

ASSOCIATIONS

the partnerships out there

IN TODAY'S GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT AND CERTAINLY CONSIDERING THE ECONOMIC CLIMATE, IT IS ALMOST INEVITABLE THAT ASSOCIATIONS WOULD LOOK FOR PARTNERSHIPS IN ORDER TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR ACTIVITIES. I WOULD LIKE TO ILLUSTRATE THIS WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL FERTILIZER INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION (IFA).

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In 1996, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) organised a World Food Summit. Although IFA was accredited to FAO, we were informed that we should caucus and join with other associations representing the farming sector in order to have a voice in this important forum. This led to the establishment of the International Agri-Food Network (IAFN) which has proven to be very successful in the advocacy activities of its members. Indeed, very soon the participating associations recognised the

strength of the network. In some cases, joint positions could be developed.

At important international forums, the network could be represented by one of its members, keeping others informed of the proceedings, allowing better management of human and financial resources. The network has stood the test to time and continues to be of great value, not in the least because of its flexibility and the freedom of its members to either act individually or in cooperation with others.

A second example I would like to cite is the very recent coalition between farmers, the

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scientific community and the agricultural input sector, called Farming First, in response to the recent food crisis, the economic downturn and climate change concerns. Once again, the different associations

involved are satisfied with the impact of the coalition.

These are just two examples of how associations in advocacy activities can improve their efficiency and obtain better results from the human and financial means at their disposal. However, partnering with other stakeholders is not only important in advocacy work. All development projects financed by my own association, IFA, are conceived and executed in partnership with other stakeholders. By pooling knowledge and resources, credibility is assured and better results are obtained.

Finally, following advocacy and project implementation, I would like to turn to the organisation of meetings, an essential activity for any association. When planning events, we consult a wide range of actors from outside our own organisation. However, while we have in the past conducted joint events and we will certainly continue to do so in the future, it is most important to have a clear line of command with only one organisation in charge.

In conclusion, strategic partnerships in all aspects of an association's activities are powerful tools to obtain better results and to be

more cost effective. Associations traditionally have limited means and pooling resources can only be beneficial to all those involved.

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