

**CSO STATEMENT TO THE 33rd FAO ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE, 07 – 11 MARCH 2016
PUTRA JAYA, MALAYSIA, March 10, 2016**

Honourable Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates and Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen

1. We, 54 representatives of small farmers, landless, rural women, fishers, agricultural workers, pastoralists and herders, indigenous peoples, consumers, youth and NGOs representing 39 national, regional and international CSOs coming from 17 countries met in conjunction with the 33rd FAO APRC. We thank the FAO for this opportunity for civil society to tell you our stories.
2. Your statistics and our stories tell us that our food and agriculture system is not only broken, it is also slowly killing us.
3. Across the region, we are losing farmers rapidly to suicide, poverty and hunger. In India, 300,000 farmers committed suicide from 1995 to 2014. From 2003 to 2013, 5 million family farmers left agriculture in Indonesia; in India, 2035 farmers are leaving agriculture every day. In Australia, there were over 55,000 pig farms in the 1960s – there are now just 600. With the loss of every family farm comes a social cost for rural communities and more profit in the pockets of a shrinking number of large, transnational corporations.
4. We have modern slavery of fisher folk on commercial trawlers, and of workers in processing facilities. Rural women remain invisible and undervalued, despite their key role as food producers, seed savers, farm workers, custodians of families, and household providers.
5. Unfair international trade rules and free-trade agreements such as the TPP limit small-scale producers' access to markets, and where we gain market access, we suffer from low prices as a result of unequal bargaining positions.
6. Hence, there is an urgent need to move away from chemical-intensive, monocultural, climate change-causing mode of production to diverse agroecological farming systems that are regenerative, organic, resilient and nurturing. There are many examples of successful agroecology in the region, even in Australia, with the rise of multi-species holistic planned grazing.

We, the CSO community, strongly call on our governments to:

1. immediately implement the recommendations of the Multi-stakeholder Consultation on Agroecology for Asia and the Pacific.
2. provide capacity building for smallholders and community-owned cooperatives to control value chains, and implement scale-appropriate regulation to enable small-scale producers to produce, process and distribute our products.

3. strengthen local food systems by implementing local procurement and distribution policies that favour ecologically- and socially-just supply chains within local, regional and national governments.
4. acknowledge family farmers' global contribution by endorsing the call for an International Decade on Family Farming by the UN and review the commitments made in previous years to cooperatives, soils and other areas of food and agriculture that have been acknowledged by the UN.
5. promote consumer awareness for safe, nutritious, diverse and sustainably-produced foods, free of pesticides, antibiotics, and GMOs.
6. Rigorously pursue human rights violations in the food and agriculture sector, with serious efforts to ensure corporate accountability, including punitive measures for violators. Relevant existing instruments include: the UN Declaration on Human Rights, ICARRD, the UN Draft Declaration on Peasant Rights and Other People Who Work in Rural Areas, the Voluntary Guidelines on Governance of Land Tenure and Small-Scale Fisheries.

As CSOs, we are committed to working together with FAO. Specifically, we call on the FAO to:

1. Ensure continued meaningful participation of social movements and CSOs in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of FAO policies, legally binding agreements, strategic programs and FAO developed guidelines, especially at national level.
2. Support independent CSO monitoring and reporting of compliance and state of affairs.
3. Maintain sufficient time and space in the agenda for robust interventions from CSOs during the APRC.

Ladies and gentlemen, why do the young people go to the city? They go for opportunity, big houses, maybe air conditioning. But when they get there, life is more expensive, and there is no connection to the land, and to life. And so they want to come back. But they cannot without opportunity.

To attract the young people back to agriculture we must provide access to land, control of value chains, and access to markets. We must join together and fight corporate control of what must be democratic food systems. Our future depends on it.

Thank you for your attention to the concerns of civil society. We hope that the Member States and FAO consider our recommendations in the regional program priorities and implementation.

FOR THE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs):

Action Aid (AA)
Asian Farmers Association (AFA)
Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Asia (AsiaDHRRA)
Asia-Pacific Network for Food Sovereignty (APNFS)
Asian Rural Women's Coalition (ARWC)
Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSN)
BARIO - Malaysia
Cambodian Federation of Agricultural Producers (CFAP)
Center for Environmental Justice (CEJ-Friends of the Earth Sri Lanka)
Center for Social Research and Development (CSRD)
Center of Environmental Law and Community Rights (CELCOR-Friends of the Earth Papua New Guinea)
Consumers' International
DHRRA Malaysia
Farmer and Nature Net (FNN)
Friends of Earth International (FoEI)
Greenpeace South East Asia
International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)
International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements (FIMARC)
International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth (MIJARC Youth)
Indonesian Peasants Union (SPI)
Kesatuan Nelayan Tradisional Indonesia (KNTI)
Korean Federation for Environmental Movement (KFEM-Friends of the Earth Korea)
Kumpulan Organik Kelantan
La Via Campesina (LVC)
Malaysian Agroecology Society for Sustainable Resource Intensification (SRI-MAS)
National Association of Mongolian Agriculture Cooperative (NAMAC)
Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network (PENGON-Friends of the Earth Palestine)
People's Coalition for Fisheries Justice (KIARA)
Pesticide Action Network – Asia and the Pacific (PAN-AP)
Pro Public (Friend of the Earth Nepal)
Sanctuary for Indigenous and Peasant – Sarawak (PANGGAU)
Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)
Southeast Asian Council for Food Security & Fair Trade (SEACON)
South East Asia Fish for Justice (SEAFISH)
Third World Network (TWN)
Urgenci China
Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI-Friends of the Earth Indonesia)
World March of Women Pakistan
World Rural Forum (WRF)