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## **Comments on Agriculture and Food Security in the Rio+20 Draft Text**

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February 2012

The Rome-based agencies (UNFAO, WFP, IFAD and Bioversity International), in their submission to the Rio+20 compilation document, conclude that “a profound change of our agriculture and food system is urgently needed to achieve global food security.” The Rio+20 process is an important opportunity for the global community to examine and undertake those needed fundamental changes. The final political document – “The Future We Want” – must reflect this essential paradigm shift. Business as usual is not an option.

As noted by the Rome-based agencies, “sustainability requires a reform of the overall agriculture and food system, from production to consumption.” The Rio+20 text will only reflect the top line elements of such a reform. Essential elements to include are:

### **1. Ensuring the right to food requires food systems based on sustainable production and equitable consumption**

To ensure the right to food and to protect the global environment, global consumption and production patterns must change fundamentally. The industrial agricultural system, from farm to table, is responsible for nearly half of all global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). The production and use of chemical fertilizers are alone responsible for 5% of total global GHG emissions. We must transform this system towards sustainable production and consumption.

The industrial food system annually discards up to half of all the food it produces, enough to feed easily the one billion food insecure people on the planet. A sustainable food system minimizes waste and transport distances, allowing more people to eat food that is fresher and more nutritious.

Agroecological methods of crop production reduce GHG emissions and sequester carbon, making significant contributions to climate change mitigation. We must increase investment in agroecological production, including research, extension and capacity-building of farmers, particularly the smallholders and women farmers who are responsible for feeding the majority of people on the planet.

Most of the people on the planet are not fed by the industrial food system, but by small producers, a majority of whom are women. We must transition to a sustainable system that supports those small producers. We must also support the development of local and regional production and consumption.

Small-scale farming, agroecological production methods, locally oriented production and consumption – all are essential components of food systems designed for sustainability.

### **Suggested text:**

We reaffirm the right to food and call on all governments and international organizations to contribute to food security and ensure the right to food of the poorest and most marginal by *enhancing* local food production, in particular through support for smallholder and women farmers, *supporting* the development and functioning of local markets as well as equitable access to regional and international markets, and *preventing* land grabbing.

We call on developed countries to take the lead in transforming production and consumption in industrial food systems towards equitable and sustainable systems by, *inter alia*, *reducing and eliminating* the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers, *eliminating* subsidies and other incentives for unsustainable production practices that distort trade, *promoting* the adoption of agroecological production methods, *reducing* transport distances and waste in food chains, and *encouraging* a shift to a more sustainable food system.

We call on all governments and international organizations to increase support for agroecological practices and production, in particular those that can provide climate resilience, with finance, research and technology transfer and capacity building at appropriate levels (in particular for women farmers) necessary to accomplish the transformation towards sustainable production methods.

## **2. Urgent action is needed to address climate threats to food production**

Regardless of the scale of the transformation achieved towards sustainable production and consumption in food systems, global food security will remain seriously threatened by climate change. As a warmer and more variable climate poses huge threats to food production, it also fundamentally threatens the realization of the right to food.

**Suggested text:**

We call on all developed country governments to immediately undertake drastic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, in order to achieve the overarching objective of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and ensure that food production is not threatened due to anthropogenic interference with the climate system.

**3. Commodity speculation that threatens food price volatility must be eliminated**

Speculation on commodity markets has greatly increased in recent years, largely due to deregulation. Markets in food commodities are now highly volatile and prices have been pushed upwards, leading to increased food insecurity and rising hunger. Production uncertainties have further driven speculation and price volatility.

Many poor countries depend on international markets for food security. Speculation makes heavy demands on scant public finances in these countries and leads to deepening hunger.

Just a few governments regulate these markets (the US, UK, and to a lesser extent France, Germany and South Africa): they have a responsibility to the international community to ensure the exchanges are not run solely for private profit at significant risk of large public loss. Regulation must be re-introduced, position limits set and enforced, and investment and insurance functions should again be separated to limit the scope for manipulating prices.

**Suggested text:**

We call on responsible governments to regulate commodity exchanges to ensure that private profit does not come at significant risk of large public loss or increased poverty and hunger.