

**Namibian based major groups' representatives:
Contribution to the High Level Meeting African Agriculture in the 21st Century: Meeting the
Challenges, Making a Sustainable Green Revolution
Windhoek, Namibia, 9-10 Feb**

The statement below was prepared by the following participants from civil society in Namibia:

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We are actively involved in several NGOs, collaborative teams and interest groups in Namibia and the Southern African region, providing services for capacity building in improved land management and development in general.

Background:

In terms of sustainable development policy and policy reform, Namibia has some examples that have received international recognition:

- The change in legislation in the 1960's on commercial (privately held) farm land allowed farmers *conditional rights of use over wild life*.
- This was followed post-independence (1989) by the expansion of these rights and responsibilities to the communal areas. Both policies have resulted in a thriving wildlife and tourism industry in the national parks, privately held land and on communal lands, effectively securing wildlife over the long term in Namibia.
- Most recently, a team of farmers, facilitators, representatives from government and farmers' unions and scientists drafted the first ever *National Rangeland Management Policy and Strategy for Namibia*
- The *Country Pilot Partnership Program*, although not a policy yet, does engage 6 government ministries and many other stakeholders in collaborating on sustainable land management practices.

From our practical experience

We read through the contributions by the *International Federation of Agricultural Producers* and *Friends of the Earth, Nigeria* made in preparation to the CSD conference and can support by and large the statements made in there. In addition we would like to share the following points, based on our experience with policy and in the field, with policy implementation. Given the fact that most of Africa falls within the semi-arid and arid ecological zone our comments are informed by and focus on this climatic circumstance:

Land Tenure

In Namibia land degradation is taking place on privately owned, communally managed land as well as parks. What is needed is policy that creates an enabling environment for producers to benefit equitably from all natural resources whilst allowing these producers to enforce sustainable management practises at the local level. In addition to improved land reform policy, the root cause of degradation of the rangeland and cropping resource base needs to be addressed in all tenure systems.

Addressing root causes

Many solutions to the **root causes** of declining production on rangeland and croplands are not necessarily complicated and technically demanding. They can be addressed by building on local knowledge and synergies between different land uses. For example in most regions of Africa (excluding wetlands and rain forests) mixed farming systems should be encouraged, including

- the herding of livestock which allows the sound application of sustainable rangeland management principles and which is used to prepare and fertilize crop fields.
- In many, if not most areas wildlife and tourism can be integrated into rural livelihoods development, thereby not only generating income, but also enhancing bio-diversity.

Management activities must improve the water cycle, mineral cycle and biodiversity on both range- and croplands, rather than treating symptoms and/or “fighting desertification”. These regenerative practices will mitigate the severity of droughts and climate change.

Water is recognized as a basic human right. However the provision of water in rural areas in response to this has resulted in large scale degradation around water points due to the poor management of the livestock and rangelands.

Emphasis on Partnerships

Policy that enables improved land based production and development must be directed at improving the quality of life of the producers of a place as well as economic gains.

On an institutional level, **Partnerships** between governments, private sector and NGOs are required to test, trial and implement locally developed solutions to increase sustainable productivity. Improved policies need to be based on these practical successes through a comprehensive consultation and on-going review process.

These partnerships are long term and the roles of each of the partners may change over time. Local level facilitation must be done by local people who are well trained and competent, and must be done in a non-sectoral approach which allows them to recognize and effectively respond to the complexity of social, economic and environmental factors. Key challenges experienced by producers must be met by on-farm research.

Our experience has also shown that an effective way towards gender equality is the recognition and encouragement of partnership in households, businesses and communities and to offer training and facilitation that responds to the capacities, interests and needs of these partnerships rather than to focus “only on women”.

Policy as process

Policy without effective implementation and regular review and adaptation will not lead towards sustainable development. Because we are dealing with life, and change, guidelines (policy) and rules (laws) must also be re-formed. When all relevant stakeholders are involved in the policy formation and review, there is a much greater chance for effective dissemination and voluntary following of the guidelines.

Look out for a DVD entitled ***Herding the Future – knowing what a grassplant needs.*** It will be screened and distributed at the CSD conference in Windhoek. The film documents the integration of traditional African knowledge and skills with modern science in some communities of the North Western region of Namibia. They are creating landscape and livelihoods that enhance biodiversity and quality of life in their community. The film was made under the auspices of *Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC)* and can soon be downloaded from their website www.irdnc.org.na