



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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Message of the Holy Father on the occasion of the Eighth Global Conference of the World Rural Forum

The following is the Message sent by the Holy Father Francis to the chair of the World Rural Forum, Mr. Martín Uriarte Zugazabeitia, on the occasion of the Eighth Global Conference, taking place in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain, from 19 to 21 March, on the theme “Family Farming: Sustainability of our Planet”:

Message of the Holy Father

Distinguished Mr. Martín Uriarte Zugazabeitia

Chair of the World Rural Forum:

I warmly greet the participants in the Eighth Global Conference of the World Rural Forum, entitled "Family Farming: Sustainability of our Planet". Family farmers are to be commended for the solidarity-based way in which they work, as well as for the respectful and gentle way in which they cultivate the land. In this sense, they are key to making agri-food systems more inclusive, resilient and efficient. Unfortunately, despite their leading role in the progress of their peoples and their considerable contribution to global food production, they continue to be hit by poverty and scarcity of opportunities.

Aware of the complex challenges they face on a daily basis, I would like to address to the families of small farmers a word of encouragement and make them feel the Church's closeness to them, reiterating the call to pay attention to their human, spiritual and social needs, in addition to their technical needs (cf. *Message on the occasion of World Food Day 2014*).

The family business, beyond being a productive entity, is the place where people belong, the place where they feel understood and valued in themselves for their dignity, and not only for what they produce or for the results they achieve. Hence the importance of strengthening the ties that bind its members together, of respecting their

religious traditions, cultural traditions and agricultural practices.

I would also like to highlight the irreplaceable role of women in this context. Rural women represent a sure compass for their families, a firm fulcrum for the progress of the economy, especially in developing countries, where they are not only beneficiaries but real drivers of the progress of the societies in which they live.

Nor can I forget the place of young people in agriculture. The real revolution for a food future starts with training and empowering new generations. The gift that young people give us "consists of bringing innovative solutions to face old problems, and the courage of not letting themselves be limited by a short-sighted way of thinking that refuses to change" (*Message to the Director-General of FAO on the occasion of the opening of the World Food Forum*, 1 October 2021).

Mr. President, God bless the deliberations of this meeting, so that, recognizing the role of the rural family, we may advance in the elimination of hunger, the reduction of inequalities, and the care and protection of our planet.

Vatican, 12 February 2024

FRANCIS
