

**NGO Inputs at the Ministerial Dialogue  
with Representatives of the Major Groups  
11:30am-1:00pm, 15 May 2008, Conference Room 4**

In the true spirit of Dialogue, we share highlights of NGO contributions in the implementation of practical and policy interventions and the challenges that we face, and we raise questions to Ministers on the hurdles to sustainable development.

For decades, NGOs work with rural communities to organize cooperatives, extend micro-credit, and provide extension services. But we can only do so much. Our resources and capacities cannot make up for the lack of basic support services that governments should deliver. The confluence of lack of support and indebtedness has driven farmers to commit suicides - taking the same toxic pesticides that buried them in debts.

We ask governments: *What have you done to address the problems in agriculture that push farmers to take such desperate actions?*

In Asia, we have seen how the Green Revolution formula of modern seeds-chemical inputs-irrigation increased food production - but not without long-term costs: biodiversity loss, ground water pollution, soil degradation. Small-scale producers had to pay high price in providing cheap food for the world: suffering from the health effects of pesticides, and dependence on costly farm inputs.

We ask African Ministers: *Why should you let African farmers suffer the same fate by repeating the same formula? Why don't you invest on a Sustainable Agriculture Revolution in Africa instead?* NGOs working with farmers in Tigray (Ethiopia) have already sown the seeds of this revolution.

As I speak, NGOs worldwide implement locally-adapted and culturally-appropriate solutions to hunger and malnutrition, using ecological approaches and traditional knowledge systems in improving livestock and crops. Technologies such as GMOs that put the environment and human health at risks threaten the economic viability of organic agriculture and promote dependence on external inputs. We are alarmed that some governments and corporations are boldly using the current global food crisis as justification for the introduction of GMOs in poor countries.

We ask you, Ministers: *How do you support the efforts of small-scale farmers in organic agriculture and protect their gains from the threats of GMOs?*

We commend the effort to adopt sustainability criteria in agrofuels production, but we have serious reservations on whether criteria can address the long-term environmental and socio-economic impacts of industrial agrofuel production,

beyond the level of plantations. Changing the unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, to drastically reduce fuel dependence and radically cut down greenhouse gas emissions, is the solution - not agrofuels.

We ask the Minister from The Netherlands: *how will you assess these long-term impacts in the sustainability criteria for biofuels production?*

Efforts of NGOs in sustainable agriculture in developing countries are undermined by unfair trade rules and the perverse paradigm of producing crops for export while importing food. NGOs are engaged in promoting fair trade, organic and short-chain models, and directly linking producers with consumers at different levels, but the potentials are hampered by the unequal playing field in the international market.

To the EU Ministers, we ask: *How do you ensure coherence in your trade, agricultural and development policies to promote sustainable development?*

Ministers, NGOs worldwide work to advance rural peoples' rights to land and other productive resources. Our decades of struggles are embodied in the concept of food sovereignty, asserting the right of communities to make decisions on food production beyond just ensuring food security.

NGOs bring to the CSD our collective reflection from our decades of work WITH and FOR farmers and pastoralists: DEVELOPMENT WILL ONLY BE SUSTAINABLE IF RURAL PEOPLES LIVE IN DIGNITY

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