

**STATEMENT FROM CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPANTS  
29TH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC  
BANGKOK, 26-31 MARCH 2009**

We, representatives from farmers' organizations, indigenous peoples, women, agricultural workers, fisher folks, people's movements and civil society organizations from Asia-Pacific countries, wish to register to the delegates at the 29th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok on 26-31 March 2009, the following:

**Water Scarcity and Availability**

- Water scarcity and poor water quality are directly linked to unsustainable and chemically intensive agriculture, and manufacturing, extractive and energy industries (including hydro-power). They capture disproportionately large volumes of water and are responsible for ground water contamination, chemical leaching and water salinization.
- High-input conventional agriculture is a significant contributor to the climate crisis and the resultant water crisis.
- Access and tenure to land, forests, watersheds and territories for smallholder agricultural producers, workers and indigenous communities have been critically jeopardized due to increasing privatization and commercialization, and are precipitating livelihood crises and resource conflicts.

In view of the above, we call on FAO and its member states to:

- Immediately halt and reverse all forms of water privatization.
- Shift and increase investments and budgetary allocations in food and agriculture to raising productivity in rainfed agriculture and supporting efforts of smallholders in ecologically sustainable agriculture.
- Promote low carbon lifestyles, ecologically sustainable agriculture, localisation of production and consumption, and energy saving/conserving technologies.
- Promote public-community partnerships that acknowledge, utilize and support indigenous knowledge and practices in water conservation and management, and involve communities—especially women—in the financing, management, delivery and governance of water.
- Implement progressive and comprehensive agrarian reform that will legally guarantee rural and indigenous communities access and tenure to ancestral and customary domains, and productive resources for food sovereignty and secure livelihoods. In line with this, ensure implementation of ICARRD agreements. Particular attention must be given to legal and equal land and resource rights for women.
- Promote and champion traditional crop/seed varieties developed by farmers through ages in coping with agro-ecological stresses and impacts of climate change, such as drought, floods and salinity.

**On Agribusiness in the context of globalization and trade**

- Agribusiness operations in the region have been dominated by national and transnational corporations that have secured monopoly access to large tracts of land,

forests, water sources and other productive resources. More than 90 percent of the world's commercial seeds market is controlled by the top 10 agrochemical corporations. Small-scale rural producers have not significantly benefited from these agribusiness operations.

- The same oligopolic reality characterizes the corporate dominated food industry, which has very high ecological and carbon footprints and has displaced local food production systems that have the capacity to meet majority of the region's food and nutritional needs at a much lower carbon cost.

In view of the above, we call on FAO and its member states to:

- Promote and make viable sustainable, ecologically friendly agro industries and community-based enterprises led and managed by small scale food producers and entrepreneurs by allocating investments, marketing support and financial, technical and human resources. Small-scale men and women farmers and fishers produce majority of the region's food; therefore it is extremely important and strategic to focus investments on smallholder agriculture.
- Compel agribusiness corporations to pay for the costs of mitigating the negative impacts arising from their operations through legally enforced regulations, penalties and fines.

On Aid for Trade

- Aid for trade must be de-linked from the WTO Doha Round of negotiations. It should not be used to pressure and arm-twist developing countries and LDCs to accept trade agreements that further open their markets and which they would otherwise reject.
- The money for aid for trade should be new and additional to already existing and pledged ODA.

If Aid for trade is to be operationalized, we call on the FAO and country delegates to be guided by the following:

- Recipient countries should have the freedom and flexibility to determine their priorities based on the development needs of small-scale food providers and enterprises which in turn should be determined through broad and effective consultations with all concerned constituencies.
- It should be given without conditionalities and not create debt in recipient countries.

On State of Food Availability Report (SOFA)

- The Regional SOFA is a useful document that consolidates information and statistics on food and agriculture in the region. To improve its usefulness to governments, farmers' organizations and civil society, we recommend that SOFA:
  - > Include gender disaggregated data and statistics to provide a clear picture of the roles and contributions of women in food and agriculture.
  - > Include data and statistics that show the roles, contributions and value of smallholder agricultural production in meeting food needs. Smallholders comprise the majority of agricultural producers in the region and their contributions must be reflected in official documents. Such disaggregated data will also show which part/type of agriculture is responsible for the environmental impacts attributed to the

agriculture sector as a whole.

> Distinguish clearly between genetically engineered and genetically modified (GM) crops and traditional biotechnologies when using the term “biotechnology.” For example, when referring to Bt cotton, RR corn, etc., the SOFA must identify them as GM crops.

> Include monitoring reports on public investments for small-scale food producers and entrepreneurs as well as investments by foreign countries in agricultural production.

#### On ensuring the relevance of FAO RAP

The FAO RAP platform needs to be responsive to both, concurrent and long-term challenges faced by the region’s peoples in attaining sustainable development and human rights, and in eliminating poverty, hunger, malnutrition and inequality. We are deeply concerned by the near absence of serious discussions on the ongoing global food and financial crises in the agenda of the 29th APRC.

To improve relevance and responsiveness FAO and its member states should:

- Ensure that deliberations and technical programmes are contextually relevant to critical concurrent conditions such as the food, finance and climate crises.
- Maximize the effectiveness of existing sub-regional intergovernmental platforms such as ASEAN, SAARC and PIF by providing technical support and resources rather than setting up separate FAO commissions.
- Immediately operationalise sub-regional food reserves (as in SAARC and ASEAN) as humanitarian rather than trade-driven initiatives to tackle food insecurity and prevent future food crises.
- Proactively engage in the structure and mechanisms of the Global Partnership for Agriculture Food Security and Nutrition (GPAFSN) to ensure equal decision making power for aid/finance receiving countries in addressing the food crisis.
- Reinstate the Gender Unit with sufficient human and financial resources.

#### On Institutionalizing meaningful participation of social movements and civil society in FAO processes

While the space provided for civil society in the 29th APRC is appreciated, we note serious limitations in the ability of small scale food providers to participate in such meetings. We call on FAO and its member states to:

- Create a permanent mechanism to facilitate the meaningful participation of smallholder agricultural producers, workers and enterprises that will guarantee that their interests are adequately represented at such fora and in accompanying processes.
- Encourage and facilitate the participation of CSOs in on-going and future FAO related programs on capacity building, research, extension, etc.

#### Our Commitments

We, the civil society participants in this gathering, are committed to working together to make our governments and the FAO responsive to the needs of the poor and marginalised.

We will continue our efforts to make FAO and its member states—our governments—accountable to the needs of the region's peoples through constructive and principled engagement in various FAO processes and monitoring of the FAO's work.

We will intensify our efforts in empowering local communities to contribute towards and benefit from sustainable development efforts in the Asia Pacific region

#### Endorsing Organisations

Action Aid

Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA)

Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (AsiaDHRRA)

East Asia Rice Working Group (EARWG)

Focus on Global South

ODA Watch

Pesticide Action Network for Asia and Pacific (PAN-AP)

Philippine NGO Coalition for Food Security and Fair Trade (PNLC Philippines)

South East Asian Council for Food Security and Fair Trade (SEACON)

Third World Network

Rural Development Working Group