

# Major Group Position Paper

## The Farmers Major Group's vision and priorities for the Sustainable Development Goals

*March 2014*

### Introduction

This short position paper details the Farmer's Major Group's vision and priorities - including themes, goals, targets and indicators – for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the wider post-2015 development agenda and the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). It forms part of the European Commission-funded multi-stakeholder engagement programme "[Sustainable Development 2015](#)" (*SD2015*). This paper provides an opportunity for the Major Group to communicate and consult on its position as a basis for ongoing stakeholder engagement, capacity building and advocacy.

The paper sits alongside similar position papers authored by the other Major Groups. A synthesis report of these position papers is provided by Stakeholder Forum in order to identify common priorities and important differences across the Major Groups' positions and compare them with the [Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals](#)' (OWG) 'focus areas', published in February 2014. The review will be used as a basis for engagement between the Major Groups and the OWG, and to establish priority clusters for further coordination and advocacy work on those themes. The individual papers will be updated by the respective Major Groups in September 2014 following a series of global and regional capacity building, outreach and advocacy exercises under the *SD2015* programme.

Since 1992, when Agenda 21 set out nine major groups, farmers have been active in the Commission on Sustainable Development leading up to Rio+20, and now the Post 2015 and SDG process. The Farmers Major Group (FMG), coordinated and represented by international farmer organizations, is responsible for providing coordination and input into the content and process of the *Post-Rio+20/Post-2015 Process*. Our main objective has been, and remains, to ensure that a genuine peasant and farmer voice is present and participating within the development and debate of what will become the SDGs and the process beyond.

The Farmer's Major Group was created to provide a space for farmers and peasants from around the world to coordinate positions, statements and over all participation in the UN-CSD process. As such, in order to ensure the highest degree of representation of our constituency base, the FMG seeks to take the following actions as part of its operating mandate:

- Updating the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform web site to share information and key deadlines, and documents pertinent to peasant, farmers, pastoralist and fisher folks
- Gather inputs to prepare FMG submissions and interventions
- Be a focal point for requests to attend official events, and ensuring the presence, resources permitting, of our constituent representatives at these events
- Seeks to prioritize participation of peasant, farmers, pastoralist and fisher folks that are from Global South Countries (LDCs), particularly women, youth and people that have been historically subjected to racial, ethnic and gender discrimination.

## Summary

For the FMG, we see that it is important to have a strong focus on peasants and farmers in developing the SDGs. Its representation and participation is key, but more fundamentally relevant to its constituency is the recognition that it is peasants, family and small-scale farmers themselves who already have in their grasp solutions to the problems that underlie the causes of social-economic inequality and poverty which is so prevalent for them, their families and communities around the world. This calls for enabling, promoting and supporting the practices, which are already taking place, such as agro-ecological, and zero-input agriculture. In addition, it is critical to ensure special attention to the effects and conditions of women, youth and those people that are discriminated because of race, ethnicity, or gender, whom are dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods or are involved as labour within the same sector.

Thus, for the FMG, an overarching framework that addresses the significant areas is food sovereignty. Many farmers consider the concept of food sovereignty to be a comprehensive framework that addresses the issue of poverty, hunger, climate and the environment, as well as issues of human rights. Food sovereignty address poverty in both rural and urban areas through sustainable local food systems while ensuring culturally appropriate, nutritious food. It ensures access, right to decision-making, rural community and marginalized producers' control over food, land, seeds, other productive inputs, trade and markets. And in the face of climate change, this approach also allows for effective conservation of planetary biodiversity and integrity of natural resources, increasing resilience and adaptation possibilities.

This position paper considers the following priority themes and issues:

- **Food Security and Nutrition / Sustainable Agriculture**
- **Poverty eradication (Eradicating Wealth Inequalities)**
- **Promoting social, gender and women justice**
- **Human rights**
- **Climate change**

## Our position

The themes which the FMG is following and which will form the core area of engagement in this process directly affect or involve peasants, family and small-scale farmers as well as pastoralist and fisher folk. Considering this themes, the goals which the FMG sees as necessary under each of these themes are focused principally on achieving the full right of peasants, family and small-scale farmers to be key actors in the decision making process of any recommendations, mechanisms or policy directed towards agriculture and their communities that depend on it for their livelihood. The absence of the right to participate in the formulation of solutions to poverty and climate change, and their implementation, limits the ability to achieve any such goals that may be considered sustainable or for the advancement of the social-economic status of the vast numbers of the population of the world that still lives in the countryside and depends on agriculture. Furthermore, it is critical that the underlying goals promote, support and protect inclusive sustainable and humane agriculture by peasant, family and smallholder farmers so as to address two sides of the same issue of poverty, social-economic inequalities and food insecurity. While, protecting and maintaining biodiversity, ecosystems services and enhancing animal welfare.

Most concerning, the vast majority of farmers are small holders, and they are part of the world's most poor and vulnerable. They have few options, virtually no resources, and need support to achieve social, economic and environmental goals. They face emerging challenges of drought and disaster risk reduction that need attention. Thus, this requires ensuring that family farmers, small scale food producers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, peasants and the rural poor are provided with enhanced access to information as a basis for decision-making; access to justice; and free, prior and informed consent for both policy development and implementation actions on the ground, including issues that pose a threat, such as land-grabbing, to local food security and tenure rights.

On the issue of **Food Security and Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture**, it is imperative that there be a peasant-farmer-centered approach which understands, analyzes, and recognizes the knowledge of farmers at the local level. In attempting to assess the needs of peasant and farmers, research must take place in a participatory process that involves farmers. This is key in re-discovering and recognizing the practices that can be solutions to poverty, hunger and climate change. These practices should be disseminated through the support and promotion of grassroots participatory

extension programs such as the *Movimiento de Campesino-a-Campesino* (Farmer-to-Farmer Movement) of Latin America, which has resulted in improved livelihoods and natural resource conservation for several hundred thousand families in the rural villages of Latin America over the last 30 years.

It is critical to address the shortcomings of development models and policies up until now by taking seriously the effects that human rights protection and the distribution of power have on economic and social outcomes. The FMG, along with other Major Groups, call for a **human rights** framework approach to the SDGs. We reiterate the essential role of family farmers, smallholders and especially rural women in the sustainable production of nutritious food and realizing the right to food. Likewise, addressing the issue of **poverty eradication**, requires the eradication of wealth inequalities and its underlying causes. One of those causes identified is the lack of pro-peasant, family and small-scale farmer policies and more specifically the empowerment and inclusion within decision-making spaces and processes, such as determining trade policies and agricultural support designation.

The promotion of **social, gender and women justice** is paramount for any sustainable development goal. It is not enough to just promote equality, since historically and systemically women, youth and people of different ethnic, race and gender have been discriminated against. Women are key to food and nutrition security, knowledge, and sustainable development. They account for 60 to 80% of smallholder farmers and produce 90% of food in Africa and approximately half of all food worldwide. There needs to be a concerted effort to ensure women's rights to productive resources, such as land, as well as protection against land grabbing caused by "extractive industries and large-scale monocultures." In addition, it is necessary to address the structural causes of what we see as the feminization of poverty, especially in the countryside. Ending the violence against women is a key to sustainable development and addressing the issue of poverty. Thus, it is necessary to address the specific economic and social constraints that rural women face and leave them behind in realizing any goal for sustainable development.

Finally, the issue of **climate change** is one, which bears much consideration for peasant and farmers. First, it is recognized that the most vulnerable and least able to absorb the impacts of climate change are the rural poor and those that depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Nonetheless, peasant and small-scale farmers are also a source of solutions to adaptation and mitigating the effects of climate change, through the sustainable agricultural practices already taking place. Small-scale and peasant sustainable agriculture must be promoted and supported, as it addresses the economic needs of the rural poor and climate change adaptation and mitigation by ensuring natural resource resilience. One example of this is seeds. In the hands of peasant and small-scale farmers, seeds will develop and naturally evolve in reaction to the changing environment, increasing their resilience and adaptation.

## Goals and Targets

### Poverty eradication (Eradicating Wealth Inequalities)

- Empower farmers in organizational frameworks and encourage them to organize;
- Evaluate agricultural improvement not only in terms of production but also in terms of its impact on farmers' and local communities social and economic indicators;
- Prioritize integration of farmer organization input into the decision-making process
- Land/Agrarian reform in order to secure farmer's and rural people's (universal) access to resources (land, water, seeds, credit, infrastructure).

### Food Security and Nutrition / Sustainable Agriculture Systems

- Agriculture production should be done in a sustainable manner – economically, environmentally and socially;
- Safeguard against food shortages, commodity price volatility and post harvest loss through the implementation of national and local grain reserves managed by local peasant and farmer organizations, guaranteed price controls and protections for key agricultural and food items and the agricultural supply chain;
- The promotion of agricultural extensification instead of intensification;
- Adoption of Food Sovereignty as policy framework – farmers and their countries must be free to make agricultural policy decisions that best benefit them;

- Address International imbalance: Many countries agricultural sectors/systems are not on a fair footing due to past and current trade policies, and historical development patterns;
- Domestic imbalance: Farmers within countries should be treated fairly when compared to other sectors and/or citizens in regards to credit, policy (e.g. subsidy) and other market failures.

### **Promoting social, gender and women justice**

- Adoption of stand-alone goals and supporting targets on justice and equity,
- Incorporate pro-justice/pro-equity concepts across all other goals and require disaggregated data in measuring progress towards meeting goals and targets.
- Ensure equal access and opportunities in employment, land tenure, education, health, governance, and access to sexual and reproductive health services for women;
- Develop and implement gender-sensitive, employment-centered development strategies based on full and productive employment and decent work for all, which also recognizes and promotes value (economic and social) of women's work and care at home and within their community;
- Adopt measures to ensure the equal representation of women in all areas of economic, political, social and cultural decision-making spaces;
- Develop and improve adequate, sustainable and gender-responsive social protection schemes;
- Enact policies and mechanisms to end the violence against women.

### **Human rights**

- Ensure the full inclusion of the recognition and protection the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas as supported in the final study of UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee (A/HRC/19/75).

### **Climate change**

- Environmental pressures such as climate change, soil degradation, deforestation and water pollution should be taken into account during agricultural production;
- Peasant and small-scale sustainable farming such as Agroecology, must be recognized, promoted and supported as productive activities that both help mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts

## **Framework**

### ***Cross-cutting Issues***

Two important crosscutting issues that the FMG will follow closely and intervene appropriately are the issues of energy and sustained and inclusive economic growth. Within the theme of energy, it is important that in the search for alternative sources of energy we do not enact trade-offs that result in negative effects such as crowding out food production for the production of energy crops. These practices also have an impact on agricultural commodity prices which adds to the market volatility of food prices worldwide. Further work must be done in lowering the consumption of fossil fuels and energy. In the case of agriculture this can be addressed in several ways, including through the promotion of local and domestic production whenever possible and limiting the inefficient and long distance transportation of agricultural products from across the globe.

On the question of sustained and inclusive economic growth, the predominant model of agriculture must change along with the view and value of food production. In developing the SDGs, agriculture and food production must change from being seen only as a commodity. Its production and distribution is a fundamental aspect for life and social-economic advancement that must be protected from the volatility of global market mechanisms, as well as policies that impact critical and key food production, particularly from peasant and small-scale farmers. Furthermore, our notion of growth must be challenged and instead replaced by a more community-centric, ecologically-balanced and culturally-sensitive framework for development.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Although it is premature to think of specific indicators absent of actual policy and mechanisms, it is critical that in the monitoring and evaluation, peasant and farmers play an active and major role. A way to accomplish this is by integrating local, national and international organizations of peasants and farmers into processes that will serve as both a monitoring and evaluative purpose. In addition, it is important that the indicators for evaluation, as well as the process of monitoring be developed with the active and meaningful participation of peasant and farmers. As a prevalent saying within peasant and small family farmers in many countries “A farmer believes by seeing” and doing.

## Next Steps

In order to move forward on these objectives and to begin unfolding the vision presented, the FMG will begin outreach and consultation with other peasant and farmer organizations in LDCs countries. It is our goal to have at least a 75% - 85% global representation of peasant and farmer organizations from countries that consist principally of family and small-scale farmers by the end of the phase 2 of the OWG-SDG process. The reason for this approach is that these are the constituents that the SDGs will be principally directed towards and they must be the primary actors in that development of SDGs and the process that follows.

The second step is to begin the formulation of a more concrete position that includes specific SMART targets, as well as policy proposals, which should be considered as part of an overall SDG approach. At the moment, there is not enough peasant and farmer participation from these LDC countries, which would grant the FMG significant legitimacy to position specific and concrete targets for the SDGs or the goals that have already been developed, prior and post Rio+20.

## Conclusion

Many farmers think that a singular focus on a production paradigm using investment and market access as the pillars of a green economy with respect to agriculture will not lead us on a sustainable path ; a previous hallmark of the green revolution.

We urge for a more holistic and sustainable path for the world's food and agriculture production system building on, for example agro-ecology, traditional systems utilizing, respecting and promoting traditional knowledge of small rural producers may they be farmers, fisher folk, indigenous people, women or pastoralists. Such a model based on collective participatory systems and processes will ensure not only safe, nutritious food for all but it will also provide a decent livelihood to the majority of the world's population. Farmers can feed the world sustainably, and are already doing so through the implementation of many small-scale solutions, which include agroecological practices, and zero-input production.