

## AGRICULTURE, FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION

1. Thank you Chair for this opportunity to give our inputs on this topic. I am Sarojeni Rengam of the Asian Rural Women's Coalition and PAN Asia Pacific, speaking on behalf of the CSO delegates.
2. We believe the work of FAO on safe food and nutrition is an important one and are interlinked.
3. Making food safe and nutritious from farm to table is important in the context of changing food habits, mass catering establishments and globalization of food supply. We are faced with the double burden of hunger and malnutrition on one hand and increasing overweight and obesity in the other, particularly in developing countries. The poor are left with no choice but to eat cheap food that is not nutritious and based on fats, oils, carbohydrates, and sugar, creating malnutrition and obesity. These are dangerous to human health.
4. The current model of agricultural production based on neo-liberal trade policies promote export oriented, monoculture, industrial agriculture, genetically modified foods (GMOs) and the use of antibiotics and chemicals in animal feed and are heavily dependent on agrochemical inputs like highly hazardous pesticides resulting in loss in crop yields and income; causing ill human health such as cancer, metabolic and learning disorders particularly of children and contamination of our rivers, soils, air and food. Women and children are often the most vulnerable due to biological, political and socio-economic factors.
5. A way forward in food production is through agroecology. In this regard, we would like to commend the FAO for making agroecology a focus in its work as mentioned in its Information Note, 'Outcomes of the Multi-stakeholder Consultation on Agroecology for Asia and the Pacific'. This is a coherent concept for designing future farming systems but it should be strongly rooted in science, practice and farming communities; and because it based on the principles of the right to food and food sovereignty. Agroecological practices can increase farm productivity, food security and nutrition, improve rural livelihoods, adaption to climate change, and reduce the environmental impacts in agriculture. And more importantly, it is based on biodiversity of crops – cereals, vegetables, herbs and integrating animals, it has the potential to provide a diverse diet and nutritious food to farmer communities who are often the poorest and thus the hungriest and malnourished.
6. We believe that a nutritious and diverse diet that is based on cultural considerations are an important aspect of ensuring food safety and nutrition. Food manufacturing practices promoting highly processed food and junk food threaten not only consumer's health but also food cultures.
7. We would like to suggest to this body, that for food safety and nutrition, it would be important to ensure the reduction with the aim of elimination of the highly hazardous pesticides; and the elimination of antibiotics and genetically-modified crops. Those of us with experience from developed countries would also caution against food safety standards written for long, industrial supply chains being applied to smallholders with direct access to their markets. Scale-appropriate regulation is critical to ensuring the livelihoods of smallholders are maintained while food safety standards are strengthened. We would also

like to suggest policy support for agroecology and capacity building of farmers on agroecological practices and to support their access to local seeds, appropriate technology and local markets.

8. Long term food security to achieve food sovereignty in the Asia- Pacific region requires “active member state support” that gives high priority to revitalizing small-scale food production based on ecological viable systems. Political will, consumer education and information can strengthen enforcement of relevant regulations and food standards.
9. Tomorrow, March 08, as we celebrate the International Working Women’s Day, let us not forget the value of food safety and nutrition for women food producers and mothers who nurture our food and the future generations.