

**“Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life”
The **Farmers’** perspective**

1. We, **farmers** of the world, men, women and youth, taking care of small, medium and largescale farms and cooperatives, recognize that Agriculture, including crops, horticulture, feedstock, livestock, breeding, fisheries and forestry, is at the heart of sustainable development. **Farmers** and rural communities are the stewards of food security, nutrition and biodiversity conservation. **Farmers** feed the planet, producing Energy for Life, transportation and heat and are integral to support sustainable development, globally. However, we also feel humble facing the responsibilities that come with the tasks of feeding the world and caring for the earth.

2. As **farmers**, we are tasked to produce enough quality and safe food at reasonable prices in order to support the achievement of food security for all. In a world that is continuously growing, the Food and Agriculture Organization projects that agricultural production must increase by 60% globally to meet the food production demand that will be required to feed the 9.2 billion people who will inhabit our planet in 2050. **Farmers** produce a wide variety of food for year round consumption. This variety provides a balanced diet with high nutritional value vegetables, fruits, grains and animal products, and is key to end all forms of malnutrition and ensure healthy lives for all. In this regard, Cooperatives, defined by the United Nation as “business model with a social conscience” in order to underline their capability to strike a balance between pursuing profit and meeting the needs of members and their communities, play an important role in improving food security and contributing to the eradication of hunger.

3. We, as **farmers**, deliver growth and employment by producing products for further processing and trade, thus improving the economic outcomes of **farmers** and all of society. However, throughout its long existence and contemporary practice, agriculture does more than just producing food and feed. Feed has fueled pack animals. Animals have been used for fishing, and oilseeds, olive oil and beeswax lighting offer other examples.

4. The agricultural sector will make a significant contribution in increasing renewable energy in the global energy mix, through biofuels, biomass and innovative technology. With price volatility and environmental concerns around fossil fuels, there is a renewed focus on identifying stable alternative sources of energy.

5. We, **farmers**, have found innovative solutions to clothe humanity and provide building material with a view to increasing sustainability of current materials in the supply chain. With a global movement towards more sustainable products and sustainably sourced inputs throughout supply chains, the role of agriculture in clothing humanity, providing building materials and consumers products, is only expected to grow. Agriculture, especially forestry, produces valuable raw material for building and other industrial purposes. However, the role of the agricultural sector as producer of raw materials has been displaced by alternatives based on fossil fuels. Concrete demonstrations that agricultural waste products can be turned to fuel and high value products establish agricultural products as more sustainable than fossil fuel derived ones. Growing food, fiber and fuel together will progressively improve global resource efficiency and be instrumental in mitigating climate change.

6. The multifunctional role of agriculture shows the intrinsic tendency of the sector to strive for sustainability, making efficient use of natural resources and taking care of the land and the natural resources. Research and extension services to better understand how agricultural producers will be affected by climate change is needed in order to adapt constantly to the projected changes in precipitation, temperature, extreme weather events and even higher atmospheric carbon levels. Forests play a critical role in climate change mitigation and adaptation and ensuring clean water supply.

7. We, **farmers**, face the major ongoing challenge of climate change in our daily work and lives. Farmers have to adapt constantly to climate instability by implementing resilient solutions to mitigate its effects on farm enterprises. **Farmers** and farm operations, if economically sustainable, are an essential contribution to mitigate the overall effects of climate change, at the farm, landscape as well as at global level. Although farmers have shown incredible resilience to weather events and climate change, a greater effort must be expended on adapting to the significant challenges that are presented as climate change gathers space.

8. We, **farmers**, have natural roles as stewards of the land. Agricultural activity has shaped the global landscape and defined many cultural groups. However our soils are under threat from encroaching desertification, erosion, sub/urbanization and other developments. **Farmers** are partners in soils preservation and improvement through combating desertification, improvements in water quality and management, providing habitat for species at risk and contributing to biodiversity worldwide. It is in the interest of **farmers** to keep land and soils healthy and fertile, as this is vital to the success of farming. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation around 1.3 billion tonnes per year of all food produced

9. globally for human consumption is lost or wasted. Agricultural cooperatives due to their structure and collective management of resources could significantly contribute to the eradication of those factors that cause food waste, such as overproduction or inadequate storage and transport infrastructure.

10. Farmland provides green space, strengthens links between people and nature and can contribute to safeguarding the world’s natural heritage. Agricultural production supports rural communities’ social, cultural and economic base while providing sustainable tourism. Looking at long terms aim **farmers**, through their cooperatives, play an important role in promoting sustainable economic growth, social development and environmental responsibility. The agricultural sector provides both ‘flower’ and ‘fun’. True stewardship has definitely a cost to the farmer and although it provides benefits to the farmer as well, the biggest benefit is for the society as a whole while the farmer is not well remunerated for the costs incurred in improving natural resource use, increasing biodiversity and protecting natural amenities and heritage.

11. Beside marketable goods and services, the farming community provides a broad range of nonmarketable, public goods and services to society as a whole. As market oriented entrepreneurs in the global marketplace, **farmers** continuously strive to deliver more using less. The inability of the market to integrate external costs and benefits in market prices hampers the balanced development of a multifunctional agricultural sector. Furthermore, as marketoriented entrepreneurs, **farmers** constantly strive to achieve evergreater efficiencies. An effective and efficient use of inputs leads to increased productivity and reduced environmental impacts. However, the provision of public goods is unfortunately very rarely recognized.

12. In order to meet the needs of a growing world population, it is critical that **farmers** have access to secure land tenure, productive resources, inputs, markets, finance and collaterals. This includes crops insurance, energy, infrastructure, land, labour, research and development, education and training. These investments will enable **farmers** to implement innovative techniques and adopt the latest technologies to improve the sustainability of their operations and to produce the food and products needed to meet growing demand.

13. Access to credit is critical to all farming businesses, regardless their size (small, medium and large scale) and geographical location. Huge work has gone into providing access to micro finance for individual **farmers**, and this effort should continue. However, to further develop the potential of the agriculture sector all **farmers** or groups of **farmers** need access to investment capital to set up activities providing added value in one way or another, with great focus on the missing middle.

14. In addition, **farmers** are increasingly exposed to volatile world market prices and natural risks, experiencing input cost and price fluctuations, resulting in pressure on farm incomes and overall viability. Government and industry support is required to ensure that farm enterprises can manage their risks and deal with volatility allowing them to ensure a secure supply of food and other materials.

15. We, **farmers**, have contributed to and have been strong innovators since the advent of agriculture since ancient times. For instance, by implementing water system in impervious areas, improving the resilience of plants through grafting or even, adopting appealing packaging for presenting products. In this context, innovation is essential at the farm level and throughout the agricultural product supply chain, including the adoption of technologies to increase output and efficiency, increased traceability in the food supply chain, branding, marketing of products, the quality and the origin of agricultural products, and many others factors that contribute to success.

16. **Farmers** need access to the market assured by an enabling framework, which grants investments in qualitative and reliable infrastructure for transport, shipping, warehousing, cooperative models, which facilitate their full involvement in the value chain allowing to exploit the full benefit of the system. This will contribute to the reduction of food losses and increase efficiencies along supply chains.

17. We, **farmers**, need access to the ability to acquire appropriate knowledge and skills to make continuous improvements to agricultural sustainability. Investments in education and capacity building will provide lasting returns. **Farmers** need the possibilities to acquire the appropriate knowledge and to become true entrepreneurs. This is because the economic dimension of sustainable development is important as well as the social and environmental ones.

18. We, **farmers**, require reasonable farm gate prices. In a food supply chain where **farmers** are clasped between the dealers and the input providers, **farmers** are most often price takers with little bargaining power constraining our adaptability to the market. We are grateful for the ear and the confidence of consumers and would like to develop this relationship. Acting collectively in cooperatives **farmers** are better able to take advantage of market opportunities and mitigate the negative effects of food and other crises, but more needs to be done in terms of policies, transparent legislation, incentives and opportunities. We need all the support

and creative thinking as we can to improve the **farmers'** position in the value chain. Without strong farm gate prices and a fair remuneration for what we produce there is no attractiveness, no renewable energy, no food security and no development in poor rural areas.

19. The key issue to meet our challenges is to deliver profitability at the farm level. This ensures that farming remains a viable, sustainable career option for young people and supports transitioning between generations. Profitability is needed for agriculture to be able to compete with alternative employment in the city and to make further investments in the social and environmental pillars of sustainability.

20. Finally, the right to farm must leave the possibility to regions to develop their own agricultural potential. Focus on competitiveness cannot be at the expense of developing farming potential in other regions. Assuring the right to develop its own agricultural potential contributes to the goal of reducing inequality among countries. It also contributes to the achievement of food security and broadens the variety and hence resilience of the agrifood system as a whole. This goal must be shared by all stakeholders in the society. In this perspective, this must be recognized as a public good.

21. In too many fora, at national, regional and international levels, **farmers** are marginalized and deprived of the right to speak and be listened to. We, **farmers**, need the ear of decisionmakers. Policy makers must talk and listen to **farmers** rather than speak about **farmers** without us present.

We, **farmers**, have and will continue to Feed the Planet and produce Energy for Life.

22.



Feeding the Planet.
Energy for Life.

The Farmers' perspective

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