



ADVOCACY FOR PRO-FAMILY FARMING POLICIES

International Decade on Family Farming 2019-2028

Last December 2017, The United Nations declared the years 2019-2028 as the “International Decade on Family Farming”.¹ This Decade aims to serve as a framework to continue promoting better public policies on Family Farming. The Decade on Family Farming offers a unique opportunity to contribute to the achievement of SDG 1 (ending poverty) and SDG2 (ending hunger, promoting food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture). The UN Food and Agriculture Organization states that about 90 percent of the world’s 570 million farms are owned and operated by families. Most are small and are found in the rural areas of the developing world. Many of these smallholder family farmers are poor and food insecure and have limited access to markets and services. In Asia Pacific, family farms dominate the landscape. The region is home to 60% of the world’s population, and to 70% of the world’s small scale family farmers, but 60% of the world’s hungry and poor; they live mostly in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture for a living. An integrated approach to sustainable development , focusing on efforts to uplift the conditions of family farmers is an imperative.

The Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Development (AFA) , a regional family farmers organizations, composed of 20 member organizations in 16 Asian countries, with a combined membership of 13M, want to achieve concrete gains for our members during this Decade, in the form of public policies and programs that can be enacted and implemented during the Decade on Family Farming. These major policies include the following :

1. Secured Rights of Family Farmers Over Farms and Forests, Fisheries and Seeds

In some developing countries, there is absence of an enabling framework that supports tenure rights of smallholders in lands, forests, and fisheries. In some countries, there are existing laws already but the laws are not properly implemented or have insufficient provisions to guarantee the rights of family farmers. There are also overlapping laws, rules, and regulations due to confused development priorities; there are conflicting claims over land between smallholders and business interests, even between poor rural sectors such as forest dwellers vs lowlanders. Also, many land administration in developing countries are riddled with corruption, red tape, overlapping tenure instruments along with conflicting agencies mandated to distribute different ownership/titles. Moreover, policies for women’s secured tenure over lands are scarce.

Thus, tenurial and land management policies on land, fisheries and forests should align with the Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Forests and Fisheries in the Context of Food Security (VGGT) which the Committee on World Food Security has adopted in 2012. Laws that can be aligned to the VGGT are in the areas of agrarian reform and land distribution; community and social forestry or community based forest management; use of virgin, fallow, idle, and new lands; laws on ancestral domains and common /customary lands; pastureland management law; national land use and management; compensation for lands to be used by government for public goods; laws on mining; lower costs for land surveys and land registration for family farmers; joint land titling between husband and wife; inheritance laws that does not discriminate women.

2. Sustainable, Climate Resilient, Agro-ecological Systems in Farms, Fisheries and Forests. Policies to scale up sustainable, integrated, diversified, organic, agro ecological approaches and practices in farms, fisheries and forests include national sustainable /organic agriculture act with sufficient budget to incentivize family farmers to shift to sustainable, agro ecological approaches; reforestation and land restoration; promotion of community based seed systems; inclusion of sustainable and agro ecological approaches in agriculture universities; support for participatory agriculture research and innovation focused on small scale family farming; support for training of Farmer Master Trainers and in situ model farms; easy access and affordable credits for production ; provision of agricultural/crop insurance; training on disaster risk reduction and management, decentralized process as well as lower fees for organic certification; and promotion of traceability measures at affordable costs.

3. Increasing the Market Power of Family Farmers Through Viable Cooperatives Using the Value Chain Approach. Family farmers have been mere price takers. By organizing themselves into cooperatives, farmers can have strong



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bargaining power with the buyers of their crops as well as consolidate their volume and pool their resources to add value to their products. Policies to support and promote farmers' multi purpose cooperatives from the village to national and even regional levels will include: enactment or revision of Cooperative Laws to reflect the volunteerism and movement character of cooperatives; incentives such as tax exemptions, flexible and easy credit, public procurement of crop and food produced by cooperatives and crop insurance to cooperatives; provision of land and other support services such as infrastructure (equipment, facilities, tools) for the use of agricultural cooperatives; promotion of coop-to-coop partnerships and businesses at country and regional levels ; support to community-supported agriculture; and halal certification subsidy for farmers cooperatives.

4. Fair and Equitable Rights and Opportunities to Women Farmers. In most, if not all developing countries in Asia, the contributions of women farmers are under recognized and undervalued, even if they perform 50-90% of the work in the farms. Supporting women in their work in agriculture will enhance food security and nutrition and increase household incomes and raise the dignity of the “other half of the population”. Policies to support women farmers include a Magna Carta for Women Farmers that will ensure provisions for equal rights to natural resources; equal access to opportunities including training, finance and information; development of agriculture tools and machineries to reduce drudgery and ease women’s work; provision of public goods that concern women the most such as day care centers, clinics/hospitals, potable water, facilities for sanitation and hygiene, electricity, fuel; women’s desk in government offices e.g. police stations ; special windows for credit; strong laws against domestic violence and sexual harassment; affirmative action for women such as quota in training and in leadership structures, and conduct of gender sensitivity sessions across all government offices.

5. Attracting the Youth to Agriculture. The farming population is ageing, and farming is not an attractive occupation because it does not earn, it is unglamorous, it is hard manual work. But there will always be some youth who can be drawn to agriculture if the problems in current agriculture systems are responded to. In many developing countries, an overall policy framework or Magna Carta for Youth in Agriculture should be put in place. This must have the following provisions:

- Provide young farmers with ownership or use or lease rights of farming lands for at least 25 years.
- Provide special and integrated agricultural programs and support services to young farmers, including education, training and extension, leadership training, credit, technologies, agricultural inputs, appropriate equipment and machineries, subsidies, insurance, and markets. School curricula , from the lower levels up to university levels should encourage agriculture as a profession.
- Provide avenues wherein young farmers can organize themselves, learn from each other and participate in decision-making and policy formulation processes.
- Improve infrastructure and peace and order situation in rural areas, as well as provide social security and protection for young farmers.

Farmers in the Asia Pacific region are family farmers, who are the poorest and hungriest in the world. Supporting the family farmers now through a comprehensive and integrated policy and program on agrarian reform, rural development, sustainable, agro-ecological approaches, and markets and trade will increase incomes and resilience of farmers, thereby changing young peoples’ views about farming. NO FARMER. NO FOOD. NO FUTURE.

September 26, 2018 version for the Global Land Forum

ⁱ FAO defines family farming as “ a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production which is managed and operated by a family, both female and male. The family and the farm are linked, co-evolve and combine economic, environmental, reproductive, social and cultural functions. A family farm is an agricultural landholding which is managed and operated by a household and where farm labor is largely supplied by that household.”(FAO, 2013)

