editions of the magazine. Information sharing is a multi-directional process: readers become authors and vice versa. The readers' survey (2010) and the authors' survey (2008) indicate that there is a lot of 'autonomous' interaction between readers and authors of articles.

Growing influence on policy

The magazines increasingly influence decision makers and their policy perspectives on agriculture. The growing exposure of knowledge on sustainable agriculture leads to an increased influence on political debates and decision making arenas. This is partly due to our increased visibility and activity on electronic media and partly the result of the strategic repositioning of *Farming Matters*; the restyling of the magazine makes it more interesting for policymakers. We envisage that the policy influence of the magazine will grow stronger in the coming years.

"Reading Farming Matters is a reality check"

Farming Matters is attracting increasing attention from policy makers. Parvis Koochafkan, director Land & Water Division of the FAO says: "People like me read *Farming Matters* as a reality check: we want to know what is happening in the real world of small-scale farmers". The editors' strategy of having an interview with a high profile person in every issue of *Farming Matters* is proving very effective. Interviews with e.g. Olivier de Schutter, Hans Herren (co-director of IAASTD), Parvis Koochafkan and Djibo Bagna (president of ROPPA) help to strengthen contacts with the concerned persons and institutions. Moreover, after the interview there are usually several readers of *Farming Matters* who contact these persons, which makes them experience the link with the field in a practical way.



Special projects with women and youth

ILEIA and the partners in the AgriCultures Network recognise the importance of the use of other media and methods of communication to connect with these groups. Radio, SMS, social media, local newspapers and peer-to-peer events have proven to be effective and attractive media to increase access to information and exchange of knowledge. We will introduce a special budget line for innovative knowledge projects with women and youth groups. We will also encourage upscaling and replication of successful initiatives in other areas.

To highlight **women's** strategic role, we will give special importance to:

- valuing women's technical and social knowledge in agriculture.
- guiding women in systematizing and sharing their knowledge and building their skills to make their voices heard, in farmers organizations, and to decision makers.
- make information available to women that helps them increase productivity and decrease workload.

- provide decision makers with information that will help them recognize women's pivotal roles in agriculture.

Youth will be encouraged to actively engage in sharing information and experience in agriculture:

- We will encourage them to develop their own communication channels using social media; peer-to-peer communication is usually most effective.
- Articles, blogs and video clips should highlight the attractive side of family farming and clearly show how family farmers can improve productivity and income in a sustainable manner.
- We will offer capacity building support on request to young farmers and train them in systematization for advocacy. This will help them in going through fast learning tracks and articulating their needs for institutional support, better services and education.
- The Learning Agriculture's educational series, meant to strengthen sustainability thinking and a family farming perspective in agricultural curricula, can be customized to the needs of young farmers.
- We will also involve young rural journalists in our capacity building for systematisation and advocacy. They can influence civil society through the media.

New editions of *Farming Matters*

We will initiate two new regional editions of *Farming Matters*; expanding the coverage to the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA) Region, Ethiopia and Central Asia. We are also considering to start an European edition and a Pacific edition. We will only take up the latter two if they are self-financing. The inclusion of new partners in the global AgriCultures Network will not only benefit target groups in these regions but will also bring new perspectives into the network.

There will be further enhancement of the synergies between the various editions: we will develop a joint corporate identity while retaining regional authenticity and identity. Emphasis will be given to the quality management of all magazine editions through regular peer reviews and through local and global editorial committees.

Result 2: Systematisation of practical experience

Main ambition

Strengthen the functional link between capacity building for documentation and policy advocacy.

There is a huge demand for capacity building in documentation and systematisation. NGOs and farmers' organisations frequently identify this as a strategic need. Major international institutions like the FAO and IFAD have identified the same gap in their organisational capacities. Documentation forms an integral part of good knowledge management in organisations and projects, whether they are small or big, local or regional.

We have identified the following priority target groups for capacity building in documentation and systematisation:

- Practitioners in agricultural institutions, supported by IFAD, FAO, and other key institutional actors;

- Active members of rural women's organisations, farmers' organisations and youth organisations.

We will integrate the use of internet and social media in capacity building for systematisation. These forms of communication cannot substitute *live* capacity building workshops but they can *reinforce* learning and sharing. We will encourage trainees to join communities of practice and/or build their own, where they can share lessons learned and seek support for problem solving. The focus of our capacity building is not only to build the systematisation capacities of participants, but also for them to produce a tangible output (article, short video, report, etc.) so that they can share their experience in systemisation with a wider audience. We will support organisations involved in capacity building to produce (multi-media) publications.



Result 3: Improved agricultural education

Main ambition

Stimulate agricultural education institutions around the world to develop a systems perspective to family farming and concepts of sustainability.

The need for new perspectives in agricultural education

The *Learning AgriCultures* educational series has been developed in response to a need expressed by an important category of Farming Matters readers. ILEIA decided to develop the educational series *Learning AgriCultures*. This material is primarily intended for undergraduate students in agricultural colleges and universities, but it can easily be modified and customised to a variety of settings. *Learning AgriCultures* thus becomes a tool to influence the thinking about agriculture in universities, in a bottom-up fashion, via the lecturers and students. The *Learning AgriCultures* educational resource kit, consisting of seven teaching modules on small scale sustainable farming, was released in 2011. The series has been well received and is now being used by universities in e.g. Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and the Pacific Islands.

We have identified several opportunities for a wide dissemination of *Learning AgriCultures*, through strategic institutional partnerships, for example with FAO and CTA, CDI and Van Hall Larenstein/WUR.

Result 4: Policy influence

Main ambition

To significantly strengthen our contribution to global information sharing and advocacy in support of sustainable family farming.

Stronger focus on policy

Agriculture is a hot issue on the policy agenda and ILEIA and the AgriCultures Network have a lot to offer. Whereas we have been advocating sustainable family farming as a viable development pathway for many years, we find an increasing number of international organisations and influential persons in these organisations stressing the importance of family farming. The fact that both FAO and IFAD have declared themselves supporters of the year of Family Farming is a clear sign in itself.

Our ambition for 2012-2016 is to engage more in policy dialogues on agriculture, food and family farming. We see our strength in connecting between field level realities of farming communities and those of decision makers, mainly through feeding systematised field level experiences into policy dialogues.

Feeding field-based experience into policy dialogue requires a solid understanding of policy processes, which we will further invest in during the coming years. Collaboration with organisations that are already active in the policy sphere is an important strategy.

Participate in global and regional events

We will give importance to two major global events: Rio+20 in 2012, and the year of Family Farming in 2014. Likewise, there will be important regional events in the coming years where we will contribute. A joint *AgriCultures* plan for policy advocacy and knowledge sharing around specific events will be prepared in 2012.

Rio+20

Our regional networks and readers will be actively engaged in the debate on sustainable agriculture and a green economy. Key issues and ideas will be presented in Rio de Janeiro and shared through a special edition of *Farming Matters* and social media. We will ensure adequate post-Rio+20 follow-up.

International Year of Family Farming

ILEIA has been closely associated with the Campaign for the International year of Family Farming, since it started in 2009. We feel proud about being part of this initiative and now that the Year of Family Farming almost certainly going to be endorsed by the United Nations in November, we can start preparing for the actual year. We plan to give wide publicity to the Year of Family Farming and we will use our magazines and website as platforms to involve large numbers of family farmers and their organisations in the global discussion on the future of family farming. We are in close contact with the World Rural Forum, the lead campaigners for the Year of Family Farming. We plan to take up collaborations with the WRF, with farmer organisations and with international institutions such as the FAO on outreach, documentation and systematisation feeding into the global policy advocacy initiatives during the year..

Result 5: A vibrant and sustainable global knowledge network

Main ambition:

Increase visibility of the AgriCultures Network and be widely recognized as a global player.

A co-evolving network

To achieve our ambition – to be more visible and be more widely recognised as global player – we will further strengthen our network in both in qualitative and quantitative terms. The glue that will hold the network together is a continued shared commitment to gather, share knowledge and advocate in support of sustainable family farming.

To begin with, the network will build on existing experience and systems. We will continue our practice of having an annual **AgriCultures International Meeting (AIM)**. This meeting serves as an effective platform to set out strategic directions, review progress, make plans for the coming year, exchange experiences and for building specific capacities of the network members.



Figure 2 shows the AgriCultures Network in its **present shape**, with ILEIA as the secretariat, and regional members, each of them connected to their own regional network. All members of the network are connected with the network as a whole, but also bilaterally. Each member also has its own regional network (see example of Brazil): it forms part of multiple networks at different levels (local, regional and global) and this is what makes the global AgriCultures Network vibrant as multiple networks and knowledge systems reinforce one another.

As secretariat of the network ILEIA performs the role of “first among equals”. It takes the lead in building strategic contacts at the global level, in bringing the voices of smaller players to the global level and advocating a sustainable development track for small-scale family farmers. ILEIA coordinates the various network activities and ensures coherence, and takes the lead in acquisition of joint projects and programmes. In the coming years ILEIA will give importance to developing a strong corporate identity of the network and its products, especially the magazines. We will develop an *AgriCultures* house style through a process involving all partners. This house style will become mandatory for all partners publishing under the *AgriCultures* ‘brand’.

All partners are responsible for their own regional knowledge networking and magazines and for mobilising resources for their magazines. Each member of the network contributes its own distinct regional knowledge and perspectives to the network. Beyond that, the network members have their own Unique Selling Points, from which other members and the network as a whole reap the benefits.

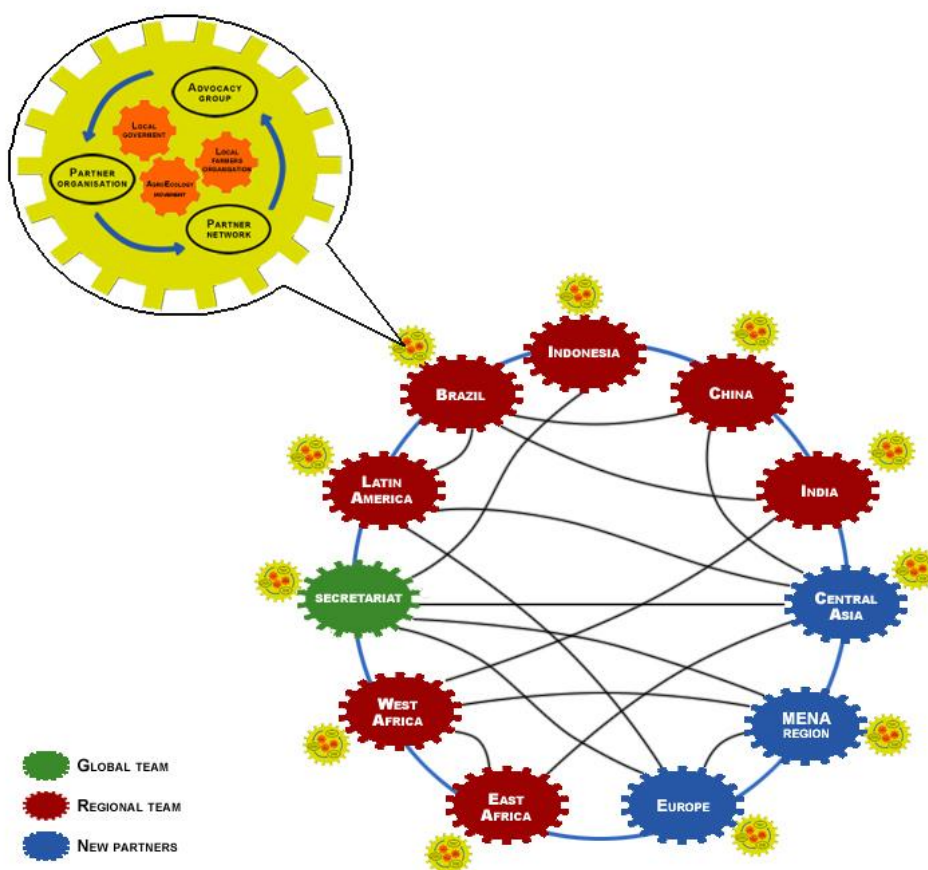


Figure 2: The AgriCultures Network

Ongoing capacity building

In the coming years there will be more focused interactions between members of the network, through joint projects and/or using specific expertise of network members to assist in setting up new projects elsewhere.

We will invest in capacity building at network level to enhance and update our own competencies as trainers in documentation and systematisation..

Expanding the network and building new alliances

In the coming years we envisage an expansion, with two to three new regional members, each producing a new regional edition of Farming Matters. Priority goes to the MENA region and to Ethiopia.

The network is in a transition phase from a relatively small, tight-knit group of NGOs connected through their magazines and funding mechanism, to a more open network with a variety of members and associates and with diverse and decentralised sources of income. ILEIA, which initiated the network one-and-a-half decades ago, will take a lead role in steering *AgriCultures* through this process.

Global Network Governance

So far, the network had no formal governance mechanism. The relationship between partners and ILEIA was basically a (long term) project relationship, whereby the partners were accountable to ILEIA for the funds they received through ILEIA. In the coming years we will establish a democratic and transparent network governance mechanism that steers the network as a whole and takes into account the changed financial relationship between ILEIA and partners. The governance mechanism will take shape in a gradual manner, involving all members of the network. We will seek inspiration from the experience of other global networks and expert guidance when needed.

Towards a sustainable funding model

Several members of the *AgriCultures* Network have made significant progress in mobilising funds for the production of their magazines, thus becoming more businesslike in their operation of non-profit activities. Until recently all members of the network depended significantly on DGIS and Sida funding for financing their magazines and related activities, today most of them have an alternative source of income to finance their magazines, wholly or partially.

We decided that a decentralised multi-donor funding model is the only way to ensure the continuity to the magazines. ILEIA concentrates on mobilizing funds for strategically strengthening the network, for the global edition *Farming Matters* (which continues to be the “mother” of the other magazines) and for new, value-adding, initiatives to be taken up by the network. We will give importance to strengthening the capacities of individual network members for mobilizing resources for their own magazines and allied activities.

5 ILEIA: the network secretariat

5.1 Organisational structure

ILEIA is a flat and compact organisation, managed by a fulltime director. This director gives overall strategic direction to the organisation, is responsible for strategic alliance building and network coordination, internal management of ILEIA, administrative and financial operations, and the marketing of products and services.

5.2 Monitoring and evaluation

One of ILEIA's responsibilities as the secretariat of the AgriCultures Network is to ensure that an adequate monitoring system is in place, and the monitoring systems of all network partners are coherent and synchronised.

We have developed three main tools for monitoring progress and impact of our programmes, with special focus on the magazines:

- a monitoring protocol
- a standardised format for readers' surveys
- a format for impact studies

5.3 Quality Management System

The ILEIA organisation is ISO 9001:2008 certified. The QMS is periodically audited by ISO: a major audit takes place every three years and in between an annual review takes place. During the regular audits an independent ISO official reviews ILEIA. The next periodical audit will take place in 2012. An internal audit has been executed in October 2011.

5.4 Environmental policy

ILEIA has an environmental policy aimed at raising consciousness and reducing our carbon footprint as an organization (and as the AgriCultures Network). ILEIA focuses on stimulating our partners in the AgriCultures Network to develop an environmental policy themselves and to integrate the environmental impact in their decision making processes.

5.5 Gender policy

ILEIA's gender policy addresses two levels: programmatic gender impact and the gender aspects of ILEIA's staff employment policy.

ILEIA's ultimate target group are small scale family farmers. The majority of them are women. Almost everywhere, poor rural women are one of the most deprived categories. ILEIA aims to give explicit and positive attention to women farmers, but also to female extension workers and female agricultural professionals.

ILEIA monitors its programmatic gender impact in the following ways:

- maintaining gender segregated subscribers and magazine statistics and presenting these in annual reports
- using a gender perspective in readers' surveys and impact studies: e.g. compare men's and women's appreciation and use of the magazine, look at gender differentiated impacts.

We decided to make special budget allocation for innovative projects with women and youth. We see this as a pro-active way to encourage a greater participation of women in knowledge sharing on sustainable family farming.

Monitoring of gender aspects of the employment policy has been integrated into the Quality Management System. It addresses:

- ILEIA's recruitment policy and the gender ratio of the ILEIA team;
- provisions for maternity leave, parental leave and special leave;
- code of conduct, discrimination and harassment policy and complaints procedure.

For several years now, the team consists for more than 80% of women. ILEIA's board is chaired by a high-profile gender and sustainability decision maker, and it has a 50-50 M-F ratio.

5.6 Financial control system

Annual financial audits are conducted by the external auditor, PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC), in accordance with international standards issued by the International Federation of Accounts (IFAC). The focus of the audits is on the implementing expenditures of ILEIA. These expenditures include the direct payments and expenditures of ILEIA and the disbursements to the partners in the AgriCultures Network.

