

Statement from the Food and Agriculture Cluster of the NGO Major Group
for the thematic discussion at the third session of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable
Development Goals (SDGs) in New York, 22-24 May, 2013

The Food and Agriculture Cluster was formed in New York to support messages from Major Groups and Civil Society before, during and following the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development. The Cluster continues to coordinate messages for the Post Rio processes and Post 2015 Thematic Consultations on sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition. As the first thematic discussion of the OWG will be on food security, nutrition, sustainable agriculture, land degradation, desertification, drought and water and sanitation during its third session on 22-24, the Cluster is helping to bring civil society voices into intergovernmental processes in New York at United Nations Headquarters. The Cluster looks forward to working with Member States, the UN System, Major Groups and other stakeholders to ensure that sustainable agriculture and food and nutrition security are prioritized and recognized as critical to achieving sustainable development.

Twelve key priorities for an SDG for food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture:

Many of the following points were included in the technical support team (TST) briefs. However, as Major Groups and Civil Society stakeholders, there are important issues our delegations wish to call attention to in considering a goal that links food security, nutrition and agriculture to sustainable development.

1. The progressive realization of the right to food - including equity of access to resources and social inclusion - should be at the foundation of a multi-stakeholder informed SDG for food, nutrition, and agriculture.

2. The SDG must recognize and address the current reasons for food insecurity, malnutrition and unsustainable agriculture. The lack of rights, disempowerment, exclusion and exploitation of the world's smallholder farmers, pastoralists, forest folk and indigenous peoples, the destruction of their land and ecosystems through land grabbing and unsustainable and inequitable industrial agriculture aided by perverse subsidies and policies and wealth creation for the global minority are amongst the main causes of entrenched hunger, malnutrition, obesity and poverty, as well as the systematic destruction of primary ecosystems, anthropogenic driven climate change, and the loss and degradation of soil, land, biodiversity, water and agricultural genetic resources.

3. Improving the livelihoods of smallholders, pastoralists, forest folk, indigenous peoples, women farmers and youth should be at the forefront in SDG development and implementation including by putting them at the center of decision-making processes, strengthening their rights including to control their own seeds, securing their tenure to their land, access to resources and markets and the provision of training based on their knowledge and technology needs and those of their communities and ecosystems. The vast majority of the world's farmers are smallholder farmers. Smallholder farmers cannot be left behind if we want to arrive at an effective set of post-2015 Goals. We must ensure that all smallholder farmers and other rural communities, in particular women and disadvantaged groups, enjoy a decent livelihood and income, and protect their right to access to productive resources and assets from seed to land and markets, everywhere. Worldwide, 70 per cent of food production stems from 525 million small

operations, which collectively cover the cultivation of 40 per cent of the planet's arable land. A reduction in hunger and poverty can only be achieved by empowering smallholder farmers including putting them at the center of decision-making processes related to their livelihoods, land and well-being. Women play a major role all along the food chain from the field to the plate. Their knowledge and needs have to be taken into account on all levels of decision-making regarding agriculture, nutrition and food systems. Globally, women account for nearly half – 43 percent – of the world's farmers, although their contribution to the agricultural labour force can be much higher – more than 60 percent in some countries. The position of women and especially their access to resources in agriculture and food systems must be improved and their rights as workers within the food system must be safeguarded.

4. A transformation of agriculture and food systems is necessary. A transformative agenda should call for systemic and holistic approaches to diverse, nutritious, sustainable and resilient food consumption and production systems. To be transformative in all three pillars, such approaches must empower inclusive, bottom-up initiatives supported through appropriate enabling policies in science, technology and business directed towards the social and ecofunctional intensification of food and agriculture systems. This means a transformation to sustainable, diverse and resilient agriculture and food systems that conserve natural resources and ecosystems, and result in substantial degraded land restoration. Sustainable agriculture and food systems such as organic agriculture and agro-ecology improve food security, eradicate hunger and are economically viable, while conserving land, water, plant and animal genetic resources, biodiversity and ecosystems and enhancing resilience to climate change and natural disasters. The key characteristics of sustainable, diverse, and resilient agriculture and food systems can be common to all future agriculture and food systems, both large and small.

5. Environmentally and socially destructive forms of agriculture development and agricultural practice must be phased out globally. Unsustainable development based on profit-driven global commodity production, such as palm oil, soy based animal feed, sugar, biomass for biofuel, etc., results in questionable enhancement of food security and nutritional value. Instead, these commodity systems often destroy livelihoods, drive obesity and diet related disease, increase inequality, and destroy ecosystems such as forests and savannahs of both local and global importance. These systems must be phased out and countries need resources and policy support to develop and implement sustainable development alternatives. Pesticides and other agricultural practices that are highly toxic to humans and ecosystem functions such as pollination and clean water provision must be phased out globally. Safe alternatives must be developed in the context of Integrated Pest Management and agro-ecology, including the integration of effective organic and agro-ecological practices such as beneficial insectary plants, crop rotations and participatory plant breeding to minimize the use of toxic inputs.

6. Sustainable and humane livestock systems should be included as key to sustainable agriculture and diets. Livestock plays a central role in food security, providing nutrition and essential services such as draft power, employment and income security. Over one billion of the poorest people on the planet depend on their animals as their main source of livelihood and food security. Sustainable livestock production, of which animal welfare is an integral part, is core to achieving socially and environmentally responsible outcomes on the future of food and farming, poverty eradication and sustainable development, especially

in developing countries. Sustainable livestock production systems are those that are ecologically sound, economically viable for farmers and consumers, equitable for rural communities and other stakeholders in society and include appropriate animal care.

7. Support the up-scaling and further development of bio-intensification of food systems, including organic agriculture and agro-ecology production and marketing systems and mainstreaming these approaches into local, national, regional and international public and private sector programs, initiatives and services, not only in food systems, but in terms of climate resilience and greening the economy.

8. Strengthening urban rural linkages and local government planning for a holistic and ecosystem-based approach to enhancing city-region food systems, should be recognized as a key element of the transformation agenda.

9. All dimensions of malnutrition have to be addressed in an integrated manner across health, agriculture and social programs in order to gain access to sufficient, healthy and culturally appropriate food and nutrition for all people. Only integrated approaches that address the whole food environment in urban and rural areas will be successful. In this regard, a well-framed SDG can encourage sustainable diets through integrated action that pays special attention to vulnerable populations such as women and youth, the rural and urban poor, and to nutrition during pregnancy and early childhood.

10. Significantly reducing food loss and food waste which accounts for one third of the total food supply is an enormous opportunity to attain the overall goal, while reducing the pressure to further intensify agricultural output with potentially damaging social and environmental consequences. The interrelated goals of ending poverty and hunger while also addressing the sustainability of food systems, malnutrition, waste and access to good sanitation and water demand more engagement and decision making by local and territorial authorities, linking urban and rural.

11. Re-establishing food security for disaster affected people, landscapes and animals is a necessary post-disaster response but also requires pre-disaster risk mitigation through better planning and investments in preparedness. For the world's poor, these landscapes are the foundation of dietary and economic resilience and safeguarding these food security assets must be an integral part of any effective disaster response and disaster resilience and preparedness planning at local, national and international levels.

12. Progress on the Post-2015 Goals needs to be measured and monitored in a multi-stakeholder and participatory manner including independent bodies with both local and scientific knowledge, competence and capabilities. The implementation of targets and the transformation needs to be informed by global, regional, and national multi-stakeholder assessments on sustainable agriculture and food systems. In the field of food security and sustainable agriculture, the Committee on World Food Security in Rome, in cooperation with relevant UN bodies, and with the full inclusion of civil society and the private sector, should be the global platform for ongoing assessment of national progress towards a new sustainable development goal for food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture.

In conclusion, to strengthen small food producers' ability to increase food availability for themselves and the world's growing population in a stable manner in the context of climate change, a major paradigm shift is required. Instead of being neglected and locked-out of development, the world's small food producers need to be placed at the center of the global sustainable development agenda. Not only must land grabbing end but so must the exclusion of small food producers from research, training and extension services and appropriate support and safety nets. Public funded extension, training, farmer field schools and farmer friendly research programs must be put in place that not only help lift the world's poor out of hunger and malnutrition but create an enabling environment for existing and new entrants to food production so that they can flourish in terms of productivity, resilience and profitability. To do this farmer and local community friendly institutions must be enabled such as farmer organizations, cooperatives and partnerships between local producers and consumers so that they can be empowered in decision-making processes such as those over land tenure, market development, fair price setting, loss and damage, training and technology transfer. Appropriate support and empowerment of smallholder farmers and small food producers in general both in rural and urban areas must be seen as the key to simultaneously engaging a growing global population in inclusive sustainable development, effectively tackling hunger and malnutrition and eradicating poverty.

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