

Statement<sup>1</sup> by the farmers of the world on:

***“MAIN ISSUES FOR FARMERS RELATED TO AGRICULTURAL  
BIODIVERSITY”***

*- Final -*

## INTRODUCTION

Linkages between agriculture (cultivated systems and livestock) and biodiversity are very strong and deserve to be highlighted, especially with the growing pressure on natural resources due partly to a growing world population in combination with an increased per capita consumption...

Farmers are faced with the double challenge of achieving food security requirements while carrying out non-food activities. Careful planning and adequate resources need to be in place to encourage them carry out this important task.

Farmers understanding the need to protect and conserve biodiversity, and their role in doing so. Continued efforts to build on this knowledge can only help farmers to further develop an understanding of how their activities relate to biodiversity. As a consequence, this will promote practices that protect and enhance sustainability whilst reducing the impact of those practices which constitute a threat to biodiversity. However, it is crucial to maintain the economic viability of their agricultural activity alongside the promotion and conservation of biodiversity. Improved understanding of the role of farmers and better definition of their role would achieve a change in mindset with respect to farmers' rights' and responsibilities in this regard and thus reducing the pressure on natural resources.

The main issue for farmers, from both developed and developing countries, is gaining recognition for the multiple roles that agriculture is expected to fulfil and to identify appropriate mechanisms in order to achieve them e.g. help and encourage farmers to improve their current practices. For farmers, it is important to recognise the natural relationship between biodiversity and agriculture. Agriculture and biodiversity should not be segregated but rather should be seen as complementary and integrated into the same ecosystem. For this, there is a need for a proactive and holistic approach. In order to reach genuine and long-lasting changes of each farmer's mindset, it is important to use a positive and constructive approach when policies are developed and implemented. Indeed, an incentive based approach using 'carrots' instead of 'sticks', proves to be an efficient method especially in those countries where markets do not reward farmers for both food and non food products.

In agricultural areas with high value biodiversity and ecosystem services, how can ecosystems be restored and preserved? What kind of mechanisms should be put in place to

---

<sup>1</sup> IFAP contribution to the Program of work of the Convention on Biodiversity 2008

create markets for environmental services to benefit all farmers? Such mechanisms already exist in most developed countries. However, there is a need to put in place the right mechanisms in developing countries which are adapted to the specificities of each location. How to create such systems to reward farmers from developing countries where markets do not reward them for the food they produce?

Farmers and their organisations have a responsibility in this integration process. However, this is a shared responsibility with the rest of society. Indeed, there is a need for the participation of all stakeholders', and in particular governments on the policy side.

## **FARMERS' MAIN ISSUES FOR THE RE-INTEGRATION OF BIODIVERSITY IN AGRICULTURE**

### **Public policies**

#### ***Government support mechanisms and stewardship programs: promoting payments for ecosystem services while maintaining agricultural landscapes***

Farmers everywhere need incentive measures to encourage them to use the most environmentally-friendly production techniques and methods. Stewardship programs to reward farmers for adopting agricultural practices to protect and enhance biodiversity have been shown to be successful in many countries. Payments are provided for such practices as: sustainable management of land and water resources, carbon sequestration, sustainable use of energy sources, sustainable management of forests, giving value to marginal areas such as mountains and wetlands and cultivating indigenous species to prevent the loss of genetic resources.

#### ***Promoting payments for ecosystem services in developing countries***

Natural resources worldwide are under pressure, especially in fragile ecosystems mostly located in developing countries. These urgently need to be rehabilitated e.g. arid zones. Given the lack of resources, knowledge and communication networks of governments in most developing countries, farmers do not have adequate incentives to enhance biodiversity in their agricultural practices. Indeed, they do not perceive the direct advantage of doing so. Therefore, there is a need for political will from national governments, donors and development agencies governments in collaboration with farmers' organisations to identify effective tools and appropriate market instruments to reward farmers in developing countries for their efforts to change their agricultural practices to restore a more balanced relationship between agriculture and biodiversity. In particular, governments should put in place compensation for damage caused by wildlife to encourage farmers to provide wildlife habitat.

#### ***Biodiversity enhancement through marketing and production instruments***

##### **▪ *Encouraging the development of markets for quality products***

Governments should work with all farmers to establish an incentive pricing framework for developing the production of quality products from their local territories e.g. underutilised species, or fruits, vegetables and livestock that enhance local biodiversity in relation to local conditions. At the same time, governments and the private sector should help to create the marketing networks to be able to sell those local products.

Support for labelling and certification systems that promote biodiversity-friendly farming practices is also an effective tool to increase the interest among farmers to change their way of thinking and manage their farms in a sustainable way.

▪ *Encouraging the production and conservation of local species*

Farmers should be encouraged to conserve local species in their territories and also reintroduce extirpated species in their territories. Farmers should then reap the benefits stemming from the production and preservation of these species. However, in some circumstances, it may be impossible to conserve local species in their current territories because of climate change.

***Policy development***

- Governments need to develop and enforce national strategies for conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity.
- Governments should identify national and international policies, laws and regulations that undermine and possibly conflict with the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and work to change them.
- Governments must put in place secure land tenure systems and **adequate infrastructure** so that farmers are able to invest in long term grazing and farming strategies related to biodiversity enhancement e.g. multi-cropping systems or crop rotations. Also, governments must commit to long-term schemes that provide stability and continuity for management that protects and enhances biodiversity.
- Governments need to recognize and implement ‘farmers’ rights’ to save seed produced on their farms for planting their crops in the following years. Further, governments should recognize farmers’ indigenous knowledge of local resource management and conservation, as well as their contribution to landscape protection and development.
- Governments should give farmers the possibility to register local varieties in order to encourage their conservation in their local territories.
- There is a need to look at Intellectual Property Rights issues with respect to protecting their own innovations and improving access of farmers to new agricultural technologies e.g. seeds.
- Governments should provide continued support for the scientific research that underpins the development and sound understanding of how agricultural management interacts with biodiversity. Scientific knowledge and findings should be disseminated and harmonised to ensure coherence in data worldwide.

**Knowledge sharing, information, awareness raising and training**

- Knowledge on the multiple goods and services provided by the different functions of agricultural biodiversity needs to be made available more widely e.g. through education and information tools to value farmers’ actions.

- Inventories and gene banks of the diverse sources of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture should be established at the national level, supported by the necessary resources.
- The nutritional values of traditional or underutilised crop species for local food consumption should be promoted.
- The needs of farmers and rural communities should be assessed in order to develop sustainable agricultural practices through partnerships with the scientific and research community that make good use of, and enhance, local and indigenous knowledge.
- The importance of biodiversity should be mainstreamed in extension services through: the development of adapted training sessions for trainers, raising awareness of farmers of the importance of biodiversity enhancement in the practice of their agricultural activities.
- Appropriate regional information needs to be improved significantly to help farmers to reduce the negative impacts of agriculture on the landscape but also to protect and enhance its positive impacts.
- Harmonised indicators including the socio-economic aspects, should be developed in order to measure and monitor agricultural biodiversity.
- There is a need to enhance linkages between policies related to biodiversity and climate change in order to better identify the impacts of climate change on biodiversity e.g sustainable management of forests; reduced tillage, conservation agriculture....
- It is important to undertake a careful scientific analysis of the potential impacts of biofuel production on biodiversity, in order to minimise negative impacts and enhance the positive impacts. Therefore, the development of sustainability criteria applied to bioenergy products are essential.

### **Capacity building and partnerships**

- Farmers' participation in the formulation and the implementation of research projects and rural development strategies to enhance biodiversity must be strengthened. There are already good examples where farmer participation in research has helped to combine the very best scientific knowledge to find effective management solutions. These partnerships should be further encouraged.
- Research on the positive synergies between biodiversity and economic activities must be strengthened, particularly on the roles of fauna and micro-organisms in soil fertility, insect pollinisation, and biological pest control
- Partnerships should be built between farmers and conservation groups to maintain and restore habitat and biodiversity. Through these partnerships, farmers can see directly how changes on their lands can positively impact the ecosystem. However, these must be long-term commitments on both sides to see real differences in biodiversity benefits.
- Policy coordination and planning needs to be improved. Agriculture is frequently subject to a plethora of environmental legislation, which lacks coordination with other legislation

affecting agricultural production. The trend within government is often to attend to these issues in isolation. There is also a lack of capacity to enforce legislation in a coordinated way.

- There should be a greater emphasis on the promotion of the positive contributions that agriculture can make to the environment.
- Capacity building programmes on gender issues and young farmers should be mainstreamed in biodiversity related projects. This is important to ensure an effective participation and awareness raising on the importance of conserving agricultural biodiversity amongst such vulnerable groups as women and youth.

### **International Cooperation and mobilisation**

- **Governments** and farmers' organisations in developing countries lack the capacity to reward farmers for the environmental services they render e.g. through zero tillage, reforestation, fighting desertification, carbon storage, pastoralism, and rotational grazing. Therefore, there is a need for strong extension activities. Economic partnerships therefore need to be developed between developing and developed countries aimed at transferring and adapting stewardship mechanisms which have proved to be successful in developed countries to the benefit of small scale farmers in developing countries e.g. credit systems, extension services. Such partnerships should involve both governments and farmers' organisations to be practical, economical and effective in their goals.
- The Agricultural Biodiversity program of work and other CBD programs must be mainstreamed in the other Multilateral Environment Agreements such as the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), the UNCCD (United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification) and other environment related programs.