

# DECLARATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AT THE 29th FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Bucharest, 30 March 2014

We, European, South Caucasus and Central Asian independent social movements of small farmers, agricultural workers, NGOs, fishers and fish workers, pastoralists and herders, consumers, women and youth, gathered in Bucharest, on 29-30 March 2014, to prepare our contribution to the 29<sup>th</sup> FAO's Regional Conference for Europe and Central Asia.

We welcome the *FAO Strategy for Partnership with Civil Society Organizations* which was approved by Member States at the Council in 2013. We reaffirm our commitment to this Strategy; we will fulfil our responsibility in this regard and we are convinced that governments and FAO will do their part as well. We are looking forward to engaging with FAO at all levels; from headquarters, to the regional office and country offices. We will do our best to broaden civil society participation throughout the region, with particular attention to Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

In this context, we see the ongoing FAO decentralization process as an opportunity for civil society to contribute towards setting priorities at regional level, and actively participating in the implementation of the priorities we share. This process has to facilitate the implementation of the new *FAO Strategy for Partnership with the Civil Society Organizations* at country and regional level.

## 1. RIGHT TO FOOD 10 YEARS LATER

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Ten years ago, FAO's Council adopted the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security. We call on FAO and its member states to reinforce efforts to effectively put these guidelines at the very centre of their actions in order to achieve sustainable and democratic food systems that able to guarantee the right to food for all. We urge FAO to use the Right to Food Guidelines as a baseline to assess the state of food and food security in our region. As we see in the report presented to this conference on the current state of food security and poverty in selected countries of the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region, the food security framework focuses selectively on increasing food production and fails to holistically address structural causes of food insecurity, such as the income situation of family farmers, agricultural workers, pastoralists, fishers and consumers. Such a multidimensional assessment is absolutely indispensable for understanding why people do not have, at all times, social protection, physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Agricultural and food workers and their families are among the malnourished and hungry in the region, because they cannot afford to buy adequate food with their wages. While the Right to Food Guidelines state that working conditions should be consistent with the obligations States assumed under the ICESCR, ILO Conventions and human rights treaties, workers' humans rights continue to be violated out in the fields. Of particular concern is the situation of an increasing number of migrant workers, who can get trapped in bounded and forced labour. More and more workers are employed through private employment agencies and middlemen, who sell the job offers to migrant workers for hundreds and sometimes thousands of Euros, get them indebted and force them to work 14 hours per day, 7 days per week to return the debts.

## 2. AGENDA POST 2015

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We acknowledge the failure of the Millennium Development Goal aimed at reducing hunger and malnutrition by 50 percent and the subsequent failure of all related policies. The Post-2015 Targets and Indicators leading to

“sustainable” development have to be decided on the basis of the following documents, which have already been agreed on by governments but which, unfortunately, are yet to be implemented:

- ITPGRFA
- FA
- TGs
- Global Strategic Framework of Committee on Food Security (CSF)
- Outcome of the Policy Roundtable: Investing in Smallholder Agriculture for Food Security and Nutrition the Roundtable Iv CFS 40
- IAASTD
- International Guidelines on Securing Sustainable Small-scale Fisheries
- ILO - Decent work agenda

The Rights Approach is the way forward and this is why we are striving for the recognition of Food Sovereignty<sup>1</sup> as an overarching framework of all food security policies dedicated to achieve the right to food.

### **3. INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PEASANT FAMILY FARMING**

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Peasant families respect their animals and their crops and do not think of farming as an industrial activity. They ensure innovation and develop agro-ecological systems to produce healthy, quality food while at the same time ensuring that natural resources are taken care of in a sustainable way. Peasant farmers are also able to foster trusting relationships with consumers, which means that localized food systems are possible.

However, the celebration of the IYFF directly contrasts with policies imposed on a global scale, which do not recognize the fundamental role played by the social model of peasant production in terms of food, employment and respect for nature. These policies often lead to the displacement of peasant family farmers from their original living areas, and are an instrument of financial speculation and capital accumulation which fosters economic wars and competition. Land grabbing due to mining, fracking and large industrial agricultural investments in monocultures are rapidly dispossessing peasants and other small scale food producers from their land and water resources. Water access, either for drinking or irrigation has to be guaranteed (respecting the natural cycle of water for all the families who live in the area). Water is a universal right of all human beings and cannot be the private property of anyone. Small-scale fishers face the same difficulties since sea-grabbing is also a form of privatization of marine resources. We strongly condemn these unsustainable ways of exploiting natural resources.

Social movements and other CSOs in our region are already building food systems based on food sovereignty. In this context, the organizations participating in the CSO Consultation call upon all national governments with the support of FAO to:

1. Ensure the strict observance of equal rights for women with regards to access to land, financing, and all the resources required for peasant farming.
2. Implement the Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests adopted by the UN Committee on World Food Security in 2012. Priority should be given to stop land grabbing, revert land concentration and ensure access to land for young farmers and farming families so that the renewal of peasant farming systems and the vitality of rural areas is guaranteed. In the same context, sea grabbing should be stopped and the right of small scale fishers should be ensured, enabling them to harvest their traditional fishing areas.
3. Increase the protection of the human rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. We call on European and Central Asian States to constructively engage and support the work of the United

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<sup>1</sup> [www.nyeleni.org](http://www.nyeleni.org)

Nations Human Rights Council to draft a UN Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas.

4. By nature, so-called "free" trade agreements only benefit transnational companies, to the detriment of small-scale farmers. They are set up in an opaque and non-democratic manner, and have a negative effect on food standards, not to mention on the countries of the Global South. In light of this, the EU should cease negotiations on all new free trade agreements, in particular the transatlantic free trade agreement between the EU and the USA (TTIP), suspend the application of agreements already signed, and renegotiate other agreements to ensure that they benefit populations. The impact of the proposed Russian Customs Union agreement should be assessed and a mitigation plan to protect local food production should be developed. Agriculture should be excluded from the WTO. FAO should develop new rules for the trade of food and agricultural products which prioritizes local and national food needs and are in line with the obligations of states under the right to food.
5. Regarding the Common Agricultural Policy, the final arbitrations on the CAP and national and regional adaptations must strive to help smallholders. In particular, this can be achieved through the maximum coupling of payments to production, removing minimum levels in terms of surface area or investment for access to subsidies (in particular for installation aid), while implementing upper limits to redistribute assistance towards peasant farming. Cross-compliance must be adapted to avoid illogical and discriminatory measures for peasant crop and livestock farming.
6. Regarding the EU enlargement policy and accession of countries that are not yet EU members, it has to be recognized how the Stabilization and Association Agreements (SAA) are contributing to land grabbing and to the loss of small farmers' rights to land access. Through the SAA, foreign companies should be not allowed to take over agricultural land in a corrupted way, under threat of criminal charges for speculation. In this way the SAA could contribute to covering up and legitimizing privatization theft carried out in countries that are in the EU accession process. Implementing more flexible methods for re-negotiation terms of SAA could allow EU candidate members to defend their small farmers' right to access land and prevent land grabbing.
7. Guarantee the inalienable rights of farmers to produce, reproduce, exchange and sell their seeds, safeguarding cultivated biodiversity and the autonomy of farmers as recognized in the International Treaty on Plant and Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. GM crops in all forms must be prohibited in all areas.
8. To promote local production in short or direct food supply chains that are accessible to all, including the most vulnerable. Local purchases from smallholders through public procurement should also be promoted.
9. Small volume local and artisanal food processing and points of sale should be the subject of developing specific hygiene regulations by European and Central Asian states.
10. States have to prioritise installation of youth, guaranteeing education, access to land and financial support in the context of revitalised rural programs that can increase the attractiveness of rural areas to young people.

#### **4. FOOD LOSSES AND WASTE**

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It is impossible to address the issue of Food Losses and Waste without first addressing the root causes of this unsustainable, industrialised food production that dominates European and Central Asian food systems, which are controlled by corporate interests and based on concentrated power, monocultures, patenting seeds and livestock breeds, imposing pesticides, and excluding small scale farmers and fishers from building new relations and exchanges of services and products with communities. We recommend that at all levels, FAO reconsider and promote the logic of the need to change the food production system to take into account the fact that

genuinely sustainable food systems are based on peasant family farming that, by their very nature, reduce food waste and loss. They need, above all, to connect small-scale producers to local markets, and re-localise food production and consumption based on agro-ecological models. We recommend that FAO commit independent studies to support the assessment of the negative impact of agro-industrial models.

Local Authorities must be encouraged to include more small-scale food producers in tenders for providing healthy local food for school, hospital and other collective catering meals. And support means whereby healthy, local produce is made accessible for the socially excluded such as through Community Supported agriculture.

We emphasize that this involves increasing consumer awareness that this involves fair prices being paid to local producers, as well as fair wages and social protection for the agricultural workforce (both on farms, in processing units and together with the cooperative movement).

Local Food Policy Councils and Food Hubs are a means of including Local Government and could provide the necessary connection between FAO Regional and Country offices with a sustainable system that by its very nature will reduce food waste and loss.

## **5. PRIORITIES FOR FAO ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION**

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1. Conduct assessments on the food security situation in the region using the Right to Food Guidelines. Support governments in reviewing their food security policies on the basis of these Guidelines.
2. Support governments in effectively enforcing workers' right as defined in core ILO conventions, on the agricultural fields as well as ensure adequate labour inspection. Priority should be given to ensuring that workers are directly employed and not treated as commodities by middleman and temporary employment agencies. Promote decent work for all workers, and stop the precarization of employment through subcontracting.
3. Support member states in quickly implementing the International Guidelines on Securing Sustainable Small Scale Fisheries. We call European and Central Asian states to adopt these Guidelines in the upcoming session of the Committee on Fisheries.
4. Support Member States in implementing the CFS recommendations at the policy roundtable event on Investing in Smallholder Agriculture for Food Security and Nutrition.
5. Support European and Central Asian governments in guaranteeing the inalienable rights of farmers to produce, reproduce, exchange and sell their seeds, safeguarding cultivated biodiversity and the autonomy of farmers as recognized in the International Treaty on Plant and Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.
6. Promote local production in short food supply chains accessible to all, including the most vulnerable in Europe and Central Asia. Support policies for local purchases from smallholders through public procurement.
7. Support all States to develop specific hygiene regulations regarding small volume, local and artisanal food processing and points of sale.

8. Support governments in motivating youth and guaranteeing education, access to land and financial support in the context of revitalised rural programs that can increase the attractiveness of the rural areas to young people.
9. Support governments in implementing the Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, adopted by the UN Committee on World Food Security in 2012. Priority should be given to stop land and sea grabbing, revert land concentration and ensure access to land for young farmers and farming families so that the renewal of peasant farming systems and the vitality of rural areas is guaranteed.
10. Support governments in ensuring the strict observance of equal rights for women with regards to access to land, financing, and all the resources required for peasant work.

The Consultation was facilitated by:

