

SYNTHESIS OF DELIBERATIONS OF THE 2024 FARMERS' FORUM

Honourable Governors of the International Fund for Agricultural Development,

We, the representatives of farmers, fishers, forest dwellers, pastoralists organizations and indigenous peoples¹ to the eighth global meeting of the Farmers' Forum bring the following statement to your attention.

Since the last global Farmers' Forum in February 2020 the world has undergone profound transformations and has been traversed by a series of intersecting crises linked to the effect of the Covid19 pandemic, the aggravation of the climate crisis, exposing further the destructive effects of large scale industrialized production and the structural deficiencies of the globalized, neoliberal food system, as well as the negative impacts of free trade agreements. We have also seen the exacerbation of existing conflicts in many areas of the planet as well as the emergence of new wars and the increasing militarization of territories and borders. In this regard, we highlight the fact that in many countries agricultural production is being destroyed by different kinds of conflicts and wars, such as in Palestine, Haiti, Eritrea and Sudan, among others. We urge IFAD to invest in rebuilding peasant agriculture and small-scale food production in these areas, with particular attention to the situation in Gaza, and we call on the international community to intervene and save over 2 million Palestinians in Gaza from the dangers of starvation, death, and killing.

These crises have once again highlighted the crucial role played by farmers, and in particular by small-scale food producers and family farmers, in mitigating their impact and continuing to feed most of the people in the world. And yet, farmers are in jeopardy: land grabbing, unequal access to natural resources, indebtedness, difficulties in getting fair prices for their products and a decent revenue are only a few of the threats they are currently facing.

We believe that the actual context requires a new and innovative approach in order to strengthen food producers organizations' work to ensure a decent income to farmers and the availability of healthy food for all peoples. We think IFAD has the potential to play a major role in this effort.

On the partnership among IFAD and Farmers' organizations

IFAD has been working for 20 years in partnership with farmers' organizations with the objective of supporting them, in particular through investment projects and grants.

Much has been done, but there is still ground to be covered.

In order to strengthen the collaboration between IFAD and FOs, we think it is essential to:

- strengthen the autonomous FAFO processes at national and regional level, accordingly with the decentralization of global FAFO, in particular with regard to Country Strategic Opportunity Programmes (COSOP).
- include FOs in discussions related to IFAD programs and in their co-construction at all levels, including as implementing partners.
- enhance the role of FOs in the resource mobilization process.
- elaborate clear guidelines for IFAD engagement and collaboration with FOs.
- include FOs in all IFAD projects and programs, as a pre-condition, in order to insure real participation in project formulation and supervision.
- dialogue and systematic engagement with FOs should be a central responsibility of the operational teams at country level.

We acknowledge IFAD's efforts in developing the approach paper and we urge IFAD to consult FOs further to finalize it.

¹ Thereinafter referred to as Farmers' Organizations (FOs).

On thematic issues

Building on the dynamic discussions held during the 2024 Farmers' Forum, we invite IFAD to actively support the implementation of the following recommendations:

Youth and gender

First of all, we would like to underline the importance of supporting rural youth, women and gender diverse peoples to access land and other productive resources and opportunities for capacity building. We ask IFAD, in particular, to support institutional funds for women and youth, showcasing women-led models related to climate resilient farming, fishing and pastoralism. The accessibility of funds at grassroots level should be guaranteed, with more flexible arrangements for women.

Food sovereignty, agroecology and organic farming

Agroecology is one of the main pillars of Food sovereignty. In view of its proven ecological, social, economic and cultural benefits for our communities, we strongly urge IFAD to integrate more relevant and ambitious peasant agroecology and other sustainable and resilient practices, including organic farming, into all its projects and programs. In this sense, we recommend that IFAD support policy dialogue promoting the uptake of these farming systems and include them in all IFAD projects and programs, starting from the country level.

Land

We ask IFAD to commit to supporting redistributive land policies instead of market-based approaches, working directly with member states and recognizing the leadership of the FAO, towards a new International Conference for agrarian reform and rural development. We also ask IFAD to support the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security.

Public policies and market regulation

As members of FOs we ask to be involved at all stages of decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies impacting farming and food production. We also ask IFAD to support the strengthening of FOs capacities to participate effectively in these processes.

We are demanding, in particular, ambitious public policies for the fair distribution of rights to use land, in particular genuine agrarian reforms, policies to support the spread of peasant agroecology, policies to develop infrastructures that small-scale producers need. These policies must be based on fundamental human rights and respect existing international frameworks such as the UNDRP and the UNDROP, and on food sovereignty principles.

We are asking IFAD to support governments in developing market regulation policies, in order to ensure the stability of local markets, fair prices that cover the costs of a sustainable production and decent revenues for all food producers.

Fair revenues through fair agricultural prices are the main way to get millions of small-scale scale food producers out of poverty. Free-trade agreements that place small-scale producers all over the world in competition, compromising local food systems and agriculture value chains, should be stopped. Instead, we ask support for local economic development in order to eliminate practices that harm natural resources by supporting the development of local markets and inclusive value chains.

Climate financing

The climate crisis is a crisis of inequalities. If wealth were distributed more equally, all people could live in dignity without having to over-use the earth resources. All solutions to the climate crisis should ensure a better distribution of wealth and power between Northern and Southern countries, but also within each country.

We are in favor of substantial grants and fundings of FOs to support all climate-friendly agroecological practices. We underline the risks connected with carbon markets and all financial mechanisms for carbon offsets, in view of their lack of effectiveness in tackling the climate crisis, their impact in terms of increasing social inequalities and the risks of land grabbing.

In this regard, we ask IFAD to support reflection and undertake a comprehensive effort to disseminate information on the risks associated with solutions involving carbon markets. We also ask that Farmers' Organizations (FOs) be involved in international discussions on carbon markets to ensure all farmers are well-informed.

We ask IFAD to perform vulnerability assessments within its regions to develop adaptation plans to face climate crisis.

Fisheries

IFAD supported the achievement of the International Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (IG SSF) in 2014. This guidelines should be mainstreamed at the national level policies and programs to support small fishers.

Therefore we urge IFAD to:

- strengthen the implementation of SSF guidelines at all levels. All IFAD projects should comply with IG SSF guidelines and uphold rights of fishers to have access and control over productive natural resources.
- build required capacity within the fishery sector on IG SSF monitoring and climate resilient fishing practices and value chain, with special focus on youth and women.
- provide dedicated funding support to fishers organizations through project grants, loans etc. leading to better infrastructures and sustainable fishing practices.
- recognize existing good practices related to climate change resilience in artisanal fishery and promote and/or replicate them instead of investing in Blue Economy.

Livestock and pastoralism

Livestock and pastoralism make a significant contribution to the income of small-scale food producers and family farmers and to the economy of developing countries. Good practices in pastoral systems have been shown to offer benefits in terms of sustainable use of biodiversity and important social, economic and cultural services.

We invite IFAD to ensure greater participation of livestock breeders' and pastoralists' organizations in consultations with FOs at all levels, and to support livestock breeding and pastoralism more ambitiously in the projects and programs it finances.

Funding and implementation of IFAD's programs and projects

We urge governments to provide more funds to IFAD in order to support public policies and programs. We express our concern on the use of private sector funding. IFAD funds should not be given to activities that undermine the existence of small-scale food producers and to activities for compensation related to climate and biodiversity.

We ask to increase funding for more sustainable long-term investment, strengthening FOs' internal capacity through direct funding to organizations.

We call for a halt of the financing of projects involving large-scale land acquisitions, land grabbing and speculative investments from private actors and development banks.

Finally, we recommend IFAD to create a permanent adequate financing mechanism to support with grants directed to FOs the capacity building of FOs in order for them to continue engaging in a meaningful and effective way in IFAD-related processes (as happened in the IFAD13 consultations). This will enable FOs to successfully get involved in policy dialogue at all levels as well as effectively play the role of implementing partners of IFAD-funded projects and programs

Implementation of UNDROP, UNDFE and 2030 agenda and defense of multilateral system

We believe that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP) and the United Nations Decade for Family Farming (UNDFE) should be integrated in all IFAD programs as tools to insure the realization of small-scale food producers and family farmers' rights and decent livelihoods.

The UNDROP recognizes the rights of peasants and rural peoples, aiming to protect and promote their specific economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, as well as to advance towards just and sustainable food systems. It is essential to increase awareness about the potential positive impact on the livelihoods of peasants and rural workers and peoples that the implementation of the UNDROP could bring. To this end, we ask IFAD to support the implementation of the UNDROP at all levels, by funding specific programs at regional and national level, and by proactively engaging in the newly created UN Working Group of Experts on Peasants' Rights and in all other relevant UN bodies and mechanisms.

The UNDFE was acknowledged and recognized as a suitable mechanism to contextualize international tools and guidelines in support to family farmers and their organizations, such as the UNDROP and CFS policy products. We ask IFAD, in particular, to support inclusive design, development and implementation of national and regional action plans for the UNDFE by strengthening explicit synergies with IFAD programs in order to foster policy change benefiting small-scale food producers.

We also restate the pivotal role of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, as a guiding tool for the design and implementation of projects involving farmers.

Moreover, we think it remains essential to strengthen the multilateral system and inclusive normative spaces like the CFS and its Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism. IFAD's programs and FAFO's processes should fully take into account the policy outcomes negotiated in the CFS.

Conclusions

As farmers, fishers, pastoralists organizations and indigenous peoples, we are committed to strengthening the dialogue with political decision-makers at all levels towards just and sustainable food systems. We will continue to mobilize to support the replenishment of IFAD's funds, and to jointly work for a greater commitment to IFAD from the governments, in order to respond to the current global crisis.

In order to improve our mutual collaboration, we reiterate the request, already expressed in the FAFO2020 synthesis of deliberation, to include producer organizations' representatives in IFAD governance structure, including participation with an Observer Status in the executive board.

We are confident that IFAD will take into account the recommendations arising from this Global meeting of the Farmers' Forum and implement them towards the achievement of a common goal, producing environmentally and socially sustainable food by defending the food producers who feed the world.