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Press Release

COPA-COGECA ADOPTS MAJOR DECLARATION HIGHLIGHTING THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF FAMILY FARMS FOR FOOD, FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, FOR GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT IN EU RURAL AREAS

In a major declaration adopted at the launch of the International Year of Family Farming 2014, European farm leaders highlighted the crucial role of family farms in ensuring good quality food for European consumers and growth and employment in EU rural areas. They outlined key measures needed to ensure family farms have a viable and competitive future. This is more important than ever in a world of increasing uncertainty, market volatility and rising global food demand.

Declaration of European Farmers and Agri-Cooperatives on the Role of Family Farming

On the official launch of the United Nations International Year of Family Farming 2014, European farmers and agri-cooperatives highlighted the key role of family farms in ensuring good quality food for European consumers and growth and employment in EU rural areas. They form the backbone of rural economies.

Copa-Cogeca calls on the European Council, Parliament and Commission to ensure family farms have a competitive future and quality of life comparable to other sectors which young people want to be a part of.

Family farms account for a major part of the 25 million people employed in the EU agriculture sector, and of annual EU-28 production worth over 400 billion euros. They are a key driver for growth and jobs in EU rural areas as well as in regions like Africa. In Europe, family farms have often been handed down for many generations, providing a wide, diverse array of good quality food produced in a sustainable way to meet the demands of 500 million consumers in the EU, at the same time as caring for the environment. Family farms are the way forward.

To ensure generation renewal in the future, family farms – in all their forms - must be an economically viable and profitable activity. Family farmers should be able to earn a decent income from the farm. They face increasing challenges like high input costs, extreme market turbulence and variable weather conditions. To meet these challenges, Copa-Cogeca calls on the European Council, Parliament and Commission to ensure that:

- family farms have access to land and natural resources;
- investment in the sector is increased significantly and research and innovation encouraged with knowledge transferred to farmers;
- the right conditions are put in place to set up producer organisations like agri-cooperatives to enable farmers to join forces to market their produce; add value to produce to get a higher return and better manage the extreme market volatility;
- farmers are given sufficient training and education to give them a competitive future;
- the irreplaceable contribution of women to family farms is acknowledged across the world;
- young farmers are given support as they face difficulties when setting up;

- unfair and abusive practices in the food chain are tackled so that farmers have a better chance to generate income from the market;
- family farms have access to internet and other infrastructures, in line with the rest of society;
- both pillars of the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform are implemented properly and red tape is minimised;

The United Nations International Year of Family Farming in 2014 focuses world attention on the role of family farms in alleviating hunger and poverty, providing food security and improving livelihoods, whilst protecting the environment and biodiversity. It is crucial to have a dynamic, modern, resilient agriculture in the future which gives family farms a viable future.

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