

Farmers, Scientists, Business and Industry release a call for action for sustainability and productivity at the UN

New York City, 24 February 2009 – A call to action on agriculture and food policy was presented at the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UN-CSD 17).

“Farming First” was developed by three of the Major Groups within the CSD - the farmers, scientists, business and industry. It is a call-for-action to enhance sustainable development and food security through agriculture, in particular in developing countries. Recognizing that farming policies have tended to neglect the critical role which farmers play in making sustainable development a reality, Farming First calls on policymakers and practitioners to increase agricultural output by developing locally sustainable value chains, knowledge networks, and policies centered on helping farmers, in particular subsistence farmers, become small-scale entrepreneurs.

Actions are proposed in six key areas:

- safeguarding natural resources
- sharing knowledge
- building local access
- protecting harvests
- enabling access to markets
- and prioritizing research imperatives.

The ratio of arable land to population is expected to decline by up to 55% by 2030. By 2025, 1.8 billion people will be living with acute water scarcity. Climate change will put regional and global food supplies at risk. The basic livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people in developing countries will be threatened by a more extreme and variable climate. Governments, businesses, scientists, farmers’ organizations and other civil society groups must focus on the source of our food security. All these groups must work together to enable the many millions of farm families, especially smallholders, to grow more crops sustainably through effective markets, more collaborative research and committed knowledge sharing.

“It’s time for action instead of discussion. It’s time to plant fields and it’s time for national governments – with their farmers – to implement real solutions that have visible, sustainable impacts,” says Ajay Vashee, President of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers.

Farmers, Scientists, Business and Industry hope that country delegates will take into consideration the six founding principles of the “Farming First” action plan to increase agricultural output in an environmentally-sustainable, economically-feasible, socially-responsible manner.

"A knowledge-centred approach to agricultural development is needed," says Luc Maene, Director General of the International Fertilizer Industry Association. "Farming First is based on getting farmers the tools and information they need to steward land, grow crops, bring in their harvest and then get it to market."

The following organizations cooperated to draw up “Farming First”: CropLife International, International Council for Science (ICSU), International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFA).

The United Nation's Commission on Sustainable Development will conclude in May its two-year round of negotiations that has been focusing on Africa, agriculture, drought and desertification, land, and rural development.

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The International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFA) is a not-for-profit trade association representing the global fertilizer industry. IFA member companies represent all activities related to the production and distribution of every type of fertilizer, their raw materials and intermediates. IFA's membership also includes organizations involved in agronomic research and training. IFA has some 525 members in about 85 countries. The global fertilizer industry produces some 170 million tons of fertilizer nutrients annually. These are used in every corner of the globe to support sustainable agricultural production and food security. www.fertilizer.org

For more information, please contact

Ms. Morgane Danielou-Doumbouya mdanielou@fertilizer.org

Head of Information and Communications IFA www.fertilizer.org

Telephone: +33 1 53 93 05 33 General: +33 1 53 93 05 00 Fax: +33 1 53 93 05 47