

## **Regional FAO Conference for Europe and Central Asia, 13-14 May 2010**

### **Declaration of Civil Society Organizations participating at the CSOs/NGOs - FAO Consultation for Europe and Central Asia, Yerevan, 10-11 May 2010**

#### **Introduction**

On 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> May 2010, 44 CSOs and NGOs, representing national organizations from 10 countries and 9 international organizations of the Region Europe and Central Asia, gathered in Yerevan before the Regional FAO Conference. They discussed issues on the agenda of the 27<sup>th</sup> FAO Regional Conference for Europe and the relationships between FAO and Civil Society. The Consultation was chaired by Abgar Yeghoyan, President of the Armenian NGO "Protection of Consumers' Rights". The Consultation came to a consensus on the following points.

#### **Analysis of the crisis in the region and the impact on food security**

Regarding the food price crisis:

- many countries in the Caucasus and CIS Region (out of the EU) were particularly affected given their strong dependency on importation of food goods;
- many farmers in the Caucasus and CIS Region were affected by the changes that occurred at the end of their membership of USSR and by the reforms that followed;
- the national agricultural producers in all parts of the region did not all benefit from temporarily high agriculture prices as they did not have enough investment capacity nor access to inputs and credits;
- in the EU countries, despite the existence of direct payments, farmers were also affected by the crisis - particularly in certain sectors such as the dairy sector - as the prices came back to a very low level falling under European production costs after the crisis; it was also the result of CAP reform measures which had substantially reduced tools/instruments for markets regulation/management in all parts of the Region. Small producers were particularly affected given that low prices do not allow them to invest;
- in the new European Union Member states where many small producers remain, the application of new sanitary, traceability, environmental and animal welfare standards meant that farmers were no longer able to sell their products on their national and the EU market;
- consumers were also affected by the crisis (more dramatically in the Caucasus and CIS Region) given the fact that the prices to consumers remain high, even when the producers' prices dropped.

Regarding the financial and economic crisis:

- the financial and economic crisis had a strong impact on poverty and food security in the Caucasus and CIS Region, given the impact on incomes.

Regarding the climate change crisis:

- the governments of the Caucasus and CIS Region showed little interest in the impact of climate change that has a severe impact, especially on water availability and scarcity.

Regarding other issues:

- participants expressed concerns about the production and distribution of GMOs and biosafety
- participants expressed concerns about the impact of the production of agrofuels

### **FAO's role in the Region**

Food and agriculture are central to society in the Region. Environmental, socio-economic and cultural aspects depend on food and agriculture policies. Besides the pre-eminent role of EU CAP, which is being constantly reviewed, it is of utmost importance to establish a Regional policy based on food sovereignty<sup>1</sup> and improving self-sufficiency.

FAO is a unique space for cooperation in the Region and is the place where such a regional policy can be formulated. FAO must take into consideration different analyses about food and agriculture coming from all Member States and CSOs to design appropriate agricultural and trade policies. Therefore we ask for a pre-eminent role to FAO to boost cooperation and exchange in this Region and we look to FAO as a fundamental instrument to foster partnership between CSOs and Member States, especially in the Newly Independent States (NIS) in the Region.

### **CSO expectations of FAO**

FAO should ensure that all the proposed programmes include the full participation of CSOs in a bottom up approach.

FAO should boost partnership between CSOs in the Region on the following themes:

- support of sustainable production
  - agroecology programmes with involvement of producers
  - family farm and multifunctional activities
  - new models of research based on the involvement of peasants/pastoralists with local knowledge (e.g. participatory breeding), linking research to the farmers and vice versa
  - crucial importance of traditional livestock keeping in the Region
- making the countryside attractive for future generations
  - promotion of livelihood opportunities for rural youth
  - development of rural infrastructure, including services with obligatory involvement of the communities and farmers in decision making to ensure farmers' ownership and access to the resources
  - development of alternative types of rural employment to support rural inhabitants
- better functioning of markets
  - promotion of price monitoring to fight against food monopolies
  - models of distribution to ensure appropriate and just food chains
  - urge governments to include independent CSOs in respective decision making processes
  - promotion of creation of farmers' bottom up cooperatives
  - participation in improving the legal environment
  - remunerative price for farmers
  - ensure that conditions of accession to WTO and the EU will not adversely affect small farmers in the long run
  - supply management (production volumes to be set by the countries)
  - securing access for productive land for small farmers
  - increase FAO capacity to enable its assistance to the Region
  - improving microfinance, access of farmers to financial resources
- other issues
  - limitation of production and distribution of GMOs in the Region after assessment of their long term impact and in the light of the precautionary principle

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<sup>1</sup> For definition, see the 2007 Nyeleny Declaration on the website: [http://www.nyeleni.org/?lang=en&lang\\_fixe=ok](http://www.nyeleni.org/?lang=en&lang_fixe=ok)

- how to ensure biosafety in the Region
- rules and conditions that ensure that the production of agrofuels does not compete with land and other resources for food production.

#### **Additional recommendations for Newly Independent States (NIS) for collaboration with CSOs**

- establishment of a legal framework for agriculture cooperatives
- establishment of an agriculture insurance system
- public financial and other support for small holder farmers
- establishment of an appropriate food safety system and valid legal environment for small scale farmers.

#### **Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Reform**

In this context, we urge the Member States to push on the CFS reform process to achieve the so called phase 2, namely, that CFS should be the venue for making decisions on global agricultural policies and allocation of respective funds, which will also ensure accountability and transparency. The newly reformed CFS also gives a prominent role to the Region and we support a mechanism for governance at regional level with full involvement of CSOs. In this context, we reaffirm the need for autonomous organization of CSOs to face the challenges to food and agriculture. To ensure CSOs' participation funds must be assured.

#### **Main expectations of Civil Society of the Member States**

Access to land: we support the process to achieve Voluntary guidelines on the access to land and natural resources. The process of International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) follow up is also crucial for the Region. We oppose the unlimited privatisation of land and land grabbing that deprive small holder farmers of fair access to resources.

Climate change: we need to consider developing activities to permit adaptation, but also mitigation activities and giving special attention to agroecology, e.g. Organic and traditional sustainable ways of farming in the Region.

Markets: Improve domestic (local/national/regional) markets for better access of smallholder farmers and satisfaction of consumers.

Ensure fair exchange in the Region by avoiding the negative impact of trade practices of countries that have stronger capacities to support their agriculture.

#### **Next Steps**

The CSOs agreed to build on existing civil society mechanisms in the Region through consultations within the various constituencies. In order to ensure continuity and regular dialogue with FAO and the Member States, there will be a facilitating committee with focal points from the different constituencies and sub-regions in Europe. The committee will work on a voluntary basis with the FAO Regional Office and Headquarters on the major issues identified above notably within the context of CFS Reform and changes in global governance of food and agriculture.

It was proposed that at the next FAO Regional Conference for Europe in 2012 that a delegation of civil society attend as participants following the precedents and procedures established within the reformed CFS.

The committee will consult virtually in the immediate future and on a face-to-face basis as possible and appropriate. It will approach the FAO Secretariat for mobilization of resources and development of a joint programme of work.