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Leaders convene at UN farmers' forum to tackle climate change challenges



IFAD President Kanayo F. Nwanze. Photo: IFAD

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Representatives of the millions of smallholders, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers around the world have agreed at a United Nations forum in Rome on the need to jointly address the global challenges of food insecurity and climate change.

“As we have seen from the droughts in the Horn of Africa last year and the Sahel now, and the floods that have recently devastated parts of Australia, Fiji and Mozambique – and even the unusual amount of snow here in Italy – farmers are particularly vulnerable to extreme weather and shifts in climate patterns,” [said](#) Kanayo F. Nwanze, President of the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)).

“This growing level of climate risk and uncertainty is one of the major challenges facing agriculture and food systems today, particularly where it is combined with land degradation, water scarcity and fierce competition for natural resources,” he told participants at the Fourth Global Meeting of the Farmers’ Forum yesterday.

The Farmers’ Forum was set up in 2005 and meets every two years for a global consultation, in conjunction with IFAD’s Governing Council. This year’s meeting focuses on the links between overcoming poverty and food insecurity, and improving sustainable agriculture development.

The meeting, which runs until 23 February, also highlights the important role of IFAD in placing the needs of smallholder farmers, pastoralists and fishers on the global agenda.

Smallholder farmers in developing countries suffer most from the changes in climate patterns and the degradation of natural resources, according to IFAD. They live and earn their livelihoods in the most ecologically and climatically vulnerable landscapes, relying on weather-dependent natural resources.

“Partnerships are central to IFAD’s work,” said Mr. Nwanze. “And farmers from developing countries are our most important partner of all. They are the experts and the agents of change in ensuring enough food for an ever-growing population.

“We need them and their knowledge to do our job – to help grow more food and increase the resilience of smallholder farmers worldwide who currently feed one-third of the global population.”

The fund pointed out that increasing volatile and uncertain weather patterns, water scarcity, soil erosion, declining soil fertility and salinization of arable land are all undermining agricultural production in many parts of the developing world.

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