

**Statement of Young Farmers at the**  
**2023**  
**Global Forum for Food and Agriculture**

In the last year, we faced multiple crises coming all-together. Climate change with droughts and floods, an energy crisis with rising prices for operating resources, the massive loss of biodiversity and the chronic hunger crisis. The unjustified Russian war in Ukraine channeled these crises and impacted our whole food system. We see now again the urgent need of a transformation of the global food system.

As young peasants and farmers, these crises affect us directly in our daily life. Therefore, we discussed potential solutions, which we want to share now by reading our statement to you. We stand here in the hope that you will listen carefully, think about it and then implement them in your national legislative processes, so some day we can provide sustainable, affordable, culturally appropriate and nutritious food for everyone.

**I. How can we create crisis-proof food systems?**

Peasants and family farmers produce around 70–80% of the food consumed by people worldwide. However, they also constitute 80% of the global population facing hunger and approximately 70% of the world's population living in extreme poverty. Women provide about 50 percent of farm labor. They are traditionally not being recognized and are particularly impacted by the different crises. To improve their situation we should cooperate with the women rights movement. Human rights instruments such as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants should be at the core of country-level efforts and globally coordinated actions to eradicate poverty and reach zero hunger by 2030.

Farmers should be at the heart of decisions that affect them. The direct participation of farmers throughout the policy making process will ensure that local knowledge is incorporated and policy is truly bottom-up.

States should enact critical policy shifts for structural change within the global economy in order to build resilient and sustainable food systems. Human rights, particularly the right to food and the right to food sovereignty, must be central to all policies, programs, and governance processes related to food and agriculture.

We all deserve healthy, culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods. This right can only be enjoyed by everyone if nation-states realize the right of peoples to democratically define and control their own food and agricultural systems.

Transparency in markets and regulation when needed is required for food prices to reflect the costs, value of production, and prevent harmful financial speculation. Parity pricing and labor protections are fundamental to guaranteeing fair incomes for everyone engaged and employed in food systems.

Genuine agrarian reforms are needed to realize and protect the right to land for small-scale producers, family farmers, and landless peoples. Equitable reforms are especially relevant for achieving gender equality and addressing youth migration out of the countryside.

Agroecological transition pathways are key to solving the root causes of rural poverty, hunger, and environmental degradation with contextualized solutions and bottom-up, territorial processes that enhance the autonomy and adaptive capacity of small-scale food producers. As recognized by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, agroecology is crucial for realizing the right to food as well as adapting to and mitigating climate change while also addressing input dependencies, fertilizer shortages, food loss and waste, and the environmental costs of agriculture supply chains.

## **II. How can we create climate-friendly food systems and preserve biological diversity?**

Farmers are among the first to be impacted by climate change. But agriculture is also a contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions which causes climate change. Nevertheless, agriculture can be a crucial part of the solution through mitigation efforts. Hence, the need to create a climate friendly food system that provides economic, social and environmental sustainability. Recent developments in food systems have yielded many positive results, such as the establishment of food industries, which have expanded off-farm employment opportunities and have widened food choices beyond local staples, thus satisfying consumers' preferences in terms of taste, form and quality.

New productive systems require the fair use of affordable and accessible "technology", openness to innovation in order to develop and to keep up with the world's pace and needs, while at the same time suffering a transformation that will attract new generations to get involved in food production.

Technology is a word commonly mistaken in the context of agriculture to mean only machines and electronic devices. In reality, it refers to techniques based on specific knowledge of crops interacting with their soil in a certain environment with specific climate conditions and surrounding community, including indigenous knowledge. Agricultural technological advances include knowledge in crop rotation that has proven to be effective in pest control, nitrogen and other nutrients availability for one or the other species; precision farming, whose focus should be teaching farmers how to keep record of their activities and using their inputs efficiently in order to produce more while optimizing the resources. Development of crop varieties that can better adapt to present climate conditions is also one of the ways technological advances can help us improve our capacity to feed the global population, while ensuring our farmers get better opportunities and greater returns for their labor. This should not come at the expense of traditional/indigenous varieties or the loss of farmer autonomy.

Misuse of chemical inputs has become an issue for most productive systems and it now shows the impact of soil degradation in microbiological content and the consequent loss of structure, water retention, permeation capacity and loss of biodiversity. Along come very visible issues such as floods or drought, and also more subtle but equally lethal issues in the general population, specifically for agricultural workers. Innovations in the development of new fertilization including concepts extracted from agroecology show that there are cleaner and healthier ways to fertilize our crops. Precision agriculture and biotechnology are ways to optimize the use of resources to improve productivity levels. Also it's important that farmers can produce those inputs themselves, a big step towards food sovereignty, a goal the world needs to pursue if we want to actually develop crisis proof systems.

We believe sustainable food systems are dependent on developing local agricultural innovations that suit a certain region or territory and being able to communicate effectively and pass the knowledge

onto those in charge of production. Use of indigenous biological agents and returning crop residues to the soil to build organic matter and carbon levels up, will ensure better conditions for productive regions of the world, starting at a local level.

The world boasts of a rich and diverse habitats which are under threat from natural and human activities. Without concerted efforts in research and conservation, the world is likely to lose unique and endangered species that form part of its heritage. Major causes of deterioration of the world's biodiversity include: agricultural expansion and urban growth, pollution (land, air and water), overexploitation of natural resources (minerals, oil and gas), climate change, political instability and inadequate policy, legal and institutional response. Hence, there is a need for world leaders to make deliberate decisions and take significant efforts in conserving biodiversity. This is through the harmonization of laws, regulations and policies. Additionally, it is critical to achieve social justice while striking a balance between biodiversity conservation and sustaining economic growth and development in all sectors of the world's economy. Some of the strategies include: creating public awareness on the importance of biodiversity conservation, conserving native varieties of crops, protecting wild animals and endangered species, prohibiting deforestation, preserving natural ecosystems and farmland, and proper utilization of natural resources (soil and water).

The importance of rescuing and preserving native species, local seeds used for generations in one region cannot be overstated. Any effort done to preserve local diversity of the species produced is a step in the right direction. Directing forest preservation towards a proper water availability and distribution avoiding desertification is also crucial.

### **III. How can we improve collaboration for sustainable global food systems?**

The global food system is complex and diverse; however, most of the power does lay with big multinational corporations and with the different nation's governments. The need for food is increasing with the world population, however the food trends are fluctual and different with the locations around the world. In order to meet the future needs and achieve SDG 2, the farmers and markets need to be able to work closer together. The food supply-chain needs to be shortened, the farmers need to continuously adapt to changing consumer demands and the consumer as well as policy makers need a better understanding of food production. The gap in understanding between the farmer and the consumer has increased over the years, this needs to be closed.

In order to achieve SDG 2, we need to admit that the hunger crisis is not only about food production but also about affordability, accessibility and distribution of food. Therefore, we need to adapt local and regional food production to the nutritional needs of people. Strengthening farmers' cooperatives locally, nationally and internationally is key to bridge the gap between the farmer and the consumer. This is also called for in SDG 17 as partnerships and collaboration is at the core of achieving the UN goals for Sustainable Development. The international collaboration needs to be strengthened on all levels from the grass root all the way up to the governments and multilateral institutions.

There is a need for better collaboration across nations, especially bringing together countries with shortages and countries with abundant food production to ensure food security. For a more resilient, crisis-proof and climate-friendly global food system we need to strengthen the rights, equality, economy and participation of the farmers in the supply-chain as well as in the policy making process, this will in turn give opportunity to the farmers to improve and develop their farm and in turn the food produced.

An even global playing field is essential. Food producers rely on local, territorial and global markets for both, selling their products and for acquiring critical tools and inputs. Access to information and knowledge is critical if farmers are to produce more from less.

All Farmers should have the ability to decide on agricultural policies at all levels. To improve international collaboration for sustainable global food systems the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) could be strengthened as a participatory multi-stakeholder forum by increasing support for the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism (CSIPM), an essential and autonomous part of the CFS. CFSIPM needs greater funding as well as more support for their policy position in CFS processes. Another option of strengthening CFS would be to explore the opportunity to assure representation of farm organizations.

To achieve a One-health-approach the following actions are important:

- scaling agroecology, and
- creating a single body at the UN mandated with tackling anti-microbial resistance (AMR)
- addressing conflicts of interest, regarding corporate influence in political processes.

*Young farmers expressed divergent views on the following points:*

- *“The resilience of the global food system should be improved by reducing barriers farmers face when trading their goods, while import/export policies should ensure the quality of food available for domestic population.”*
- *“National agricultural policies should prioritize production for domestic consumption and food self-sufficiency, thereby reducing import dependencies and vulnerability to shocks.”*