

CSO Statement on the 30th FAO-APRC

We, seventy (70) representatives of organizations of small farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, rural women, pastoralists, youth, cooperatives, and NGOs from Asian Civil Society met from September 27-28 for the CSO parallel consultation to the 30th FAO-Asia Pacific Regional Conference in Gyeongju, Korea. We discussed the critical issues affecting global food security namely: climate change adaptation and mitigation, land grabbing and food sovereignty, trade and investment, global food and financial crises, and agriculture and food governance.



OUR STAND

In the last five years, manifold crises have afflicted the world. The financial crisis caused the closure of banks and many financial institutions. The food crisis resulted from the destruction of food systems through neo-liberal reforms in poor countries. Food prices remain high, and now, 1 billion people are hungry and malnourished with more than 700 million found in Asia. A climate crisis is upon us due to unsustainable industrial and agricultural policies.

These crises are fundamentally linked to neo-liberal globalization triggered by oligopolistic capitalism. 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, these policies and processes are destroying our food sovereignty, poisoning our land, common property and natural resources and driving small food producers to bankruptcy and loss of their land and livelihoods. The hardest hit and most vulnerable are developing countries that became net importers of food.

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The issue of climate change is a matter of ecological justice. Its worst impacts are felt by the most marginalized communities (esp. 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. Climate change cannot be adequately addressed without dismantling the current neo-liberal and corporate-driven political and economic model which in fact is its cause and driver. We reject techno-fixes like genetically engineered food and geo-engineering, intensive industrial agriculture and market-based mechanisms like the Clean Development Mechanisms (CDMs) and carbon credits that allow the developed countries to continue business as usual at the expense of the poor.

The 2007-08 food and financial crises spawned a new wave of foreign land acquisitions. Financial investors are also taking advantage of food insecurity to speculate on the price of landholdings. Governments that host these land 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 farmers, peasants, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, fishers and other marginalized communities that depend on common property resources are displaced, creating resource conflicts and greater threat to food sovereignty. The Voluntary Guidelines or Codes of Conduct proposed by the FAO, the World Bank and other inter-governmental agencies to regulate these land-based investments have no teeth, and do not offer even minimal protection or any real means of redressing grave human rights violations that often arise from these deals. We need

our Governments to develop and implement policies that protect the rights and access of small food producers to land and natural resources from the assault of big foreign and domestic investments that compromise food sovereignty.

The collusion between agro-transnational corporations, governments, and international agencies have resulted in driving small food producers into greater poverty and robbing them of their inherent right to seeds, breeds and other productive resources. The WTO, for instance, persists to advance corporate control in food and agriculture through agreements like Agreement on Agriculture and TRIPS . The FTAs and UPOV further complicate the problem. The intellectual property rights (IPRs) regime has even put small food producers at risk of being sued and harassed while seed companies have been making excessive profits from the crises. IPRs have encroached into the socio-cultural and ecological domains which threaten the multifunctionality and biodiversity of food production. Food sovereignty has been recognized in the constitutions of countries like Nepal, Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador as a policy framework to govern food and agriculture. Thus, we are unanimous in our rejection of neo-liberalism (i.e. liberalization, deregulation and privatization) and IPRs over plant, animal, and other living organisms. We maintain our call for the WTO to get out of food and agriculture. Food is not a tradeable commodity for profit.

In addition to already existing institutions there are new mechanisms in the global governance of food and agriculture. There is a dire need for policy coherence among all these players . The World Summit on Food Security in Rome, November 2009 endorsed the reforms for the Committee on Food Security. These reforms have enhanced its role for greater coherence in the global food policies. Besides, the CFS has a mandate to formulate a Global Strategic Framework to improve coordination among a wide range of stakeholders. Additionally the representatives of small-scale food producers and other CSOs will be full participants and not just observers of the CFS processes.

OUR CALLS

We call on FAO member states to:

1. Implement a genuine, people-led land and agrarian, pasture land, and fisheries reforms.
2. Restrict foreign land acquisitions. Investigate and arrest cases of land grabbing and related human rights violations; and release peasant leaders who were arrested for defending their land from land grabbers. Agricultural, pastoral, and forest lands as well as common property resources should be protected . Conversions and takeovers should not be permitted without full, free, prior and informed consent of the community. Customary rights of indigenous and ethnic minority communities should remain inalienable and not be overridden by other national laws.
3. Enable, support and sustain family farms practising community- and biodiversity-based, sustainable, organic and ecological agriculture, fisheries, forestries and pastoralism to ensure food sovereignty, as per recommendations of the International Assessment on Agricultural Science Technology and Development (IAASTD).
4. Promote community-centered seed conservation and development with an emphasis on women regaining their role as seed conservers as well as community-based marketing systems. Prohibit intellectual property rights on plant, animal and other living organisms. Do not allow 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.
5. All measures to address climate change must ensure climate, social, environmental, and gender justice, common and differentiated responsibility, and food sovereignty. Industrialized countries should substantially cut down their

- greenhouse gas emissions according to the commitments of the Kyoto Protocol, under a legally binding agreement.
6. Promote and effectively support household food security initiatives. Develop national food security programs that prioritize food self-sufficiency and promote rural employment.
 7. Invest in developing culturally-appropriate local, national and regional food banks in consultation and collaboration with community food producers to ensure food sovereignty and price stability.
 8. Respect and adhere to food and national sovereignty principles when negotiating and signing international, regional and bilateral trade agreements. Ensure participatory consultation processes and transparency with relevant stakeholders. Put in place safety nets, safeguards and anti-dumping mechanisms.

We call on FAO to:

1. Implement the FAO Guidelines on the Right to Food and Farmers Rights as stipulated in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. 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 International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD).
2. Hold CGIAR systems, including the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), accountable for the harm they have done to the small food producers. Food and agriculture research and development initiatives must be farmer-driven, community-led and primarily for the benefit of small food producers.
3. Initiate processes to reconcile 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.
4. Establish guidelines to regulate food commodity speculation.
5. Regulations that seek to protect the food sovereignty of the people should be legally-binding rather than voluntary.
6. Facilitate and ensure greater and more meaningful participation of civil society groups in CFS and other FAO processes, and allocate resources for these processes. We appreciate FAO support for this CSO parallel meeting. However, we exhort FAO for greater inclusion in future dialogues and processes as full participants and not merely observers. The FAO should learn from existing processes of engagement with civil society organizations.
7. Develop a global strategic framework as one of the outcomes of the CFS processes.
8. We, the civil society participants in this gathering, are committed to working together to make our governments 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 constructive and principled engagement in various processes and in the monitoring and evaluation of their work. We will contribute our expertise in the deliberations on the substance and methodologies of the various agricultural policies and investments for agriculture at national, regional and international levels. We will intensify our efforts in empowering local communities to contribute towards and benefit from sustainable development efforts in the Asia Pacific region.

From the CSO delegates of the CSO Parallel Meeting to the 30th FAO Asia Pacific Regional Consultation 27-28 September 2010. Presented to the High Level Meeting of the FAO-APRC on 1 October 2010 in Gyeongju, Korea.

