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**National Conference on Family Farming  
Agricultural Institute Grangieuve  
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**Speech of Dr. Evelyn Nguleka  
Vice-President  
World Farmers' Organisation, WFO**

*Prepared by the International Secretariat*

Honorable ministers, distinguished authorities, guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to be here today as the representative of the World Farmers' Organisation, WFO, and I am very proud to be addressing this speech on behalf of the global community of farmers. I would like to thank the Swiss Farmers' Union and the Swiss Group for the Mountain Regions, SAB, for inviting me to participate in this important event and for organizing this national conference on Family Farming, as part of the initiatives for the International Year of Family Farming.

I would like to take this opportunity to share a few words about WFO: WFO is a farmer-based international organization, which was founded about two and a half years ago. Since then WFO many farmers' organization has joined WFO in the recent past. It currently has almost 70 member organizations of small, medium and large-scale farmers, from more than 50 countries in developing and developed world.

WFO is a responsible community of agropreneurs who work with other stakeholders from around the globe in order to foster food system stability; respects the environment; acknowledges the rights of all farmers to be entrepreneurs and gain appropriate incomes; respects the farming community's diversity.

WFO also promotes specific farming models, such as that of family farming that we are celebrating here today. Family farmers in particular, are the link between the social, economic, and environmental dimensions that are inherent in food security policy. Our role in the achievement of food security is fundamental. Family farmers are in charge of preserving the world's stressed and depleted natural resources. More than half of the food needed to ensure future global food security will be produced by family farmers. Actually, as of today, 70% of the world's food supply is provided by family farmers.

As the world population continues to grow, and the projections are daunting: 9.2 billion in 2050, we realize the importance of increasing food production to feed all

these people. This is a reality, ladies and gentlemen. To meet the food needs of this vast population, agriculture production should expand by an estimated 70%, compared to what it was in 2000. Responding to this challenge is on top of political agendas and strategies need to be defined. Considering that 90% of the world's farmers are family farmers, this challenge will be a burden directly affecting family farmers.

First and foremost, governments must take action and give the highest priority to ensuring that the world's family farmers can provide food security in a sustainable way, and contribute to eradication of rural poverty and hunger. Further, family farmers need to obtain a better understanding of the challenges we face, now and in the future, and how we can adapt to ensure food production in the long-term. With the right knowledge, capacity building and technical assistance, often provided by or through farmers' organizations, farmers can not only adapt to environmental challenges and especially climate change, but also contribute to its long-term mitigation, simultaneously ensuring global food security.

Being a family farmer today is not a simple job: we are subject to many more challenges if compared to our ancestors; climate instability, which affects food production dramatically; price insecurity, which frustrates farmers' income; access to finance; even though farmers are those who have the most difficult, and the most important job, that of producing the world's food supply, we do not have access to finance. We also face the problems of generational renewal: farming today is seen as a marginal occupation, as a last resort, and not as a dignified, long-term career prospect. We have to bring back family farmers at the center of the stage, prizing our role and activities.

Family farmers represent the economic model of agriculture on which most of these families depend. It is also the basis of the sustainable production of food, the management of the environment and its biodiversity, and an important part of the cultural dimension of people and communities. Family farmers represent a fundamental pillar in the development of countries. We are responsible for producing most of the world's food, but despite our critical role we face many challenges, i.e. difficulties in accessing resources and raw materials, the aging of

the population and the lack of generational renewal, scarce managerial skills, lack of training and financial assistance, price volatility, and exclusion from relevant discussion fora affecting our livelihoods. This is the reason behind the celebration of the International Year of Family Farming.

Family farmers, due to our close relationship with the land, have an inner knowledge of agricultural products, their characteristics and their nutrition factors. Farmers, better than everybody else, are capable to select and produce the highest quality food possible. Our work has a direct implication on nutrition. If we want to achieve better global health conditions we need to invest in better nutrition, and who better than family farmers can assure the production of nutritious and healthy food? The direct involvement of family farmers, the main player in food production, is necessary. We bring our expertise and knowledge in the field of nutrition and healthy diets to ensure that people will have access to sufficient and good quality food along with an understanding of what constitutes a good diet for health, as well as the skills and motivation to make good food choices. Additionally, the way we grow, raise, process, transport and distribute food, influences the quality of what we eat, rather than the quantity.

Another field in which family farmers play a leading role is innovation. Innovation can be referred to different field and it can be applied to different issues: innovation in financing, to help farmers to invest in their work; innovation to spread meteorological information, in order to help farmers to predict the best time to plant their seeds; innovation in teaching and learning, in order to create stronger and more focused knowledge in the field of agriculture. Family farmers were the very first innovators: since the ancient times we adapted to the changing conditions, always looking for a better solution which allow us to increase food production and food quality. Research is at the basis of innovation and as such, it represent an important ingredient to support the development of sustainable farming systems. Farmers, especially in developing countries, need the support of research centers in order to become more productive, to tackle climate change, and to ensure a higher yields at the end of the harvest.

I believe that a concerted effort is necessary in order to achieve the objectives of the International Year of Family Farming. We need to support the development of policies conducive to sustainable farming practices and technique; employ the global constituency of farmers to advocate in order to increase knowledge, communication and raise public awareness and we also need to bring together farmers from all over the world to share perspectives on the needs of farmers, our constraints and our potential. And this is exactly what we have been doing over this past 6 months. This year's celebration represents a great opportunity to create effective synergies among various stakeholders, and we cannot afford to lose this chance.

Achieving these objectives is very important; these are long-term goals that will contribute to keeping the attention of the international community on the family farming model very high. It is important to exploit the attention given to family farmers in this year 2014, keeping in mind that this model of farming has provided the backbone of the agriculture sector since ancient times. Global attention and concerted efforts will ultimately lead to impact at the local level. It is vital that we join voices to make sure that this model of farming remains vibrant and a viable employment option. The family farming model has significant economic impacts but also represents a significant part of nations' historical and cultural heritage.

These objectives will only be achieved through the promotion of multi-stakeholder dialogues where family farmers are directly involved and consulted; during these important consultation processes, family farmers should bring up concerns and doubts, the challenges we face and the solution we foresee: a participatory approach is the best way to find strong and long-lasting solutions. We need to collect the best practices and lessons learned on pro-family farming policies that has worked around the globe, and mostly to engage in communication and awareness raising to keep the interest and attention towards family farmers.

WFO has struggled to reposition family farming at the centre of agricultural, environmental and social policies in the national agendas by identifying gaps and opportunities to promote a shift towards a more equal and balanced

development. The framework of the International Year of Family Farming represents a unique opportunity to promote dialogue and cooperation at the national, regional and global levels to raise awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by family farmers, and help identify efficient ways (policies, measures, tools) to support us. And I must say that the event of today is a successful example of what needs to be done to support family farmers.

The International Year of Family Farming 2014 should act as a catalyst to identify and characterize family farmers as a solution to the food security issue and the climate instability. Family farmers are on the front lines of dealing with numerous global challenges: we are engaged, first-hand, in providing efficient and effective responses to climate change as our primary objective is that of passing down the farming tradition from generation to generation. With this in mind, family farmers cannot pollute, but are responsible people - socially, economically, and environmentally - with a clear vision, ensuring a sustainable and viable future for the coming generations through innovation and research.

As a family farmer, I directly know how dedicated, responsible and careful family farmers are. Worldwide, we have an important role to play: economically, socially and environmentally. The International Year of Family Farming is the best opportunity to create the best framework conditions to keep families on our farms.

With these few words I thank you all for your attention and I wish you a most productive meeting.