

People-friendly agriculture



The many reactions we received in response to our renewed magazine make one thing clear: family farming is very much alive. The conference on the future of family farming hosted by ileia last December 2009, in celebration of our 25th birthday, also affirmed this. Together with professionals from science, government, business, NGOs and partners from the South we explored how family farming can contribute to solving global issues like climate change and food security. Across the world, recognition is gaining ground that properly managed small-scale farming is low carbon agriculture. It is more efficient, more people-friendly and less polluting than large-scale industrial agriculture. Camilla Toulmin, director of IIED and one of the speakers, challenged the audience: “The market place for ideas is wide open”. On our website, www.ileia.org, you can find a full report of the conference.

Even though the outcome of the Copenhagen conference has not been encouraging, let us not forget that there are real opportunities to influence the way in which climate change policy is being shaped. But the mindsets of policymakers must change if possibility is to become a reality. ileia supports the campaign for an international year of family farming; we think this is a timely and important initiative to create a greater global awareness of the importance of family farming (see www.familyfarmingcampaign.net).

This issue of Farming Matters is about livestock. Lucy Maarse, our guest editor for this issue, makes a convincing argument in the theme overview (page 7) that an integrated perspective is crucial to overcome simplistic assumptions about the opportunities and threats that livestock present to family farmers. Strengthening ecologically and economically sound and socially just livestock systems is possible; it starts with understanding the multiple functions of livestock in rural livelihoods.

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Keep sending us your comments and suggestions, and thank you for reading Farming Matters!

Edith van Walsum, director ileia



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