

A synthesis of deliberations of the third global meeting of the Farmers' Forum

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Governors of IFAD, Mr President, Ladies and Gentlemen

We the participants in the Farmers' Forum, representing millions of small- and medium-scale family farmers, pastoralists and artisanal fishers, worked over the last four days for the third meeting of the Farmers' Forum at IFAD and agree on the following synthesis of our deliberations.

Since the Farmers' Forum last convened two years ago, the world has experienced multiple crises, exacerbated by the global recession and climate change. More people are poor and hungry. We mark the words of the President of IFAD at the opening of our Forum, who said that these crises "alerted the world to the importance of developing agriculture as a source of economic growth and political stability.... investment in rural development and serious attention to the role of poor rural women and men in agricultural growth, and particularly the role that smallholders play across the world, must be central to government policies and their development agendas." We acknowledge the significance of family agriculture in the world and we uphold the campaign for the UN Declaration of the International Year of Family Farming.

We are witnessing all over the world an increasing competition for land and water, with rising land concentration and large-scale land acquisition by transnational corporations and local elites. These practices result in exclusion of people from land and water resources, the fundamental resources on which we rely as food producers. This includes our fishery resources, which are being increasingly depleted as artisanal fisheries remain severely underfunded. It is important to continue promoting the engagement of farmers' organizations for the development of the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land and Other Natural Resources as a follow-up to the ICARRD Conference.

We want agriculture to be controlled by us, the very people who cultivate the land and are feeding the world. There is no effective response to the challenges of food security for all, eradication of extreme poverty and mitigation of climate change without more and better investment in our farms and rural communities and more supportive policies for rural development.

Country leadership and ownership of development policies have been recognized by the international community as a fundamental principle. But country ownership in agricultural and rural development must go beyond ownership by our governments and administration. Therefore as legitimate and autonomous membership-based producers' organizations we claim our duty and rights to be part of the design, implementation and evaluation of these rural development policies and programmes that are benefiting not only our rural communities, but our urban fellow citizens who rely on the food we produce.

Partnership between IFAD and Farmers' Organizations in Country Programmes. We note and highly appreciate the real progress in the consultation and partnership between IFAD, governments and our organizations since the creation of the Farmers' Forum, and in particular over the last two years.

We agree with the President of IFAD's emphasis that IFAD's partnerships with the farmers' organizations have improved IFAD's own understanding of rural poverty, that they have enabled IFAD to ensure a greater focus on the smaller and poorer farmers, and that they have also benefited from the local and indigenous knowledge and experience, which in turn have resulted in better projects and more sustainable benefits to smallholders. At the same time, we recognize that we need to do **more and better** to deepen this partnership.

In order to seize all of the opportunities offered by a more inclusive participation of rural producers, we need time and resources to consult. We provide the following recommendations to IFAD:

Extend the partnership to all countries where IFAD is operating, taking into account the diversity of the organizations of poor rural people.

Systematically include at least one national apex organization in the IFAD Country Programme Management Team in order to contribute to the steering of the IFAD country programme (COSOP formulation, project and programme design and implementation, policy dialogue and other initiatives).

Create a flexible, demand-led facility within IFAD's budget for facilitating the participation of farmers' organizations in the COSOP and the project cycle.

Develop operational guidelines to support the systematic engagement of farmers' organizations at country level; in particular in the monitoring and implementation of IFAD programmes.

Ensure that the already strong practice of consultation with farmers' organizations is systematized; in this regard, IFAD and regional/international farmers' organizations could maintain a roster of organizations that should be systematically invited when IFAD is about to embark on project design.

Take stock of important lessons from programmes with farmers' organizations, with a view to replication and upscaling, and to promote south-south exchanges and knowledge among the farmers. (In this regard, we recommend exploring the possibility replicating the programme 'Learning Routes', which was successfully implemented in Latin America.)

Monitoring and evaluation. It is recommended that M&E systems for projects be systematically open to farmers' organizations, as a way for them to be able to influence projects as well as for them to have access to key information. The involvement of farmers' organizations in the Country Programme Management Team will be the entry point to collectively monitor the outcomes and impacts of IFAD country programmes and to assess the quality of the involvement of farmers' organizations.

Direct support to farmers' organizations. We noted and appreciate the increasing direct support that IFAD has been providing to our organizations over the years through grant funding for capacity-building programmes. We agree with IFAD that direct support to our organizations should be channelled primarily through our regional networks and federations for the sake of economies of scale and efficiency. However, direct support to national or local organizations should remain an option.

As support is expanded, IFAD also expects that farmers' organizations conduct their own M&E of the benefits and impacts of such support for IFAD's target group that accrue within their own organizations, particularly in terms of economic empowerment. In addition, there should be a more systematic approach to identifying synergies between direct support to farmers' organizations for capacity building and their capacity to benefit from the larger projects supported by IFAD and governments. Synergies need to be identified between these two processes.

Farmers' Forum Process. We reiterate our request that the Farmers' Forum be an on-going, bottom-up process of consultation, inclusive of the diversity of our organizations and respectful of our autonomy.

In this regard we recommend that each regional division of IFAD develop and implement its own plans for dialogue and consultation at country and regional levels in partnership with the members of the Steering Committee of the Forum, with the objective of organizing regional or sub-regional meetings of the Farmers' Forum in at least five regions/sub-regions over the next two years, with contributions from farmers' organizations. Regional division plans should be developed over the next months and submitted to the Steering Committee of the Farmers' Forum for comments and validation. It is suggested that, at the regional level, the consultation be systematically linked to existing opportunities directly linked to IFAD operations in its five regions. For example:

For Latin America and the Caribbean, a dedicated session be organized each year in the context of regional integration processes, including DR CAFTA and REAF MERCOSUR.

In the other IFAD regional divisions, national farmers' organizations be invited to attend the annual Regional Implementation Workshop and that an additional day be added to the agenda to take stock and define ways of accelerating the partnership, at the national level, between IFAD, farmers' organizations and national governments.

It is also recommended that IFAD develop a dialogue with the NEPAD Secretariat with the aim of establishing a CAADP focal point to accelerate the partnership with farmers' organizations.

Women in Agriculture and Farmers' Organizations¹

We, women farmers, fishers and pastoralists, call attention once again to the glaring disproportion between women's roles in all aspects of agriculture across the developing world and the limited recognition, rights, resources and services

provided to us. We also raise an alarm over the effect that climate change and the financial crisis are having on us women as they result in increased poverty and food scarcity. Because of poverty and lack of services in rural areas, our sons and daughters do not wish to be farmers and continue to migrate to urban areas. This raises a critical question: How can the profitability and sustainability of farming be secured so as to ensure a future for the next generation of women and men farmers?

Effective and representative producer organizations can provide a powerful instrument to make rural women's voices heard, so that we can have a greater influence over decisions that affect our lives and livelihoods. But as of yet, our voices have been heard too rarely in our organizations.

The economic empowerment of women and their increased knowledge and skills are essential preconditions to improve our status and livelihoods, and for us to be able to assume effective roles in producer organizations. We therefore urge IFAD and other donors to bring new and significant resources to support the economic empowerment of women farmers. We need these resources to strengthen our knowledge, skills and leadership in order to produce and process food more effectively and sustainably, for our families and also for the markets. We urge IFAD and other donors to direct resources to women's structures in farmers' organizations and to require quotas that are respected.

We also specifically call upon IFAD to:

continue and increase efforts to enable women to increase their access to and control over productive assets including land and water;

support the development and provision of financial services suitable to agriculture, and to enable women's incomes to grow;

in addition to mainstreaming gender equality concerns throughout projects and programmes, wherever feasible earmark funds for women in IFAD-funded programmes as an affirmative action measure – for example under community development funds, and in training;

use grant funding for women's capacity building – including child care facilities where needed – when it is not possible to finance such activities through a loan;

where IFAD funded programmes support access to land and other kinds of property, seek to negotiate for joint titling, supported with legal advisory services to enable women to defend their rights;

in the context of a much-needed focus on rural youth, give attention to the specific situation and needs of young women.

In the context of IFAD's engagement with farmers' organizations we recommend that IFAD:

open spaces for women farmer leaders to participate in country and global policy processes, and also in IFAD country strategy consultations;

in the design of the projects and programmes that work with farmers' organizations, establish quotas for women (where possible, not less than 30 per cent, with a view to reaching 50 per cent over time), provide incentives for producer organizations to achieve the targets, and monitor their implementation;

invest more grant resources in increasing capacity of farmers' organizations to address gender issues and empower women, and to strengthen women's leadership – where possible channelling funds directly to women's structures within organizations;

involve women leaders of farmers' organizations in the supervision and monitoring of development programmes.

Finally, we note with satisfaction that the 30 per cent quota of women participants recommended at the last meeting of the Farmers' Forum has been exceeded this year. We urge that the current proportion of 40 per cent be maintained in subsequent meetings, with a view to increasing further over time.

Investing in Young Farmers

We all share a recognition of the urgent need to address young farmers. Our family agriculture needs to be remunerative and give dignity. Young women and men farmers' access to production assets – land, credit, training – has to be ensured.

In this regard, we recommend that IFAD:

Map young farmer and rural youth organizations and their networks (national and regional).

Hold a Farmers' Forum event similar to the one held for women this year, and ensure more representation of young people in subsequent Farmers' Forums.

Designate within IFAD a focal point for youth.

Hold a global workshop on youth involvement in Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development during this year (UN Year of Youth).

Mainstream youth in all IFAD policies and programmes, with a gender balance and an emphasis on developing capacity-building and enhancement programmes for rural youth to engage in sustainable food production and agriculture and rural employment.

Launch pilot projects supporting rural youth.

Organize youth exchanges for experience-sharing on best practices and learning.

Once again we sincerely thank IFAD for having responded positively to our request for establishing the Farmers' Forum as a unique platform for inclusive dialogue on rural development and for giving us the opportunity to address its Governing Council.

I thank you for your attention.

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1/ This statement was prepared during the Special Session of the Farmers' Forum: Preparatory workshop on promoting women's leadership in farmers' and rural producers' organizations