

**NGO Policy Paper for CSD-17 on
*Agriculture, Land, Rural Development, Drought, Desertification, and Africa***

A. INTRODUCTION

NGOs push for fundamental approaches that should underpin policies on Agriculture, Land, Rural Development, Drought, Desertification, and Africa, namely:

1. Rights-based approaches to development, including the right to food, right to self-determination, right of peoples and states to determine their own policies that protect food security, environmental quality and livelihoods, and adoption of land and agrarian reform policies within a human rights framework.
2. Adoption of food sovereignty as the key concept for decision-making about resource use and trade policies.
3. Shift to demand-driven policies that meet the needs of the poor.
4. Recognition of the right of small-scale producers and farmers, fisherfolks, pastoralists and indigeous peoples to directly participate in ethically-based decision-making processes and resource management, organize collectively, and full access to justice and redress.
5. Changing and stopping unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, to foster fundamental change.
6. National and international policy coherence to implement sustainable development.

These approaches should provide the overarching framework for policies around the current CSD themes to ensure that sustainable development promotes equity, social and environmental justice, and political empowerment of the people.

B. POLICY OPTIONS AND ACTIONS THAT PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

NGOs identified the following policy options and actions that promote sustainability which need to be mainstreamed at the national and international levels:

1. AGRICULTURE

- a. Promotion of agroecological approaches to food production, and creation and expansion of local or regional infrastructure, markets and networks that benefit smallholders, including organic agriculture, sustainable livestock production, diversified production, and crops that are water- and energy-efficient, and under local control.
- b. Recognition and promotion of the important role played by livestock in addressing social, environmental, economic, and welfare issues.
- c. Technology transfer that uses appropriate and indigenous knowledge systems, involves shared ownership and control and comprehensive multi-stakeholder assessment of desirability.
- d. Recognition of local knowledge and fair compensation for local people for financial gains that accrue from R&D that uses seeds, breeds or locally-generated technologies.
- e. Promotion of community-based practices, such as the use of stress-tolerant local varieties and reforestation, which are invaluable for climate change adaptation.
- f. Promotion of short chains in food production and distribution.
- g. Incentives for producers to provide ecosystem services and protect biodiversity.
- h. Facilitate access of small-scale producers to support services and infrastructures such as credits, markets, technology and information.

2. LAND

- a. Agrarian reform that secures tenure for small-scale farmers, tillers and indigenous peoples, especially women. Agrarian reform should integrate the worldview on territory of peasants, the landless, indigenous peoples, fisherfolk, nomadic pastoralists, minorities, displaced peoples, etc., and must allow women access to and jurisdiction over land and natural resources and guarantee their representation in decision-making. Agrarian reform must be complemented by adequate support services.
- b. Recognition of the socio-environmental functions of land, sea and natural resources in the context of food sovereignty.
- c. Transparent and inclusive processes in the development of land policies that are people-centered, recognize diverse tenurial systems, and involve innovative and accessible systems of recognition of land rights of both men and women.
- d. Sustainable land management and agroecological strategies centered on peasant and family agricultural and artisanal fishing.
- e. Trade policies that favour livestock-based livelihoods and peasant and indigenous production for local, regional and national markets.
- f. Recognition of the fundamental role of women in agriculture, and natural resource use and management.
- g. Complementary public sector policies such as rural healthcare, education and infrastructure.

3. RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- a. Demand-driven rural development policies and interventions that promote the sustainable use of water, land, forest and fisheries resources and maintain biodiversity.
- b. Comprehensive and inclusive water resources management to address conflicting water uses and demands emerging especially from irrigated agriculture.
- c. Community-based extension that values and supports traditional knowledge systems and networks, with training of local farmer-to-farmer extension agents, including women.
- d. Locally-managed decentralised energy systems that benefit rural areas, such as small-scale and locally-controlled agrofuel production for rural communities, alongside comprehensive and inclusive risk and impact assessments of larger-scale production.
- e. Infrastructure and market development that incorporate participatory mechanisms and promote technological choices and innovations by farmers.
- f. Education and training programs to rural youth that develop their learning capabilities and encourage them to invest in their own communities.
- g. Implementation of internationally agreed approaches such as the FAO Guidelines on the Right to Food, and operationalization of the principles of food sovereignty.

4. DROUGHT

- a. Drought mitigation strategies that identify the most vulnerable, determine the reasons for vulnerability, prioritize factors that can be addressed in the short-, medium- and long-term, and integrate action into the broader development agenda.
- b. Comprehensive land use involving carefully-planned crop rotation that minimizes erosion and uses less water-dependant crops in drier years, sustainable agricultural practices, rainwater harvesting, water recycling, appropriate water restrictions, etc.

- c. Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) as the main international instrument to address land degradation, drought and desertification.

5. DESERTIFICATION

- a. Policies that value the importance of drylands in economic, environmental, social, cultural and political terms, and respect for the rights of livestock keepers and pastoralists.
- b. Guarantee access to land and ownership of natural resources by both men and women, securing local control of vital livelihood factors.
- c. Evaluation of the costs of not preventing degradation in drylands, i.e. of inaction.
- d. Increased collaboration between all actors involved in development projects in drylands, combined with increased investment.
- e. Implementation of the new ten-year strategic plan of the UNCCD.

6. AFRICA

- a. Favourable policies to assure the food sovereignty of the continent where countries have a right to determine their agricultural and food policies in a way that makes for sufficiency and takes into cognizance the cultural needs of the people.
- b. African governments need to substantially increase public investment in agriculture and rural development, particularly in demand-driven initiatives. Investments in agriculture should be monitored to ensure specific targets that benefit smallholder women and waged agricultural workers.
- c. Mainstreaming ecological approaches in agriculture anchored on local demands and includes extensive support for local farmers, especially women.
- d. Integrate indigenous crops in national research programs, and more research programs are needed on crops that thrive on drier landscapes of the continent.
- e. Diversification of farmers' incomes through livestock development, agro-processing, and fisheries.
- f. Fair trade and good pricing of agricultural products, their promotion and sale in local markets by State measures, permitting healthy competition with imported products.
- g. Promotion of local economies by processing agricultural products in small enterprises and factories within the rural milieu, thus permitting a greater retention of profits.
- h. Build capacity of farmers' organizations engaged in the practice of sustainable agriculture as outposts for scaling-up and replication of successes.
- i. Linking practice to policy through partnerships among the major groups to increase capacity to achieve mutual goals, and to promote the key role of major groups, especially small-holders and women, in policy making.
- j. African countries need improved early warning systems to predict occurrence and severity of droughts, and develop and implement specific emergency aid for pastoralists in times of drought, and further investigate coping strategies.
- k. Structural, economic and political changes need to be carried out to allow for sustainable development in drylands, backed by economic investment, and should stem from field-based research in collaboration with local communities.

C. BARRIERS TO SUSTAINABILITY

NGOs also identified the following cross-cutting national and international policies that impede and promote sustainable development, to enable policy makers to recognize and address the barriers to sustainability in the current thematic cluster:

1. Trade agreements and policies that prevent countries from developing their own agricultural and food policies, including those that promote export subsidies in industrialized countries and dumping products below the cost of production in developing countries, undermining local markets.
2. Promotion of technologies that have potential adverse impacts on health, environment and socio-economic relations, e.g. genetic engineering, nanotechnology and synthetic biology.
3. Policies that undermine food sovereignty, such as providing incentives, crop insurance and support for mono-cropping, commodity food production for export, industrial and commercial crops, and genetically modified crops.
4. Policies that provide perverse incentives to degrade resources or exacerbate climate change.
5. Policies that discriminate against women or other vulnerable peoples, such as those that promote or allow gender imbalances in land ownership.
6. Promotion of mega-development projects such as large dams, infrastructure projects, extractive industries and tourism, which have forcibly displaced local populations and destroyed their social fabric and resource bases.
7. Policies supporting the industrial production of agrofuels which are likely to exacerbate forced evictions, landlessness and land concentration and degradation.
8. Policies that lead to corporate monopoly and concentration, and land re-concentration such as deregulation and privatization of land ownership.
9. Dismantling of rural public services and those that support production and marketing by small and medium producers, as well as the privatization of agricultural extension services, particularly veterinary services, where farmers pay more, coverage is limited and the smallest farmers, mainly women, lack access.
10. Supply-driven rural development policies complemented by short- and medium-term strategies such as migration and paid labour.
11. Foreign aid focusing on market development without addressing poverty which exacerbates inequalities.
12. Policies that facilitate biopiracy of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, including through patents.
13. Policies and decision-making processes that stymie the participation of rural communities.
14. Lack of investment by governments and donors on agriculture in general and in dryland areas in particular, which are perceived as poor in biodiversity and are usually inhabited by poor, marginalized populations.

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