

## **CSO STATEMENT AT THE 31ST FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA**

Honourable President, Excellencies, Distinguished delegates and observers, Ladies and Gentlemen

We, the 53 representatives of small and medium farmers, rural women and youth, fishermen, agricultural workers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, cooperatives, consumers, NGOs, national, regional and organizations from 22 countries gathered in Harare, Zimbabwe, February 25-27, 2020 for the civil society consultation at the 31st FAO Regional Conference.

**We recognize FAO's efforts to support this opportunity for civil society to collectively debate our relationships, challenges and demands and proposals to FAO and its member countries, as well as the opportunity to discuss issues relevant to the issue agenda of the Regional Conference.**

Despite the will and efforts of FAO and committed CSOs, the effective and sustainable implementation, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of recommendations from CSO consultations remain a major concern for us. Added to this is the persistence or emergence of certain challenges that threaten the hopes raised by the initiatives underway.

**Thus, we ask our GOVERNMENTS to act on the following:**

1. Develop and maintain progressive and inclusive policies and processes to create and secure not only corridors within and across borders for the safe movement of transhumant pastoralists, with appropriate health and education services, but to ensure the active participation of actors, in particular food producers and consumers in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of relevant policies concerning them.
2. Create a balance between intra-country and intercountry trade that clearly protects African Food Sovereignty and benefits local economies and markets first, including public policies that promote and protect the consumption of local products, including public procurement programs.
3. Introduce sustainable agriculture and food production into the education system of children from an early age. It is crucial that this be done on the basis of positive examples and experiences of working on land and the waters.

**In addition, we urge FAO to the following:**

1. Continue to be a key player in the popularization of existing and new avenues for resource mobilization arising from United Nations agencies and related funding programs, such as the new IFAD Climate Change Mechanisms.
2. Support technically the establishment and functioning of a permanent secretariat for FAO consultations on CSOs, in order to meaningfully assess the progress of CSO recommendations, share relevant information and knowledge between organizations, and support the Steering Committee in the preparation of regional consultations.

**We call on FAO and our GOVERNMENTS to:**

1. Take decisive action to encourage youth to stay connected to local food systems and foster respect for local food production.
2. Countries should urgently follow through on their commitment to secure ownership of land and other natural resources for food producers, through the United Nations Declaration on Peasants' Rights (UNDROP), Governance Assessment Frameworks, land tenure and the FAO voluntary guidelines on fisheries, the African Union fisheries strategy, the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples and ensure a harmonious integration of these frameworks for effective implementation through their ratification in national legal frameworks.
3. FAO's country and regional offices urgently need to take responsibility for implementing the Decade of Family Farming, while ensuring inclusive civil society participation and support for farmers. national family farming committees. FAO should create open accountability mechanisms to enforce this situation and rectify behavior as needed.

**Finally, we are committed to:**

1. Work collectively within our networks and constituencies to interpret and socialize the Peasant Bill of Rights in as many African languages as possible to ensure that it is known and understood in all corners of Africa; and use as an opportunity to collectively develop solutions to our common and specific challenges,
2. Take action to fully understand the Decade of Family Farming, its programs, action plans and the possibilities it offers for the improvement of our independently developed plans and strategies; articulate and co-create national committees for the implementation of the Decade; and play an active role in information and communication around.

Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of the organizations represented at the CSO Consultation, we hope that our sincere analyses, requests and proposals will be well received by you and your teams, and we will remain available for more concrete collaborations with you for the periods to come.

**Harare, Zimbabwe, February 25-27, 2020**