

INTERNATIONAL YOUNG FARMERS' FORUM
**STATEMENT OF YOUNG FARMERS AT
GLOBAL FORUM FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE (GFFA) 2024**

INTRODUCTION

Global food security and sovereignty are threatened due to climate change, loss of biodiversity, war-related supply chain disruptions and monopoly of the food system by a few companies. While the farming community is aging, young people struggle to access land, knowledge, finance and other productive assets. The multiple crises that we are facing remind us that we can no longer afford the ecological and social costs of the current food system: we need to change it to make it more sustainable and more just.

Globally, we are experiencing the challenge of generational non-renewal in farming and the gradual loss of food producers. Governments need to make greater effort to counter this trend by developing and implementing suitable policies and legal frameworks.

1. Promoting sustainable production and food sovereignty

Food producers (including farmers, peasants, small holders, Indigenous People, pastoralists, forest dwellers, rural workers and fisher folk, etc.) should be at the heart of decisions that affect them. The direct participation of farmers throughout the policy making process will ensure that local and traditional knowledge is incorporated, and that policy is truly bottom-up.

Agroecological transition pathways are key to solving the root causes of rural poverty, hunger, and environmental degradation with contextualized solutions and bottom-up, territorial processes that enhance the autonomy and adaptive capacity of small-scale food producers.

Governments should enable critical policy shifts for structural change within the global economy to cut net emissions and build resilient and sustainable food systems. Human rights, particularly the right to food and the right to food sovereignty, must be central to all policies, programs, and governance processes related to food and agriculture. We all deserve healthy, culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods. This right can only be enjoyed by everyone if nation-states realize the right of peoples to democratically define and control their own food and agricultural systems.

Therefore, countries should promote food sovereignty as a holistic policy framework. This means:

- Establish local/regional mechanisms to support global policy formulation. Strengthen the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) as the most inclusive forum to monitor, support and implement its recommendations.

- Support the engagement of people affected by food and nutrition insecurity into policy processes, especially in the context of the 2019-2028 UN Decade on family farming.

2. Supporting resilient and sustainable supply chains

Many problems of the industrialized food system need a systematic societal transformation. A balance between import and exports is necessary to achieve food security. However, in a time of multiple crises and great uncertainty, governments should develop systems to protect their food producers. This will ensure food supply for their populations against the instability of global markets, unsustainable and illegal labor exploitative practices, without price dumping on other countries. Greater policy efforts must be made to support local and regional food chains, which during the Covid-19 pandemic proved to be more resilient and effective in feeding people in times of shocks. Supply chains should prioritize food security and primary food producers' incomes instead of higher profits for a few. In times of several enforcing crises and climate shocks, governments should promote international trade based on solidarity and food sovereignty.

There is a need to develop policies and infrastructures to de-risk the farming sector, especially for smallholders, and to enhance their access to technology like agroecological approaches, improve market access and strengthen rural communities. Participatory research and education in sustainable food systems is highly crucial to achieve food security and sovereignty, poverty alleviation and sustainability for all. Additionally, investing in training and consultation services, peer to peer exchanges on agroecological approaches and other sustainable techniques for food producers, especially family and small-scale farmers, will further strengthen food security, biodiversity preservation and community well-being. Indigenous Knowledge Systems, peasant-to-peasant knowledge exchanges, traditional farming methods and community-based solutions must be supported and promoted.

Food loss and waste is a global problem, however there are many approaches to tackle it such as minimizing overproduction and educating consumers, as well as students in schools. Governments could invest in Post-Harvest infrastructure, public stocks, training producers in food handling techniques, data collection and food loss analyses. Furthermore, industrial food chains tend to create more food waste than local agroecological ones therefore they should become more efficient and ensure that production meets real food needs.

3. Gender equity and youth rights

Globally, most countries are experiencing a lack of youth participation in the farming sector and high rates of youth migration away from rural areas. The biggest obstacle is the difficult access to land due to high land prices, land concentration, land grabbing and the access to finance. Robust agrarian reforms and land regulation are needed to realise and protect the right to land, especially for youth as well as rural and urban women. We need policies and market instruments* to make the farming sector attractive, first and foremost by ensuring fair pricing practices and stable incomes to food producers. Equitable access to productive assets must take into account youth diversity in terms of gender, socio-economic status, ethnicity, race, class, levels of education, citizenship and disability status, with specific attention to Indigenous Youth and youth in marginalized situations. To bring youth back to farming we need to stop all activities, which lead to the degradation of natural resources,

biodiversity loss and damage of local economies and enable lively rural areas with better social, cultural and economic opportunities for young people.

We are the generation facing the consequences of climate change, which puts us in a situation of extreme vulnerability. We demand climate justice now!

Gender equity and youth rights need to be realized to empower women and youth to take up leadership positions both in the agricultural sector, especially as landowners, and in decision-making spaces. Exchange of knowledge, culture and skills between genders and generations is necessary to enhance the participation of vulnerable groups in food systems and political processes.

An essential precondition for realizing the human right to adequate food is that nutritious food is available in sufficient quantities and readily accessible for all, first and foremost for vulnerable groups which are particularly affected by the multiple crises. However, this is not sufficient. We demand context- and need-specific social protection systems to guarantee the access to quality education, health, sanitation and hygiene, adequate housing, safe and dignified working conditions for all food producers and rural workers.

4. Conflicts and food security

Today, all the world should hear the voice of the smallholders whose lives are overshadowed by the ravages of war. Conflicts like the war in Ukraine and in the Middle East and Africa are realities that reshape our future. It is critical to address a pressing issue: the sale of agricultural land to large corporations during war. When governments allow these sales, they are not just transferring land; they are stealing the future of young food producers for decades.

Food is a common good. Access to food is a human right. Blocking cross border movement of food should never be used as a pressure tactic or a political strategy, especially during conflict. It should move in and out of conflict areas without trade and other barriers to not undermine the right to adequate food and nutrition.

Another pressing issue is the dangerous task of demining agricultural lands. This is a task too large and perilous for food producers to handle alone. We urgently need the support of the United Nations and international organizations in providing technical and financial assistance for demining.

In conclusion, we - young farmers - call for inclusive and transformative changes in global food systems: joining forces for a more just world and zero hunger world.

Young farmers could not achieve consensus on the following:

- The meaning of the word „peasant“.
- The inclusion of the fragment “peasants and smallholders” in the statement: “Support the engagement of people affected by food and nutrition insecurity into policy processes, especially [peasants and small-holders] in the context of the 2019-2028 UN Decade on family farming”;
- The inclusion of the statement “We need agri-food policies based on existing UN legal frameworks such as the Universal Declaration on the Human Rights; the UN Convention on

the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); the UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security (UNSCR 2535); the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP); the eight fundamental Conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to ensure that the rights of every actor in the food system is respected.”