

Civil Society Statement to FAO Member Governments on Vital Role of Women in Agriculture and Rural Development

Attn: New FAO Director General and Member States

On Behalf of Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN), Action Aid International, Oxfam International, the Huairou Commission, Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PANAP) and la Plateforme Paysanne du Niger (PFPN).

In the midst of this food crisis, characterized by market volatility and an increase of the world's hungry by 44 million since June 2010, women and children living in rural areas are struggling disproportionately despite the huge contribution they make to agriculture. The FAO State of Food and Agriculture Report 2010-2011 writes that investing in women in agriculture could increase yields and decrease global hunger by 12-17 percent, or by between 100 and 150 million people. At the recent IV LDC Conference in Istanbul, UN Women's Executive Director Michelle Bachelet addressed governments, saying that "investments in rural women's access to productive resources and financial services can have critical multiplier effects on rural development." She asked the obvious question: *why isn't this kind of investment happening?*

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) member governments and newly appointed Director General must respond to this question by acting now to provide leadership through a commitment to support women in agriculture and rural development. In particular, **we urge the new Director General and Member States to pledge to take these actions:**

1. Support gender mainstreaming in FAO's Program of Work, allocating the necessary resources from FAO's regular budget for this to happen, and also setting clear targets as well as processes to monitor its effectiveness.
2. Invest in more research and gender disaggregated data as the basis for better programs targeted to rural women in all regions.
3. Hire more women experts in all areas of work to create a more gender-equitable institution.
4. Require all FAO staff to incorporate a strong women's rights and empowerment perspective to design and implement programs at the institutional and country level.¹
5. Regularly engage with women civil society leaders, including organized groups of women producers and market women, to strengthen the direction and implementation of its work as implied in FAO's Medium Term Plan 2010-13 (Reviewed)-Effective Collaboration with Member States and Stakeholders (Doc. C 2011/3).

¹ A 2010 audit of the FAO found that its overall gender ranking is low in terms of staff, resources, and capacity. Clearly, the agency and its member governments can do better

6. Ensure that women's leadership and expertise feed into thematic areas of work such as guidelines and initiatives related to land, investment, and food security that support a stronger CFS.
7. Promote the adoption and implementation, among member countries, of policies that protect women's rights to land and other productive resources, access to markets, finance, information and technologies, their capacity to organize themselves and participate in policy process, as well as protect rural women worker's wages and labour conditions.

In addition to procedural and budgetary matters, the new Director General upon taking office should position the FAO as a leader on rural women, food security and agriculture by prioritizing these concrete actions at all high-level events, including the next UN Commission on the Status of Women that will take place in March, 2012 focusing on *'The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges.'*

If we do not invest in rural women's livelihoods, assets and decision making power, the Millennium Development Goals of reduced poverty and food insecurity will not be achieved. On the flip side, if we shift course to and take positive steps in this direction, we will see benefits today and in the future. **Let us take urgent action.**

LIST OF ENDORSEES

International

Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and NRM (WOCAN)
Action Aid International (AAI)
Oxfam International (OI)
The Huairou Commission
International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement (IFOAM)
World Farmers Organization (WFO)
Ecumenical association for sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development (ECASARD)
World Rural Forum (WRF)
International Movement Against Discrimination and Racism (IMADR)
International Food Security Network (IFSN)

Regional

Organisation Régionale des Organisation Paysannes d'Afrique Centrale (PROPAC)
Windward Islands Farmers Association (WINFA)
Women's Committee of COPA
European Women's Lobby
Asian Farmers' Association (AFA)
Asian Rural Women's Coalition (ARWC)
Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PANAP)
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)
Committee for Asian Women

National

Women on Farms Project (WFP), South Africa
REACH OUT, Cameroun
Collectif des ONG pour la Sécurité Alimentaire et le Développement Rural (COSADER), Cameroun
Support for Women in Agriculture and the Environment (SWAGEN), Uganda
Women Farmers Trust, Zimbabwe
Confédération des producteurs agricoles pour le développement (CAPAD), Burundi
La Plateforme Paysanne du Niger (PFPN)
Confédération Paysanne du Congo (COPACO-PRP), Democratic Republic of Congo
Pan African Climate Education (PACE) Centre, Ghana
Women Environment Climate Action Network (WECAN), Ghana
Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD), Thailand
Khushi Kabir, Bangladesh
Nijera Kori, Bangladesh
Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), India
Tamil Nadu Women's Forum, India
GREEN Foundation, India
Rural Agency for Social and Technological Advancement (RASTA), India
Society for Rural Education and Development, India
Penn Thozhilalargal Sangam, India

Beej Bachao Aandolan, India
Community Awareness Centre, India
ARPAN, India
Tenaganita, Malaysia
AMIHAN, National Federation of Peasant Women, Philippines
Guimaras Indigenous People's Network, Philippines
SIBAT (Sibol ng Agham at Teknolohiya), Philippines
Dagsaw Panay, Philippines
GABRIELA, Philippines
National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO), Sri Lanka
Mothers and Daughters of Sri Lanka
Vikalpani National Women's Federation, Sri Lanka
Human Development Organization, Sri Lanka
Federación Agraria Argentina, Argentina
El Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, Peru
Programa de Apoyo a la Mujer, A.C, Mexico
Fédération nationale des syndicats d'exploitants agricoles (FNSEA), France
Food and Climate Consulting, Italy
Women's Earth Alliance, USA

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