

FINAL DRAFT
CSO STATEMENT ON 31st FAO APCR
Our Calls for the Future of Food Sovereignty in Asia

We, 130 representatives of small food producers including farmers, fisherfolks, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, rural women, and youth, cooperatives, labor movements, consumers and NGOs from 20 countries worldwide met from March 10 to 11, 2012 for the CSO parallel consultation to the 31st FAO-Asia Pacific Regional Conference in Hanoi, Vietnam.

We are aware of the complex issues confronting food, agriculture and rural development in the face of intensifying economic, social and environmental crisis Asian region and the world. The global capitalist crisis has caused worst suffering especially for many people in Asia, including small food producers, women and indigenous peoples.

This profit-driven and unsustainable development model has gravely afflicted the region's marginalized and vulnerable communities. Asia, despite being a food basket of the world, is home to 700 million people who depend largely on agriculture but are faced with endemic poverty, hunger and malnutrition, poor health and vulnerability to environmental disasters.

This gathering enabled us to collectively take stock of the wide range of issues such as challenges on food security and nutrition, domestic and foreign land grabbing, food price volatility, corporatization of agriculture, trade agreements, climate crisis, and food governance and, from a grassroots, people-centered perspective, come up with recommendations which we forward to the 31st Food and Agriculture Organization – Asia-Pacific Conference.

OUR CONCERNS

1. Multiple crises have afflicted the world in the last few years. The food and climate crises have resulted to the destruction of the food systems through market-led driven and unsustainable food productions and consumptions promoted by governments, corporate sector and multilateral bodies. Speculation in food, land, and water by the futures market, corporate agriculture and armed conflicts have further eroded the food sovereignty of many communities resulting in the destruction of food systems, food insecurity, landlessness, poverty and hunger.

2. Corporate globalization triggered by oligopolistic capitalism has brought us to this situation. This is an intensification of cyclical forms of recession due to unsustainable development, chemical intensive agriculture, overproduction, and global speculative markets. In Asia's rural areas, corporate agriculture and globalization policies and processes at local, national, regional and international levels, are destroying our food sovereignty, poisoning our land, waters, common property and natural resources and

driving small food producers to bankruptcy and loss of their land and livelihoods. Unsustainable industrial policies have led to loss of jobs and have negatively impacted vulnerable developing countries that became net importers of food.

3. In search for greater profits and cheap food, corporations and sovereign states are into large-scale investments in agriculture that led to landgrabbing in many countries in Asia. To date, there are at least more than 400 cases of landgrabbing through long-term leases and direct acquisition, of which many are taking place in the region. These are resulting to human rights violations, displacement of rural communities and irreversible damage to the environment.

4. Governments that host these land grabbing deals are often poor and in desperate need of investment, have weak capabilities or lack commitment to protect its people from related economic, social, and environmental risks. Thus, small food producers and other marginalized communities that depend on common property resources are displaced (forced migration to urban areas), creating resource conflicts and greater threat to food sovereignty.

5. The negotiations on the Voluntary Guidelines on Land Tenure have just concluded and this offers a crucial opportunity for governments and other actors to re-examine existing national investment policies especially in the face of massive foreign land grabbing and food crisis. However, this VG is only recommendatory in nature and is not legally binding. As we closely analyze the final version which has yet to be disclosed, venues for consultation and information sharing must be provided to look into how this addresses land grabbing.

6. Meanwhile, unsustainable industrial and agricultural production has gravely contributed to the climate crisis. The issue of climate change is a matter of ecological and social justice. Its worst impacts are felt by the most marginalized communities, especially women and children who are the least responsible for it. Developed countries share a disproportionate responsibility for historic greenhouse gas emissions due to unsustainable industrial model and chemical-intensive agriculture. False solutions to the climate crisis, such as techno-fixes using harmful technologies such as GE and pesticides will further worsen the situation. Agroecology as one of the adaptation strategies by farming communities are gaining ground but the lack of policy and actual support from the governments are apparent. The climate crisis cannot be adequately addressed without dismantling the current neo-liberal and profit-driven political and economic model which in fact is its cause and driver.

7. Corporate-driven policies and collusion among agro-transnational corporations, governments, and international agencies to implement these have resulted in driving small food producers into greater poverty and robbing them of their inherent right to seeds, breeds and other productive resources.

8. The Rio+20 Summit offers an opportunity for the world's governments and peoples to seriously come up with alternatives to the current development model that has caused

untold poverty and suffering for the largest majority of the global population. The highly corporatized Green Economy blueprint for development is a false solution to the crisis and is not reflective of the interests of rural communities. The Summit must be on occasion to push for a genuine, people-centered sustainable development.

9. New mechanisms in the global governance of food and agriculture, while offering new opportunities, need policy coherence among all players. During the 35th Session of the Committee on Food Security in October 2009, the Members approved the reform of the CFS, which has enhanced its role for greater coherence in the global food policies. The CFS has a mandate to formulate a Global Strategic Framework to improve coordination among a wide range of stakeholders.

OUR CALLS

We call on FAO member states to:

10. Implement genuine people-led land, agrarian, pasture, fisheries, forest and rural development reforms. Stop domestic and foreign land grabbing. Investigate the cases of land grabbing and develop policies to balance investment vs. agricultural land for food and conservation of small-scale family farming using agro-ecological model through participatory planning processes. Implement the agreements under ICARRD and initiate processes towards implementing and monitoring the Voluntary Guidelines on Land Tenure.

11. Investigate land and sea related human rights violations and prosecute guilty parties; and release peasant and fisheries leaders arrested for defending their rights.

12. Work for the protection of agricultural, fisheries, pastoral, and forest lands as well as common property resources and putting an end to conversion of agricultural land to other uses. The full free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) processes should be fortified to protect the rights of indigenous cultural communities against takeovers. Customary rights of indigenous and ethnic minority communities are inalienable and should not be overridden by other national laws.

13. Initiate and institute the adoption of environmentally and economically sustainable food production models that lead to dynamic local economies. Commit to increase the annual national budget to enable, support and sustain sustainable family farms, fisheries, forests and pastoralism to ensure food sovereignty, as per recommendations of the International Assessment on Agricultural Science Technology and Development (IAASTD).

14. Develop and implement policies supporting small holder food producers in food production that provides a good, living income including active participation in value chains and small scale enterprises led by small farmers, fishers, indigenous people organizations, and cooperatives. Strengthen and support small holder food producers organizations and cooperatives to be able to use these opportunities. Support should

include institutional development, infrastructure support, research and development, and capacity building. Along this, governments should recognize the important role of youth in agriculture and increase investments to support their active participation in agriculture and rural development.

15. Ensure the regulation and monitoring and accountability of national and multinational corporations and stop free trade agreements (FTAs) that harm rural livelihoods, undermine food sovereignty and destroy ecosystems.

16. Ensure gender budgeting at all levels and the promotion of gender responsive policies at local and national level to ensure women's control of and access to land, forest, water, marine resources, sea, seeds and other productive resources and their participation in all levels of decision-making.

17. Work for policy implementation that recognizes the role of rural women, their indigenous knowledge and skills and the protection of women and children's health from exposure to highly hazardous chemicals/pesticide and stop the dumping of banned pesticides/toxic chemicals from developed countries to developing countries.

18. Promote community-centered seed conservation and improvement, with an emphasis on women regaining their role as seed conservers, as well as community-based marketing systems and farmer-led innovation. Prohibit intellectual property rights on plant, animal and other living organisms. Prohibit the production of genetically engineered seeds, breeds food and fish stocks. Partnerships with private corporations that give them access, ownership and/or control over common goods/resources should be avoided by public and international R&D institutions as they pose a threat to public welfare.

19. Develop and implement policies on climate change based on food sovereignty through improved and appropriate technology, favouring the rights of small food producers especially those facing danger or distress from floods, storms, piracy, and harassment. All measures to address climate change must ensure climate, social, environmental, and gender justice, common and differentiated responsibility, and food sovereignty. GMOs are not the answer to climate change. At least 50% of all climate funds should be allocated to adaptation of small food producers. There should be no donor conditionalities attached to the funds.

20. Regulate food commodity market speculation and develop and implement policies aimed at stabilizing food supply and prices at national and regional levels such as strategic food reserves, that are primarily sourced domestically, and price control mechanisms to address food price volatility. Moreover, ensure decent living wages of farm workers and social protection and safety nets (specifically for failed crops) for the poor and marginalised communities.

21. Refrain from actions that lead to new conflicts of any kind and should create an environment enabling constructive dialogues to promote peace and security towards the

realization of the right to food.

22. Put in place national/regional mechanisms to strengthen small food producers/CSOs participation and engagement in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of food and agricultural policies.

WE CALL ON FAO TO:

23. Set up mechanisms for its national offices to strengthen their engagement with wider civil society in their programs, and to support the call for an increase in national budget allocation of member countries to smallholder sustainable agriculture, fisheries, forestries and pastoralism to ensure food sovereignty. The FAO-APRC should call for the involvement of small food producers and CSOs in defining workplan and in its implementation and monitoring, especially at the national level.

24. Call on member countries to institute policies aimed at curbing and stopping food speculation such as setting up position limits and banning commodity index funds among others. Additionally, FAO should support governments in strengthening food reserves to stabilize supply and prices of food staples.

25. Work at ensuring that the Global Strategic Framework (GSF) contributes to the progressive realisation of the right to food, and guarantee food sovereignty especially of the most vulnerable groups such as landless farmers, fishers, women and indigenous peoples and minority groups. The GSF must include strong monitoring mechanisms to hold transnational corporations accountable for their role in respect to agro-fuel production, land grabbing and the displacement of food crops. In addition, the document should provide guidelines for governments on how to strengthen coherence between national and global food policies.

26. Initiate a process of consultation on principles for responsible agricultural investment (different from the RAI developed by the World Bank, IFAD, FAO, UNCTAD) as soon as the Voluntary Guidelines are approved during the special session of the CFS in May 2012, as mandated by the 37th Session of the Committee on World Food Security. The consultation should be as broad and inclusive as possible to ensure the participation of the governments and organizations of the people most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition.

27. Ensure the participation of farmers' organizations and CSOs, with special attention on women's equal representation in the relevant committees and official consultations especially in the context of the 2012 International Year of Cooperatives and the 2014 International Year of the Family Farming. Implement the FAO Guidelines on the Right to Food and Farmers Rights to seeds. The FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries should be improved to make it more regionally-relevant and commodity-specific. Pursue the implementation of the agreements in the ICARRD.

28. Initiate processes to reconcile, monitor and report various international treaties and

conventions that pertain to natural resource management and agriculture in view of protecting small-scale food producers and their community rights. In relation, FAO together with member governments should encourage and support the broad participation of sectors especially farmers' organizations and CSOs in the processes leading to Rio+20.

29. Facilitate and ensure greater participation of civil society groups in CFS and other FAO processes, and allocate greater resources for these processes as we welcome FAO support for improved CSO participation at all levels.

30. Strengthen its work in the region and national offices in Asia-Pacific specifically on gender and women, youth, sustainable food, agriculture, fisheries, peasant, forestry and indigenous people programs. Moreover, it should strengthen its work in helping farmers' organisations on adoption of sustainable ecosystem approaches against climate change stresses such as drought, floods and extreme weathers.

CSO Commitments

We, the civil society participants in this gathering, are committed to working together to make our governments, FAO and other international policy making bodies to respond to the needs of the rural poor and marginalized. We will continue our efforts to make our governments and intergovernmental agencies accountable to the needs of the region's peoples through principled engagement in various processes and in the monitoring and evaluation of their work. We will contribute to the deliberations on the substance and methodologies of the various agricultural policies and investments for agriculture at national, regional and international levels. Both as individuals and organizations, we will intensify our efforts in empowering local communities to contribute towards food sovereignty and benefit from sustainable development efforts in the Asia- Pacific region and we will not waiver in resisting programs and policies that work against the interest of the rural poor and marginalized. ###

From the CSO delegates of the CSO Parallel Meeting to the 31st h FAO Asia Pacific Regional Consultation 10-11 March 2012.