

NAIROBI, Kenya, September 18 (Infosplusgabon) - Heifer International and the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) have agreed to seek opportunities for financing smallholder farmers in rural areas.

The two organizations are also collaborating on market-driven development, climate-smart agriculture, access to finance and several other areas involving smallholder farmers, IFAD said in a news dispatch from New York Monday.

For more than 10 years, Heifer has been working with IFAD, a specialized agency of the United Nations and international financing institution that focuses on ending rural poverty in developing countries through long-term investment, the UN agency said in a press statement from New York Monday.

The two organizations have collaborated in Nepal, Rwanda and Tanzania.

Under a new memorandum of understanding signed by Heifer and IFAD, the two organizations will explore ways to build on their successes in the following areas:

- * Market-driven development, inclusive business models
- * Climate-smart agriculture, sustainable resource management
- * Financial literacy, access to finance
- * Capacity-building of local communities
- * Improved food security and nutrition through integrated crop/livestock farming
- * Stronger resilience through increased incomes, assets
- * Management of post-harvest loss
- * Social capital, women's empowerment

"Heifer and IFAD share many development priorities that make this partnership a natural one", said Pierre Ferrari, president and CEO of Heifer.

"Our new memorandum of understanding adds another level of strength in our partnership for leveraging each other's work and achievements to meet the goal of ending poverty and hunger," he added

"The need for a concerted, collaborative effort for greater investment in resilience is more critical than ever as millions of rural people are facing the increasing impact of climate change," said Gilbert F. Hounbo, President of IFAD.

He added that "partnering with like-minded organizations such as Heifer allows IFAD to reach more rural areas, where 80 percent of the world's poorest and undernourished people live."

Heifer has partnered with communities for 70 years to end hunger and poverty and care for the Earth.

The Little Rock, Arkansas-based non-profit organization has helped millions of households in more than 125 countries attain sustainable livelihoods through community-led programs.

Heifer works closely with a rapidly growing group of smallholder farmers – especially women – worldwide to promote agro-ecological productivity, attain food security, gain market access..

It also protects biodiversity and the environment. Heifer invests in local capacity, knowledge transfer, appropriate technology, farming capital and other agricultural resources.

IFAD invests in rural people, empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience.

"Since 1978, we have provided about US\$18.5 billion in grants and low-interest loans to projects that have reached some 464 million people."

IFAD is an international financial institution and a specialized United Nations agency based in Rome – the UN's food and agriculture hub.

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