NEW YORK, ꓹ US, September 19 (Infosplusgabon) - The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) will leverage synergies to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

The principals of the two organizations, Houlin Zhao (ITU) and José Graziano da Silva (FAO), on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that seeks to facilitate the development of e-Agriculture policies and regulations as well as ICT-centric innovation clusters that strengthen national and regional agricultural competitiveness.

The MoU is also aimed at enhancing the capacity of rural communities to adopt and use ICTs in agriculture, climate change monitoring and disaster-prevention, according to a statement by FAO on Tuesday.

"ICTs have a huge potential to support rural development, increase the resilience of rural families, improve access of farmers to markets and other services, and empower women and youth. ICTs will help ensure that the rural population is not left behind," said FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva.

"ITU looks forward to working more closely with FAO to promote and facilitate the development of valuable e-Agriculture policies, strategies and plans, as well as the development and sharing of ideas, resources and ICT solutions aimed to increase livelihood of rural communities. A priority will be the fostering of digital skills among women and youth in the agriculture sector," said ITU Secretary-General Zhao.

The statement said the MoU builds upon the ongoing collaboration between ITU and FAO to assist member states in adopting a strategic approach to make the best use of ICT developments for agriculture. In 2016, the two institutions jointly developed the E-agriculture Strategy Guide that suggests a framework for countries to develop their national e-agriculture strategy and master plan, while also jointly organizing the FAO-ITU e-Agriculture Solutions Forum in Bangkok in August 2016.

FAO has a longstanding history of fostering exchanges of ideas and best practices in ICT for sustainable agriculture and rural development. In 2007, FAO and a group of founding partners launched the e-Agriculture Community of Practice - an online space with over 12,000 members from 170 countries and territories.

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