

Opening Statement

Farmers' Forum 2012

Asian Farmers' Association (AFA)

February 20, 2012

Good morning to everyone!

In behalf of the Asian Farmers Association, we greet you all a belated happy lunar new year of the Water Dragon!

Since we last met in 2010, we have made some victories. First, the UN has declared 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming – we have endorsed this declaration in our synthesis of deliberations in FaFo 2010. Second, in the Asia region, the medium term cooperation program aimed to build the capacities of farmers' organizations was started, after three years of negotiations, and now is in its third year of implementation. The Global Agriculture for Food Security Program or GAFSP also started implementation in 2010, and involved three CSO members in its global steering committee, including one from Asia. The GAFSP has approved some funds in several countries, including five in Asia. And the farmers organizations in these countries have started to engage their governments in the design of the final proposal, for implementation hopefully this year 2012. Lastly, the Civil Society Mechanism for CFS was organized in 2010, promoting the participation of farmers' organization in CFS processes not only as observers but as participants.

These are for us, clear manifestations of the growing commitment of international agencies, especially IFAD to strengthen partnership with FOs in the region, and we would like to thank IFAD for this.

Yet, challenges still abound. In June, governments will meet for Rio+20 to decide the future we want. But it seems that the "we" does not include small scale farmers and producers, the "future" is silent on sustainable, agro-ecological, smallholder, family farmer agriculture, which has been the call of farmers' organizations in Asia since the FaFo started. Last December, in the UNFCCC meeting in Durban, governments have not decided clearly on climate financing for adaptation, seemingly deaf to the calls of farmers to be supported in their efforts to reduce the impact of

climate change. In Asia, our regional governments ASEAN and SAARC have made initiatives to develop frameworks on food security and climate change, yet, its operationalization is still to be done, and the involvement of farmers and their organizations have yet to materialize.

It is in this context that we come to the fourth Global Farmers Forum with high hopes that as a community of small-scale women and men farmers, young and old, together with partners from NGOs, international organizations, and especially with IFAD, we discuss, now with more emphasis, how sustainable small holder and family farming agriculture, can feed the world, and protect the planet.

For us, there is no question about this. In many of the initiatives that we do, albeit small scale in character, we have seen how having rights to lands, how integrated, diversified organic farming, alternative pest management, community water impounding systems, creating seed banks, establishing local food reserves, forming commodity clusters for production and marketing activities, building young farmer entrepreneurs, involvement in value-addition activities, developing leaders among women and youth in agriculture, sharing and learning activities and farmers exchange visits -- have improved incomes and lives of farming families.

So it is for us a question of how to upscale and mainstream sustainable smallholder agriculture, making this sustainable smallholder agriculture the agenda of governments at the national, regional, inter-governmental bodies. We can best do this if farmers are organized more, advocate more, and do more things on the ground.

In this regard, we ask IFAD to partner with farmers organizations in Asia to:

a) directly support the efforts of farmers organizations to involve more women and youth in agriculture by directly supporting capacity building programs and policy work directed to governments. Many of our members would like to establish programs that involve women and youth and that directly benefit them.

b) directly support the efforts of farmers organizations to:

-be actively present and be more involved in dialogues with governments at national,

regional and international levels;

-directed to Rio+20 processes and beyond;

-in the preparations and actual implementation of the IYFF;

-in the project design and implementation of GAFSP projects in countries -- so that GAFSP projects really involve FOs.

c) directly support the efforts of farmers organizations in knowledge management and sharing not only through online activities but also offline activities -- because farmers believe what they see and touch.

d) lastly, we would like to reiterate what we have recommended in 2008 – is it possible that farmers organizations be represented in the IFAD executive board, as a reflection of growing commitment of IFAD to truly involve FOs in its governance processes?

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