

African Civil Society and Farmers' Organization joint statement to the 25th FAO Regional Conference for Africa, Nairobi 16th to 20th June 2008.

“Reforms now! The Poor can't wait! The future of Africa is in its small scale farmers!”

We, the undersigned African civil society and farmers' organizations meeting in Nairobi from 16th to 18th June 2008 to review the implementation of the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) Declaration of March 2006.

We wish to bring to the attention of this conference the outcome(s) of the recent meeting of farmers' networks held in Addis Ababa, 21st – 23rd May 2008 to review the current state of African agriculture. Considering the importance of the need to work together at the continental level, the four sub-regional farmers' networks – Agricultural Producer Organizations of Southern Africa (SACAU), Eastern Africa (EAFF), Central Africa (PROPAC) & Western Africa (ROPPA) reaffirmed their total commitment leading to the formation of Pan African Farmers Platform

In furtherance of this commitment, the Addis Ababa meeting agreed to establish a steering committee composed of the presidents of the four sub-regional farmers' networks and appointed Mr. Mamadou Cissokho as the chair. This new instrument constitutes a powerful lever to promote a resurgence of African agriculture.

Realizing that the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) goal number 1 to reduce the number of hungry people by half by 2015 is unattainable, when out of the 854 million people that go to bed hungry 313 million are in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Africa hunger kills more people every year than AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis combined.

Noting that 80% of food in Africa is produced by women and yet they own less than 1% of land and also comprise 60% of those who suffer from hunger. In addition they remain shackled by discriminatory cultural, traditional, social and economic structures which hinder them from access, control and ownership of land/natural and productive resources making them increasingly vulnerable to food insecurity.

The present global food crisis that is unprecedented in magnitude and impact is caused by international policies that reduce the policy space of southern governments to design and implement appropriate national policies which results in decreased investment in agriculture, reduction of support to peasants and small scale farmers and dismantling of state managed food reserves.

However we recognize that climate change, unfair trade, increasing promotion of biofuels, forced privatization of vital resources, high energy prices, internal conflicts and disasters are all contributory factors to the food crisis.

Recognizing the outcomes of the ICARRD that emphasized the need for appropriate national policies for agrarian reform and rural development, we decry global trends in agriculture that promote large scale capital intensive farming to the detriment of other systems of agricultural production (e.g. peasant farming, farm workers, pastoralists, animal husbandry, fisheries, and hunter-gatherer societies).

With the proposed green revolution in Africa led by Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), we observe a lack of recognition of indigenous knowledge and the plurality of agricultural systems. We strongly believe that the hallmark of this global homogenization is the role of multi-national corporations seeking to make agriculture subservient to their profit motives.

Taking cognizance of these facts, we the under-mentioned civil society organizations:

- Re-affirm our commitment to farmers and regenerative sustainable farming to ensure self reliance in the development of agriculture and the achievement of food sovereignty.
- Reiterate that women must be at the centre of an inclusive, appropriate and participatory agrarian reform and rural development.
- Emphasize that trade must serve the development of agriculture and livelihood of the poor people than the interest of the multinational corporations.
- Insist that governments must prioritize inter and intra Africa trade especially in agriculture rather than negotiate unfair bilateral trade agreements such as the EPAs.

Recommendations

The 25th session of FAO Regional Conference for Africa should consider the following:

1. Advance the follow up of ICARRD recommendations through:
 - a. A clear mechanism for monitoring that guarantees women, youth and marginalized groups to have access, control and ownership of land, water and other natural and productive resources.
 - b. Acknowledgement of CSOs as fundamental actors in designing national and regional agrarian reform and rural development policies that is people-centered.
 - c. Allocation of resources by African Union and national governments to the whole agriculture chain and the promotion of indigenous knowledge.
2. Build consensus on the need to exclude sensitive agricultural products from the unbridled trade liberalization and establish an effective special safeguard mechanism to regulate influx of imports and overcome the food crisis.
3. Urge African governments and institutions at all levels to provide solidarity and technical support to the Pan African Farmers' Platforms and other civil society networks working on food security in order to fully engage in developing viable alternatives for agrarian and rural development.
4. Countries must fulfill the commitment of allocating a minimum of 10% of their national budget to agriculture development as stated in the 2003 Maputo declaration and increase the allocation of resources to the development of irrigation systems.
5. African governments should fully implement the UN voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Adequate Food and FAO should take practical measures to ensure compliance.

6. FAO and African governments should commit to promote sustainable agricultural development that aims to achieve food sovereignty with emphasis on the right holders (i.e. women, men and youth, small scale farmers, fisher folks, pastoralists, agricultural workers, landless and off farm rural communities). Agricultural practices must seek to strengthen social structures and farmers identity as political, social and economic actors as well as to support agro-ecological agriculture.
7. FAO should come up with a moratorium on the production of biofuels until African governments have put in place strong policy frameworks in which regulation and enforcement are adequate. The use of food crops as biofuel must be immediately stopped.

Thank you

Coast Women's Rights (COWER) - Kenya, Rwanda Women's Network(RWN), Plateforme Sous Regionale Des Organisations Paysannes D'Afrique Central (PROPAC) – Cameroon, Food Security Advocacy Network (FOSANET) – Malawi, National Youth Association for Food Security (NaYAFS)/IFSN - The Gambia, Kenya Food Security Network (KEFOSPAN), Kenya Land Alliance (KLA), Eastern African Farmers Federation(EAFF) - Tanzania, National Women's Farmers Association (NAWFA) - The Gambia, Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations (NEWA), Uganda Land Alliance (ULA), Community Land and Development Foundation (COLANDEF) - Ghana, Landless People's Movement (LPM/La Via Campesina) - South Africa, Conseil National de Concertation et de Cooperation des Ruraux (CNCR) – Senegal, Network of Organizations Working on Food Sovereignty (ROSA) - Mozambique, Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF) - Zambia, Shelter Forum - Kenya, Food Rights Alliance-Uganda, Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns - Uganda, ACORD International, ActionAid International.