

**Statement FARMERS MAJOR GROUP**  
**April 30, 2012**  
**Meeting with BUREAU AND Member States**

With less than 51 days to the Summit in Rio, we have a critical opportunity to support the implementation of sustainable agriculture and food sovereignty. We need to ensure essential human rights like the right to food and water, and rights for peasants, smallholders and family farmers. While farmers are often among the most affected by the multiple crises, they also hold the solutions for sustainable development in their hands. Many farmers consider the concept of food sovereignty to be a comprehensive framework which addresses the issue of poverty, hunger, climate and the environment, as well as issues of human rights, and animal welfare. Food sovereignty addresses poverty in both rural and urban areas through sustainable local food systems.

To change the direction towards sustainability, countries must rethink the path of development. The green economy as currently framed, based on the financialization of nature and market-based solutions will not sufficiently address the social aspect of development, nor will it help us to achieve food sovereignty.

We are seeing important references upholding basic human rights eliminated. Rights to nutritious, culturally appropriate food, and to clean water and sanitation are absolutely necessary for any sustainable development; farmers, fisher-folk, and pastoralists play an indispensable role in realizing these basic rights. Therefore, institutions and governments must also recognize peasants and family farmers as rights holders.

The new path of development must entail the empowerment of peasants, indigenous peoples, women, family farmers, smallholders, artisanal fisher folk and pastoralists to produce and harvest. This requires the rights to equitable access to and control over land and seeds – regardless of gender, marital status, religious or ethnic origins – and access to water, inputs, trade and markets.

The effective conservation of planetary biodiversity and natural resources are integral. Through sustainable agriculture, such as organic and climate smart, peasants and family farmers globally produce 70% of the world's food consumed. Addressing these issues will only be accomplished with traditional agricultural practices, agricultural research and development, infrastructure, risk management instruments, innovation, and capacity building for farmers and their organizations. A policy framework is needed in support of this kind of agriculture, which contributes greatly to feeding the world, and stands as a real solution to reverse the current trend of climate crisis.

In order to be able to implement systems that nourish our people and sustain our planet, institutional change is necessary, particularly in the area of participation and empowerment of the most vulnerable, the majority of whom reside in rural areas, especially rural women. FAO's State of Food and Agriculture Report 2010-11 reveals that if women farmers had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30 percent, raising total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent, enough to feed up to 150 million more of the world's hungry people, in turn reducing the number of hungry people in the world by 12 to 17 percent.

Policy prescriptions for agriculture must be consulted with farmers and the most affected constituencies. No longer can institutions make decisions based on volatile market signals. Farmers need to have access to market information, and fair trade, including better prices. We must defeat hunger while creating positive prospects for the younger generation to settle in economically prosperous rural areas. Our responses should be instructed by what people are demanding: to implement food sovereignty; what many peasants and farmers around the world are already implementing for the basis of their livelihoods, fighting hunger with fresh, safe, nutritious, chemical-free food, reviving rural economies, and preserving biodiversity.