

# **Farmer's Major Group vision & priorities for the Sustainable Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda**

***An updated position paper for the programme  
"Post 2 Post: Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement in the Post-Rio+20/Post-2015 Process"***

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## **Introduction**

This short position paper updates the position of the Farmer's Major Group's vision and priorities - including themes, goals, targets and indicators – for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the wider post-2015 development agenda and the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). It forms part of the European Commission-funded programme "*Post 2 Post: Enhancing Stakeholder Engagement in the Post-Rio+20/Post-2015 Process*" (*Post 2 Post*). This paper provides an opportunity for the Major Group to communicate and consult on its position as a basis for ongoing stakeholder engagement, capacity building and advocacy within the SDG process.

This paper encompasses the positions and perspectives of the members of the World Farmer's Organisation (WFO), as an Operating Partner of the Farmers Major Group, who have been consulted in its development. Furthermore, it has been updated alongside similar position papers authored by the other Major Groups and has been supported by a small grant provided through Post 2 Post. This updated position paper highlights the priorities of farmers from around the world and builds upon a previous position paper that was released in 2014. This update takes into account the work that has taken place in drafting text for the SDGs as well as the December 2014 United Nations Secretary General's Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Agenda which has outlined six elements for delivering the SDGs:

1. People
2. Dignity
3. Prosperity
4. Justice
5. Partnership
6. Planet

Since 1992, when Agenda 21 set out nine major groups, farmers have been active in the Commission on Sustainable Development leading up to Rio+20, and now the SDGs and Post 2015 process. Over the course of 2014 a series of Open Working Group sessions were held to develop the Zero Draft for the SDGs which included draft goals and indicators for each goal. Presently, these remain subject to negotiation by UN member states and are expected to be finalized for adoption in September 2015.

The Farmers Major Group (FMG), coordinated and represented by international farmer organizations, is responsible for providing coordination and input into the content and process of the *Post-Rio+20/Post-2015 Process*. Our main objective has been, and remains, to ensure that genuine farmer voices are present and participating within the development, negotiation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the SDGs.

## Summary

For the FMG, it is important to have a strong focus on all types of farmers, including small, medium and large scale holders, fishers, forestry and livestock keepers, in developing the SDGs since they are stewards of the land and produce food from the land and play a key role in advancing sustainable development. Representation and participation is key, but more fundamentally relevant to the FMG constituency is the recognition that it is farmers themselves who are advancing sustainable development with solutions by continuously striving to improve upon the three pillars of sustainability: economic, social and environment. Farmers are driving forces in advancing innovative solutions to the problems that underlie the causes of social-economic inequality and poverty that affects individuals, families and communities around the world. This calls for enabling, promoting and supporting the practices and solutions which farmers around the world are already implementing to address social, economic and environmental challenges. In addition, it is critical to ensure special attention to the conditions of women, youth and those that are discriminated on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender or for any other reason, and to those who are dependent upon agriculture directly, or indirectly for their livelihoods. Producing more food to meet a growing world population, projected to be 9.2 billion by 2050, will require sustainably boosting productivity (60% increase by 2050 to meet the estimated requirements) through new technologies and expertise.

Thus, a key support required for the FMG to advance sustainable development is access to key investments to create the conditions and access to products, knowledge and markets that will enable farmers to advance the SDGs. Investments and access are needed in areas such as new and innovative technologies, storage and distribution infrastructure, affordable inputs, market access and the associated knowledge translation and knowledge dissemination that is needed in order to extend access globally to all agricultural producers.

This position paper presents the FMGs positions for the SDGs, highlights challenges as well as proposes solutions and is organized around the *six* essential elements for delivering the SDGs as presented by the United Nations Secretary General in his Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Agenda.

## Our position

The FMG is pleased that agriculture is recognized in proposed Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. However, farmers will be affected by and can contribute to the other proposed goals. “Further recognition is needed on the role that agriculture plays in promoting economic and social conditions while contributing important environmental services.

**People:** The themes which the FMG is following and which will form the core area of engagement in this process directly affect all farmers. Considering this themes, the SDGs which the FMG sees as necessary under each of these themes are focused principally on achieving the full participation of farmers as key actors in the decision making process of any recommendations, mechanisms or policy directed towards agriculture and their communities that depend on it for their livelihood. Their absence in participating in the formulation of solutions to poverty and climate change, and their implementation, limits the ability to achieve any such goals that may be considered sustainable or for the advancement of the social-economic status of the vast numbers of the rural population of the world that depends on agriculture. Furthermore, it is critical that the underlying goals promote, support and protect inclusive sustainable agriculture by all forms of agricultural production so as to have the greatest impact on reductions in poverty, social-economic inequalities and food insecurity. This can be accomplished while protecting and maintaining biodiversity, ecosystems services and enhancing animal welfare.

**Dignity:** Many farmers in the world are also some of the most poor and vulnerable people. They have few options, virtually no resources, and need support to achieve social, economic and environmental outcomes as will be expressed in the SDGs. These farmers face emerging challenges from climate change of drought and disaster risk reduction that need attention. Thus, this requires ensuring that marginalized groups of farmers such as family farmers, small scale producers, women, youth, pastoralists and the rural poor are provided with enhanced access to information as a basis for decision-making; access to justice; and free, prior and informed consent for both policy development and implementation actions on the ground, including issues that pose a threat, such as land-expropriation, land titles, power imbalances in transactions, food insecurity and tenure rights.

It is critical to address the shortcomings of development models and polices up until now by taking seriously the effects that human rights protection and the distribution of power have on economic and social outcomes. The FMG, along with other Major Groups, call for a **human rights** framework approach to the SDGs. We reiterate the essential role of farmers in the sustainable production of nutritious food and realizing the right to food.

**Prosperity:** Sustainable development must be inclusive in a manner that does not perpetuate inequalities but offers the opportunities for the benefits of sustainable development equally. One of the greatest impacts to increasing profitability for farmers is by creating better access to affordable inputs, investment options, the latest genetic improvements and management practices. Investments in technological improvements can create employment within the agricultural sector while boosting productivity for the producer.

**Justice:** The promotion of **social and economical justice** is paramount for any sustainable development goal. It is not enough to just promote equality, since historically and systemically women, youth and people of different ethnic, race and gender have been discriminated against. Women are key to food and nutrition security, knowledge, and sustainable development. Women account for 60 to 80% of farmers and produce 90% of food in Africa and approximately half of all food worldwide. There needs to be a concerted effort to ensure women's rights and tenure security of productive agricultural land. This includes protection against land expropriation by extractive industries, other developers and government and non-government actors. In addition, it is necessary to address the structural causes of the feminization of poverty, especially in rural areas. Ending violence against women is a key to sustainable development and addressing the issue of poverty. Thus, it is necessary to address the specific economic and social constraints that rural women face and in order to realize the SDGs.

**Partnership:** Best management practices and new technologies should be disseminated through the support and promotion of grassroots participatory extension programs such as the *Movimiento de Campesino-a-Campesino* (Farmer-to-Farmer Movement) of Latin America and the National Cooperative Business Association (USA Farmer to Farmer Program), which has resulted in improved livelihoods and natural resource conservation for several hundred thousand families in the rural villages of Latin America and Africa over the last 30 years.

Global partnerships and initiatives such as the Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture offer an opportunity for all organizations along the value chain in conjunction with government to advance solutions to sustainable development issues. Global promotion of best management practices, technology and agricultural products are also sorely needed to support all farmers in achieving sustainable development. The active participation of farmers within such organizations and processes is absolutely critical in order to ensure support from rural areas and ensure that sustainable development progresses in a manner that is effective on the ground. Inclusive approaches for the negotiation of the SDGs as well as their implementation and follow-up must be supported in order to reach the most effective outcome and to ensure that the SDGs are attainable.

**Planet:** On the issue of **Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture**, it is imperative that there be a farmer-centered approach which understands, analyzes, and recognizes the knowledge of farmers at the local level. In attempting to assess the needs of farmers, research must take place in a participatory process that involves farmers. This is key in discovering and recognizing the practices that can be solutions to poverty, hunger and climate change.

The issue of **climate change** is one, which bears much consideration for farmers. First, it is recognized that the most vulnerable and least able to absorb the impacts of climate change are the rural poor and those that depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Secondly, the impact of climate change on food production will affect all citizens not just food producers. Climate smart agriculture, new technologies, research and a better understanding of climate change will inform and develop new tools for farmers to better adapt to the risks posed by climate change and take advantage of any benefits it may offer. Farmers must be involved in developing the SDG's, their implementation, monitoring and evaluation and sustainable development initiatives that affect them in order for their processes to be effective. Farmers are a source of information to creating effective solutions to adaptation and mitigating the effects of climate change that will work on the ground. Solutions from all agriculture sectors must be promoted and supported to address the economic needs of the rural poor, climate change adaptation and mitigation by ensuring natural resource resilience. One example of this is the use of traditional seeds and seed technol-

ogy to promote biodiversity and new varieties that hold the promise of improving yields, nutrition while reducing inputs.

## **Priorities to be integrated within the SDGs**

### **Poverty eradication (Eradicating Wealth Inequalities)**

- Empower farmers in organizational frameworks and encourage them to build capacity and advocate for agriculture;
- Evaluate agricultural improvement not only in terms of production but also in terms of its impact on farmers' and rural communities social, economic and environmental indicators;
- Increase access to adequate and affordable inputs such as crop protection products, fertilizers as well as crop insurance;
- Promote infrastructure improvements to reduce wastage and quality deterioration throughout distribution;
- Reduce trade distorting barriers including tariffs and non-tariffs to increase incomes through trade opportunities;
- Prioritize integration of farmer organization input into decision-making processes;
- Land reform in order to improve farmers' and rural people's access to resources (land, water, seeds, credit, infrastructure) and security of land title.

### **Food Security and Nutrition / Sustainable Agriculture Systems**

- Agriculture production should be done in a sustainable manner – economically, environmentally and socially;
- Promote new crop varieties, improvements in genetics and technologies which have the potential to reduce the environmental impacts including inputs and make nutritional improvements.
- Recognize the ecological goods and services provided by productive and well managed agricultural lands.
- Promote best management practices that protect water availability and quality as per SDG 6.
- Safeguard against food shortages, commodity price volatility and post-harvest loss;
- Farmers must be free to make agricultural policy decisions that best benefit them and have access to the knowledge, credit, infrastructure and low-cost inputs needed;
- Address international imbalances: Many countries' agricultural sectors/systems are not on a fair footing due to past and current trade policies and historical development patterns;
- Domestic imbalances: Farmers within countries should be treated fairly when compared to other sectors and/or citizens in regards to credit, policy (e.g. subsidy) and other market failures.

## Promoting social, gender and women justice

- Support for stand-alone goals and supporting targets on justice and equity,
- Incorporate pro-justice/pro-equity concepts across all other goals and require disaggregated data in measuring progress towards meeting SDGs and targets.
- Ensure equal access and opportunities in employment, land tenure, education, health, governance, and access to sexual and reproductive health services for women;
- Develop and implement gender-sensitive, employment-centered development strategies based on full and productive employment and decent work for all, which also recognizes and promotes value (economic and social) of women's work and care at home and within their community;
- Adopt measures to ensure the equal representation of women in all areas of economic, political, social and cultural decision-making spaces;
- Develop and improve adequate, sustainable and gender-responsive social protection schemes;
- Enact policies and mechanisms to end the violence against women.

## Human rights

- Ensure the full inclusion of the recognition and protection the rights of agricultural workers and others working in rural areas as supported in the final study of UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee (A/HRC/19/75).
- Recognize farmers' contributions towards realizing the human rights to health, development, and a healthy environment.

## Climate change

- Support must be provided to farmers so they can make the necessary investments to address environmental pressures on agriculture such as climate change, soil degradation, deforestation and water quality and availability and reduce green-house emissions
- Promote further research to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

## Framework

### *Cross-cutting Issues*

Two important crosscutting issues that the FMG will follow closely and intervene appropriately are the issues of energy (SDG 7) and sustained and inclusive economic growth (SDG 8).

The impact of agricultural commodity prices and market volatility of food prices worldwide plays a significant role in determining the economic growth opportunities for farmers. Development for farmers and rural communities will be boosted by new local and export market opportunities, new uses for agricultural products and better infrastructure to ensure that a consistent and high-quality product is able to reach the market. Further work must be done in lowering the consumption not of just fossil fuels, but all energy. In the case of agriculture this can be addressed in several ways, including through the promotion of sustainable intensification of pro-

duction, improvements in lowering the CO2 equivalents of food through better on-farm management, lowering food wastage and improving efficiencies of transportation of agricultural products.

Agriculture and food production is not solely a commodity but supports countless livelihoods. Agricultural production and distribution is a fundamental aspect for life and social-economic advancement that must be protected from the volatility of weather and global market mechanisms and policies that negatively impact food production. Sustainability for the world's farmers encompasses continuous improvement in the areas of economic prosperity, social conditions and lessening the environmental impact of production. Implementation of the SDGs must promote the conditions necessary for farmers to take advantage of all the opportunities for continuous improvement that are available as well as those that have not even been conceptualized yet.

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

It is critical that in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation, agricultural producers are offered the opportunity to play an active and major role. A way to accomplish this is by integrating local, national and international farmers' organizations into processes that will serve both a monitoring and evaluative purpose. In addition, it is important that the indicators for evaluation, as well as the process of monitoring be developed with the active and meaningful participation of farmers. As the saying goes: "A farmer believes by seeing" and doing.

## **Next Steps**

In order to move forward on these objectives and to begin unfolding the vision presented, the FMG will continue ongoing outreach and consultation with other farmer organizations in all countries. Farmers must be a primary actor in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of SDGs as part of the post-2015 agenda as farmers face the impact of multiple and multi-faceted challenges to development.

The next stage is to continue the formulation of concrete positions on the SDGs that includes specific effective and feasible targets, as well as policy proposals and contribution to the negotiations of the SDGs. To date, participation of farmers in the SDG process has been lacking and farmers from LDC countries have been particularly absent within the Open Working Group process for developing the first draft the SDGs. Without changes, this trend risks continuing through the negotiations of the SDGs. Farmers cannot risk having their interests and perspectives sidelined. The FMG aims to build significant legitimacy to position specific and concrete wording, targets and indicators for the SDGs.

## **Conclusion**

Farmers must be actively involved in defining what the barriers to sustainable development are, and how to best overcome them. We urge an inclusive process that will chart a sustainable path for the world's food and agriculture production system that builds upon current production methods that include both modern conventional methods as well as traditional knowledge of small rural producers may they be farmers, fisher folk, Indigenous Peoples, women or pastoralists. Such a model based on participatory systems and processes will ensure not only access to safe, nutritious food for all but it will also provide a prosperous livelihood to farmers and a basis to build upon for the entire world's growing population. The implementation of climate-smart agriculture will build resilience to all farmers and also reduce emissions. Farmers can feed the world sustainably, and are already making strides in reducing environmental impacts and im-

proving social and economic sustainability. This is taking place through the implementation of many solutions, from the small-scale to the landscape. The continuous improvement to agricultural production practices will support the attainment of sustainable development for all.