

Smallholders need access to technology and knowledge

Achieving food security by 2050

Paris: 16 October 2009 – On the occasion of World Food Day, a group of international agricultural organizations is calling on policymakers to support farmers worldwide and invest in sustainable agricultural technologies and knowledge networks.

The FAO High Level Expert Forum on How to Feed the World by 2050 closed on 13 October 2009 by stating that food production needs to increase by 70 per cent to be able to feed a population that will reach over 9 billion people in 2050. According to the FAO 2009 hunger report (the State of Food Insecurity was released on 14 October 2009), **the number of undernourished people in the world has been increasing steadily for the past decade**, reaching 1.02 billion hungry this year.

Improved agricultural technologies and management approaches have doubled the production of world food calories over the past half-century. The shadow of famine and food shortages has been lifted from developed countries but not from developing countries, where most smallholder farmers struggle to achieve even the most basic level of subsistence. They lack access to existing technology, tools, inputs and knowledge required to manage their land and grow sufficient crops.

The FAO's Director General **Jacques Diouf** opened the High Level Expert Forum on 12 October by stating that "there should be a special focus on smallholder farmers, their access to land, water, quality seeds and fertilizers". He added that "**organic agriculture cannot feed 6.8 billion today and 9 billion in 2050**".

We support the **Farming First** (www.farmingfirst.org) approach that focuses on farmers and the tools and information they need to steward land, grow crops, bring in their harvest and then get it to markets. Our group also supports Farming First's six-point action plan for productivity and sustainability in agriculture:

1. Safeguard natural resources
2. Share knowledge
3. Build local access and capacity
4. Protect harvests
5. Enable access to markets
6. Prioritise research imperatives

Integrated agriculture based on the judicious use of technology and inputs (such as seeds, manures, fertilizers and crop protection products) and good agricultural practices can increase farm production in a sustainable way. By increasing agricultural productivity and decreasing waste and losses, inputs – such as plant nutrients (from organic and inorganic sources) and crop protection products – can significantly mitigate the effects of climate change, prevent deforestation, and protect biodiversity.

Food security and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive goals. Farming First's plan for sustainable agriculture argues for increasing productivity through **ecological intensification**: increasing production, while protecting the environment.

Good agricultural practices – such as integrated crop, pest, plant nutrition and soil fertility management and fertilizer best management practices – promote the responsible use of agricultural inputs for greater use-efficiency and cost-efficiency for farmers and fewer losses to the environment. The knowledge and benefits must be made available to all farmers, recognizing their role as guardians of our shared environment, biodiversity and ecosystems. **Women farmers should become specially targeted recipients** because of their vital roles in the agricultural workforce, household food procurement and preparation, and family unit support.

There is a need for a radical shift in thinking which places the farmer (including women, youth and agricultural workers) at the centre of sound and sustainable agricultural practices. **Farmers deserve a choice between farming systems and all stakeholders need to do more to offer them the best technologies to choose from.** In particular, they must be involved in implementing climate change mitigation strategies. To support them, we must create sound and reliable incentives; we must share knowledge and make adequate tools and technologies accessible so that farmers deliver both food and energy security.

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Supporters:

- International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)
- International Seed Federation (ISF)
- International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFA)
- International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI)
- International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC)
- CropLife International (CLI)

Farming First is a global coalition of agricultural organizations and a public campaign calling for a broad-based, knowledge-centred approach to increase agricultural output in a sustainable and socially responsible manner. The platform is focused on helping subsistence farmers become small-scale entrepreneurs.

www.farmingfirst.org

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