



AHG OF INGOs
Representatives to FAO in Rome

FAO Conference 2011

June 25 – July 2



**«Home Economics extension services in support of rural women
and rural families»**

FAO CONFERENCE 37th SESSION 2011

SIDE EVENT at FAO Conference 30 June 2011 - WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

Statement by Francesca Ronchi Proja, IFHE representative

An official statement on this subject was submitted by IFHE to the FAO Conference, its extended text is on distribution here.

IFHE has a long history of cooperation with FAO, starting from 1952. As the only worldwide organization concerned with Home Economics and Consumer studies, IFHE has advocated for women in rural areas and conducted and stimulated programmes and projects aiming to raise levels of living, improve nutrition, food security and wellbeing of rural, besides urban, populations.

Examples of projects in academic area, in the field of education and in home economics extension are given in the official statement. The special role of home economics extension services was demonstrated by the study carried out in Tanzania by the University of Giessen, Germany: it showed that many elements influence food security, including regional, social, cultural, family factors. Home economics extension services would ensure that all those factors are taken into account in advising the families.

IFHE firmly believes that access to land and to education is crucial to any strategy to ensure food security and alleviate poverty. Therefore, rural women only have chances to improve their wellbeing and that of their families if they have access to land and to education, and are trained to improve their competences in agriculture.

But a major and critical aspect from the perspective of home economics is the relation among genders and the respective responsibilities and roles within the families. Societies have to find strategies to reach gender equality so that women participate and benefit of the resources available in the same way as men do. At the same time, the heavy and time consuming tasks of women, and girls, within the family need to be alleviated and shared with men and boys.

We cannot continue to encourage women to work outside their home and participate in the communal public activities, when they are often overburdened with work inside their homes – taking care of children, of the elderly, of the sick, of family food procurement, preparation, conservation, distribution, house cleaning and maintenance, and all other jobs that never finish in a household. And all this is not even considered “Work”; in fact, it has become common practice to use the term “working women” only with reference to women working outside their homes, as if they had no work to do at home – when they all have, and even more so in rural environments.

Finally, IFHE wish to encourage FAO to reinstate and/or strengthen the Home Economics elements in the PWB of the Organization. These had an important role in the past in assisting developing countries ‘ extension services, and through them, assisting rural women and rural families. We regret that attention to these aspects has declined over the years.



International Federation For Home Economics



IFHE congratulates FAO for the summary document and the SOFA report, which update the information available on the above subject.

Participating at the IFHE Symposium held in July 2010 in Sligo, Ireland, Dr. Marcela Villarreal, Director, FAO Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division, spoke on the theme “Soaring Food Prices, Gender and Vulnerability” and reported on the effects that the financial crises have had on food security. Lack of access to land, for poor rural people, but especially for rural women, is one element which underpins food security.

The FAO document confirms the important role of women in agriculture and rural development, underlining at the same time that much remains to be done to improve their situation and power for the benefit of all communities.

IFHE advocates for women in rural areas

During its relation with FAO since 1952, the IFHE, as the only worldwide organisation concerned with Home Economics and Consumer Studies has advocated for women in rural areas and conducted programmes and projects to raise level of living, improve nutrition and living conditions of rural populations

The examples, reported below, of projects carried out by home economics experts and home economics associations in different regions of the world demonstrate that in all areas

the academic area,

the field of education and

the home economic extension services

attention is focused on food security with a gender approach.

IFHE Projects for family well being

In the academic arena for example home economic experts at the University of Gießen Germany, conducted a research to the theme “Nutrition Security, Livelihoods and HIV/AIDS of South African Farm Workers - Qualitative Social Research from the Household and Gender Perspective“. The study showed the regional, social, economic, cultural and family related influences and the interaction with food security. Strengthening the role of home economics extension services would ensure that all the relevant aspects are taken into account in the programmes.

In the field of Home Economics education there are many projects underway to promote food security.

The Caribbean Home Economics Association chose different methods to promote food security in the last few years

A poster competition with the objective of educating students, in all territories of the Caribbean, about initiatives that could be undertaken to assist in reducing poverty and promoting food security within the region.

A ‘train the trainers’ workshop under the theme: • FIGHTING THE FOOD CRISIS: FEEDING A FAMILY, to promote nutrition, food gardening, school meals in community institutions and schools.

Another significant example is the “Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato (OFSP) Project” of the Tanzania Home Economics Association. Under the guidance of this project, women have learned to grow and prepare a variety of products such as chips, cakes, and sell them on the local markets. The success of the project is shown by the improvement of the living conditions of the families, for example they were able to move from shacks to small more proper stone houses.

Gender aspects important for developments

IFHE firmly believes that access to land and to education is crucial to any strategy aiming to improve living conditions of families in rural areas, to ensure food security and alleviate poverty. Therefore, rural women only have chances to improve the wellbeing of their families if they have access to land and are trained to improve their competencies in agriculture, in processing products for the market and sell them as entrepreneurs to generate more income.

A major but very critical aspect from the perspective of home economics is the gender approach. A significant aspect of partnership and a central element to social integration in society in general, and particularly in families, is the dimension of gender.

As is also underlined in the FAO documents, countries and societies have to find strategies to reach gender equality so that women participate and benefit of the resources available in the same way as men do. At the same time, the heavy burden of women (and girls!), within the family needs to be alleviated, by sharing it with men and boys. Achieving equality between men and women in the family is the foundation on which empowerment in other areas is based.

IFHE fully supports the recommendations included in the FAO documents, and will continue to advocate for gender equality, improvement of legal conditions for women so that they will get access to land and support to improve the living conditions;

binding strategies to establish home economic extension services in developing countries to support and train families, communities and especially women to overcome poverty and hunger and improve their quality of life;

multi-disciplinary efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger.

Finally, we wish to encourage FAO to reinstate and/or strengthen the Home Economics elements in the Programme of Work and Budget of the Organization. These have had an important role in the past in assisting developing countries' extension services, and through them, assisting rural women and rural families. We regret that attention to these elements has decreased over the years.