

Ad Hoc Group of International NGOs representatives to FAO residing in Rome

Joint Statement

Climate Change and Food Security



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Representatives to FAO
residing in Rome

Rome, May 2008

Ad Hoc Group of International NGOs representatives to FAO recognizes that climate change and global warming pose a significant challenge to the achievement of food security for all and can increase hunger and malnutrition in many countries. Vulnerable and discriminated people - women, children, urban and rural poor, small-holder farmers, fishermen, Indigenous people - will be most affected by climate change.

Already, 820 million people in the developing countries do not have enough to eat. Hunger and malnutrition cause immeasurable suffering to millions of families and result in poor health, lost learning potential, lost productivity and income. Food is so important for life and health that governments around the world have recognized that people have a right to food.

Climate Change and Food Security Globally

According to FAO, in some African countries yields from rain-fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50% by 2020. Agricultural production and access to food in many African countries is projected to be severely compromised. This would further affect food security and exacerbate malnutrition. In Latin America, by mid century, increases in temperature and decreases in soil water are projected to lead to gradual replacement of tropical forest by savanna. Productivity of some important crops is projected to decrease and livestock productivity to decline. The number of people at risk of hunger is projected to increase. Sea-level rise is expected to exacerbate floods, storms, erosion and other coastal hazards, threatening the livelihood of Small Island communities. Freshwater availability in Asia, particularly in large river basins, is projected to decrease by the 2050s.

In addition to that, agrofuels compete with food production for land, water, forest and natural resources. Despite this fact, agrofuel plantations continue to expand leading to the loss of livelihood for women, indigenous people and other vulnerable communities, loss of biodiversity, high food prices, concentration of limited land and water resources in one hands and distracting time, effort and money from the pursuit of really renewable and sustainable energy sources.

Three out of four of the world's poorest people live in the rural areas of developing countries and face immediate risks from increased crop failures. More than 1.5 billion forest-dependent people are highly vulnerable too, as are 200 million people dependent on fisheries.

Women and girls make up 70% of the world's poor and are particularly affected by the risks of environmental damage. Women have less financial, physical and human resources than men, so they will have fewer options for responding to the effects of climate change. Also, poor women tend to rely more than men on natural resources, so when these are directly hit by climate change, women's livelihoods will also be affected. Depletion of natural resources and expansion of agrofuel production would put additional burden on women, who would be forced to travel longer distances in search of firewood and water. As principle actors in the management of natural resources and the development of sustainable and ecologically sound practices, women can contribute to the solution. Women in rural areas, due to their daily contact with the natural habitat for the provision of food and wood, have sound ecological knowledge that could be useful in environmental planning and governance.

In the light of the above, we call on international community, national governments and all parties and stakeholders to:

- Develop an effective information strategy to raise public awareness of the importance of climate protection. Support formal and non-formal education programmes, projects and campaigns that encourage climate-responsible consumer behavior. Civil society and NGOs can play crucial role in raising awareness of the issues of climate change and food security and influencing a change in attitudes.
- Take steps towards addressing the challenges of climate change by reducing energy consumption and consumption in general. Promote the development and use of truly renewable and sustainable energy sources.
- Mitigate the impact of climate change through the sustainable management of land, forests and other natural resources; support smallholder farmers, women, local agricultural producers and organic farmers.

- Encourage research and provide for policies and resources to revitalize agriculture and agricultural productivity in developing countries.
- Empower women and ensure their participation in climate change policy and initiatives; improve women's access to productive resources such as land, water, credit and technology; recognize women's role in promotion of environmental ethics and knowledge; support and encourage their efforts in community development and waste management through recycling and re-use of resources.
- Support the call of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food for a five-year moratorium on agrofuel development, until the potential social, environmental and human rights impacts can be fully examined and appropriate regulatory structures put in place to minimize negative impacts.
- Promote **immediate action** that will remove the risk of starvation from the world's poorest people.

Rome, 9 May 2008

For further information:
www.ahgingos.org