

Farmers Major Group Intervention on Sustainable Development Goals

Open-Ended Meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to UNEP

March 24-28, 2014

Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on this important topic.

Farmers represent one third of the world population. Small-scale farmers, many of whom are women, produce around 70% of our planet's food. As the earth's primary ecosystem managers, farmers are best placed to ensure sustainable development and contribute to the green economy.

Without farmers, there will be no sustainable development, no rural communities, and no food production. Farmers cannot accomplish sustainable agriculture and rural development without other major groups and governments, but neither can other stakeholders replace farmers and feed the world.

Recent studies show that, current industrial/intensive agricultural systems contribute between 43% and 57% of the total global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions: production, processing and packaging, transport, land-use change and deforestation. The International Assessment of Agricultural Science, Knowledge and Technology for Development (IAASTD, 2009), analyzed the merits, shortcomings and challenges of agriculture in select developing countries. Based on its findings, the assessment recommends a transition from a conventional/industrial system to multifunctional, resilient, and sustainable agricultural systems.

With special regard to the International Year of Family Farming, we advocate for a paradigm shift towards strengthening people-centred, humane and sustainable agricultural systems (farmers, fisherfolks and pastoralists) that are resilient to and mitigate climate change, enhance animal welfare, improve food sovereignty and benefit the livelihood of millions of small-holder farmers and their families.

Ecologically friendly agricultural systems have enormous potential in contributing in all of the three pillars of sustainable development (i.e. economic, social and environmental). They contribute to people's well being and the integrity of the natural resources and ecosystems services, which are essential life support systems. Moreover, a recent report by UNCTAD, looking at crop yields of organic and conventional farms in Africa, concluded that organic agriculture can be more conducive to food security than most conventional production systems, and that it is more likely to be sustainable in the long term.

Therefore, we urge governments and UNEP to:

- i. Further promote bio-diverse ecological agriculture employed by small holder farmers and rural women as good practice and the appropriate technology, as asserted by the 2010 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, as key to food security that ensures their right to nutritious food, protects the environment and is economically and ecologically feasible.
- ii. use 'The year of agriculture in Africa' to support the significant livestock sub-sector and humane and sustainable livestock production systems to the Green Economy in Africa
- iii. improve water efficiency in agriculture and eliminate the use of toxic chemicals from farm to fork.
- iv. full farmer empowerment and participation in marketing systems to ensure that they receive a fair return for their products

Finally it is essential that observer organizations have full participation in all meetings of UNEP. Let us all work together to ensure a sustainable future.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Farmers Major Group

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