

**IFAP CONTRIBUTION TO THE CBD POW 2008 ON AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY**  
*Intervention by Mr. Serge Benstrong, IFAP, President of the Seychelles Farmers' Association*

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am a farmer from the Seychelles. I produce pig meat, fruits such as bananas and apples, and vegetables. I am the President of the Seychelles Farmers' Association which is an active member of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP). IFAP has in membership 110 national farmers organisations, representing 500-600 million family farms worldwide. Two-thirds of our member organisations are from developing countries.

Mr. Chairman, IFAP appreciates the attention given by the Convention on Biological Diversity to focus on agricultural biodiversity in its program of work. IFAP also appreciates the CBD willingness to include the farmer's contribution in this program of work. In particular we would like to thank the CBD Secretariat and FAO for their support.

This is a good sign of progress from the international community to get back agriculture on its agenda and therefore to recognise it as an important sector for rural development and poverty reduction. We also very much appreciate the reference made, in this POW, to the ecosystem approach and the critical role of farmers in conserving biodiversity.

Agriculture and biodiversity are closely linked and integrated to one another. This integration deserves to be highlighted rather than segregated; in particular, in a context where there is a growing pressure on natural resources due to a growing world population. Agriculture has multiple roles which go beyond the production of food. It has also a conservation role which needs to be recognised and rewarded.

Farmers from both developed and developing countries are doing a lot to improve biodiversity through the use of environmentally friendly agricultural production techniques such as: zero tillage, agro-forestry, production of quality products based on the conservation of traditional and local species, use of sustainable water and land management techniques, sustainable use of energy sources as well as valorising marginal areas such as mountains, arid and humid zones.

All these sustainable practices show the wide spectrum of services farmers render to nature through their work. But farmers need to be rewarded for these services, and be given incentives to continue.

However, one fundamental question comes up straightaway in this regard: what kind of mechanisms should be put in place to create markets for these environmental services to benefit all farmers? Such mechanisms already exist in many developed countries in the form of stewardship programs such as the well known Land Care –Australia. However, most farmers in developing countries do not benefit from stewardship programs. Therefore, they feel less encouraged and less capable of improving their ecological footprint through sustainable agricultural practices. They do not perceive the direct advantage of doing so. This becomes a luxury for them as often, short term food security is the overriding concern.

However, conserving agricultural biodiversity is everyone's concern. All stakeholders should share the costs arising from this conservation. Therefore, governments as well as the international community have a critical role to play in supporting farmers from both developed and developing countries to enhance biodiversity through sustainable agricultural practices and nature conservation.

Their role includes:

1. Setting up support mechanisms and stewardship programs through the promotion of payments for ecosystem services while maintaining agricultural landscapes.

2. Encouraging the production of quality products in relation to their local territories through for instance providing farmers with attractive prices for unusually cultivated varieties.
3. Developing clear national conservation strategies for conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity such as secure land tenure systems so that farmers are in a better position to invest in long term biodiversity enhancement e.g. multi-cropping systems, crop rotations....

Governments and farmers organisations have also the responsibility to share information and knowledge on the multiple goods and services provided by the different functions of agricultural biodiversity e.g. user-friendly tools to valorise farmers' actions.

Finally Mr. Chair, partnerships between farmers and other stakeholders are essential. No one stakeholder can meet these challenges by themselves:

- Governments need to consider farmers as real partners through involving them in the formulation and implementation of projects aimed at enhancing biodiversity.
- Researchers need to work hand in hand with farmers since research on the positive synergies between biodiversity and economic activities is essential e.g. the role of fauna and micro-organisms in soil fertility, pollinisation through insects.
- Conservation groups need also to collaborate with farmers to restore and maintain habitat and biodiversity.

Finally, North-South cooperation is critical to backstop the lack of capacity of governments and farmers' organisations in developing countries to reward farmers for the services they render to nature. This cooperation should focus on transferring and adapting successful stewardship mechanisms, e.g. credit systems, extension services to benefit farmers.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, farmers are very motivated to work with different stakeholders in order to implement this very ambitious program of work. Action is needed and we, as farmers are ready to make our contribution.

Thank you for your attention.