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Asia Pacific Regional Farmers' Forum (RFAFO)

Asia Pacific Regional Farmers Forum 2022 Statement

We, 40 representatives of seven (7) regional/international small-scale farmers' and fishers' organizations (FOs),¹ with a combined membership of 24 million, 34% of whom are women and 23% are youth, have gathered both in-person and virtually for the 2nd Asia Pacific Regional Farmers Forum (AP RFAFO) on October 26-27, 2022 in Bangkok, Thailand. We have been accompanied by officials of the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), led by the Director of the Asia Pacific Division, Task Manager for regional grant Asia Pacific Farmers Program and Rural Institution Technical Specialist. The AP RFAFO aims to assess the partnership between IFAD and FOs, which started during the 1st RFAFO in 2018 in Jakarta, Indonesia, and to identify action points towards strengthening such partnership, so that we, family farmers² as a sector, can respond better to the current crises we face.

Our Context

Climate change has affected family farmers the most since the 2000s. Massive climate related disasters in the Asia Pacific region, most recent of which are massive flooding in Cambodia, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Thailand, heat waves and droughts in Cambodia, India, and China, and super typhoons in Fiji, India, Philippines, and Vietnam, have depleted fish stocks, decreased yields and incomes, destroyed billions of dollars of agriculture crops and livelihoods, and even caused deaths among family farmers.

COVID 19 pandemic, which started in early 2020, has merely exacerbated the effects of climate change on family farmers. The mobility restrictions which governments imposed to arrest the spread of the virus have made inaccessible or closed traditional and export markets even as prices of basic food stuffs increase. Researches reveal that COVID 19 has widened poverty and income gap across the region.³

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which broke out in early 2022, has caused fuel prices to soar, doubling or tripling prices of electricity, gas, water, food, and agricultural inputs, thus worsening the already sorry and battered state of family farmers.

This three-fold crisis—climate change, COVID 19 pandemic, and the conflict in Ukraine happening simultaneously--has worsened inflation in our countries; increased agrarian

¹ Participants are from members and partners of the AP RFAFO Steering Committee namely: AFA, INOFO, LVC, PIFON, WFF, WFFP, WFO.

² FAO has defined family farming as “, family farming is a means of organizing agricultural, forestry, fisheries, pastoral and aquaculture production that is managed and operated by a family, and that is predominantly reliant on the family labour of both women and men. The family and the farm are linked, co-evolve and combine economic, environmental, social and cultural functions.

³ <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/inequality-virus#:~:text=The%20virus%20has%20exposed%2C%20fed,individuals%20and%20corporations%20%E2%80%93%20are%20thriving.>

conflicts, land grabbing, eviction, and criminalization especially among rights defenders; and severely impacted our rights to work and to food.

The FAO 2021 State of Food Insecurity (SOFI) Report indicates that the global price food index in 2022 is higher than those in the past two years. The Report also reveals that out of 828 million hungry in the world, 424.5 million or 51% are in Asia Pacific, even as small-scale family farmers in the region contribute 80% of the region's food, as much as 35% of the world's food, as much as 6% of the world's fisheries products, and 84% of global employment in fisheries.

Current Food Crisis and Global Food Systems

The current food crisis has exposed the ills of the current global food systems dominated by industrial, corporate, chemical-intensive, exploitative, and export-oriented agriculture systems, mainly with a profit orientation regardless of environmental considerations and human rights. It has left out billions of family farmers who feed the world. Inadequate policies and regulations and lack of support services, such as research, innovation and extension, and financing directed towards supporting family farmers, have contributed to such ills.

Family farmers as solution providers

Family farmers are solution providers. In spite of limited capacities and resources, FOs at local, national and regional levels have made efforts to respond wholistically to the current global food crisis. In fisheries, FO members use appropriate fishing gears, practice sustainable ecosystem-based fishing and collectively raise their voices against coastal land grabbing and unsustainable fishing. Herders and pastoralists practice sustainable forest management and agroforestry. Family farmers practice sustainable, integrated, biodiverse, climate-resilient, organic systems in farms, fisheries, and forests. We note that organic and agroecological farmers who rely on inputs produced on or near the farm and who sell in local markets and acted through their groups suffer less and are more resilient.

Our Recommendations to IFAD

We view IFAD, with a strong mandate from UN for financing agricultural development, as our strong ally and strategic partner towards increasing our Agency to effectively engage governments in policy work and in providing effective social and economic services to our members.

Following our review of the joint FO-IFAD statement at the 2018 AP RFAFO at the country and regional levels and the current food crisis we face, we call on IFAD to:

On Meaningful participation of FOs

1. Recognize FOs as a strategic partner in IFAD processes, thereby effectively facilitating the inclusion of FOs at national level processes of IFAD, including processes cited in the 2018 Joint FO-IFAD Statement (e.g., IFAD COSOP processes in the design,



implementation, and monitoring of its country portfolio projects, IFAD's knowledge management work); as well as facilitating FO-government interactions, and supporting capacities of FOs in policy engagement as needed.

2. Strengthen national farmers' forum processes and support farmer-led design and implementation of national and regional action plans for the UN Decade of Family Farming.

On Climate Financing

3. Refrain from supporting any project that pollutes and destroys our planet; promotes genetically modified crops, land and ocean grabbing, unsustainable use of natural resources; and treats farmers as mere recipients of top-down technologies.
4. Set up regular or permanent grant facility for direct Financing to FOs through ASAP+, if possible, for climate change adaptation and mitigation by FOs with their members and partners.

FOs can use such grant facility to support their various works:

4.1 Economic services delivery to members including:

- 4.1.1 access to institutional credit and skills trainings from various the government institutions.
- 4.1.2 development and implementation of business models.
- 4.1.3 establishment and maintenance of agroecological systems.
- 4.1.4 Developing appropriate technology for small farmers
- 4.1.5 Effective utilization of digital technologies, such as e-platforms for products promotion, marketing, and small farmer friendly certification.
- 4.1.6 access to local markets.

4.2 Exchanges among farmers such as farmer field schools.

4.3 Provision of revolving funds for enterprises of members.

4.4 Strengthening of partnerships with governments and other development organizations for procurement of sustainably grown and processed products of members.

4.5 Policy making engagement with governments in VGSSF and VGGT implementation at national levels and in formulation and implementation of UNDF National and Regional Action Plans with the right to food, UNDRIP and UNDROP under the concept of food sovereignty.

4.6 Responsible, accountable, and transparent governance of organizations.

Even as we highly recommend the setting up of such grant facility through ASAP+, we call on IFAD to:



Asia Pacific Regional
Farmers' Forum

1. expand ASAP+ allocation for FOs from 15% to 50% or more of the total funds.
2. involve representatives of the FAFO Steering Committee at global, regional, and national levels in a co-construction process.
3. make the inclusion of FOs in the design, implementation, and monitoring of funds as part of the eligibility requirements for government applications for ASAP+.

On Policy Agenda

5. work together with FOs for joint policy agenda, including on:
 - 5.1 Government recognition of FOs.
 - 5.2 Access of farmers to public finance.

Our Commitment

We, as frontliners in the work for sustainable, healthy and just food systems, commit to join IFAD in resource mobilization and in the wise use of mobilized funds through good project/program management, lending of our collective voice as family farmers in Asia Pacific, and effective engagement with decision makers for pro-family farmer policies and programs. We commit to strengthen our solidarity, knowledge exchange, and movement building through FAFO processes at the national and regional levels.

Signed:

- AFA - Asian Farmers’ Association for Sustainable Rural Development
- LVC - La Via Campesina
- INOFO - Inter-continental Network of Organic Farmers’ Organizations
- PIFON - Pacific Islands Farmers’ Organizations Network
- WFF - World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers
- WFFP - World Forum of Fishers Peoples
- WFO - World Farmers Organization

