

International Federation of Agricultural Producers

60, rue Saint-Lazare, 75009 Paris, France
Tel. : +33 1 45 26 05 53 Fax : +33 1 48 74 72 12
E-mail : ifap@ifap.org Web Site : www.ifap.org



THE WORLD FARMERS'¹ CHARTER

PREAMBLE

The farmers of the world, coming from every continent and working under very different conditions met from 13 to 20 May 2006 in Seoul, Korea on the occasion of the 37th IFAP World Farmer's Congress. This Congress marked the 60th anniversary of IFAP.

Believing that agriculture is critical to the economic and social progress and prosperity of every nation;

convinced that farmers are the main stewards of the land, producing an abundant and safe supply of food and renewable raw materials for the world's people, preserving biodiversity and the rural environment, and ensuring the vitality of rural communities and rural culture and way of life;

affirming that during a time of accelerated global economic development, industrialization and urbanization, governments have a key role to play in ensuring that farmers' are able to earn a reasonable standard of living from their work, and that they have access to services equivalent to those in urban areas;

confirm our strong determination to work together through our farmers' organisations to improve the economic and social status of all who live and work on the land;

declare the following fundamental principles for recognizing the rights and duties of farmers and for facilitating the contribution of farmers to society:

¹ By "farmers" we mean both men and women farmers, recognising the important role that they both play in family agriculture

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

1. Recognize the importance of agriculture and the central role of farmers

Agriculture must be given the priority it deserves in resource allocation, in order to meet the food, rural livelihood and environmental needs of a growing world population.

Family farmers are basic elements for sustainable development of agricultural systems. They should be at the centre of any agricultural and rural development strategy. Comprehensive farm programs must be implemented in order to achieve the productivity progress and advances in management skills enabling them to become the central elements in the sustainable development of agriculture.

- Farmers will employ all their skills and energies to feed the people and fulfil the other functions required from agriculture, if governments place farm families at the centre of agricultural and rural development strategies.

2. Involve farmers' organizations as essential partners

Farmers are critical stakeholders in the agricultural and rural economy and, through their organisations, can play a key role in strengthening democratic processes. Any agricultural policy or development initiative must therefore involve farmers and their organisations. Governments should recognize the right of farmers to associate and act collectively, and should create, at all levels of government, the necessary framework for strengthening and institutionalising participatory decision-making processes for farmers.

Farmers' organisations should be capable of mobilising their members, undertaking analysis of agricultural policy issues, and drawing up position papers to input into the development of government strategies, capable of relaying farmers' interests in all debates and programmes, and capable of strengthening the position of farmers in the market.

Farmers' organisations also provide an essential network to diffuse information and programs to grassroots farming communities to mitigate the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, to explain farm programs and to encourage adoption of improved farming techniques.

Strengthening of the institutional capacity of farmers' organisations needs to be a cornerstone of any strategy for reaching the rural poor, because unless the poor are organised they will remain politically powerless and economically disadvantaged.

Farmers everywhere should support their professional and economic organisations by participating in their activities and by contributing to their financing.

- Farmers' organisations can play a crucial role in agricultural and rural development, and are willing to take on this responsibility.

3. Create opportunities for farmers to earn a fair income

Governments must commit to provide a stable and favourable economic environment and an advantageous farm policy framework in which farmers have a fair and equitable opportunity to earn reasonable incomes for their families and the rural communities, allowing them to exercise their

rights as farmers. This should include instruments to help farmers manage risk in a situation of more deregulated and liberalised markets.

The farmer must be recognized as an independent professional and specialized manager having valuable economic and social status, entitled equally to every legal right and social protection. There must be no discrimination against farmers anywhere in the world, whether it be due to differences of sex, race, nationality, age, or political and religious beliefs.

- Farmers are an exceptional force for development and given the right opportunities, they will unleash their productive potential to the benefit of their families, rural communities and society at large.

4. Provide equal treatment for rural communities and urban areas

The rural community is a rich area of economical, ecological, social and cultural relations that should be continuously sustained for the benefit of all people. Rural communities should therefore be harmoniously developed with the urban community, sharing prosperity equitably.

Rural infrastructure is often a major constraint to agriculture, rural development and family life. In many developing countries, less than a half of the population have access to safe drinking water, and even less have access to modern electricity. Better roads, telecommunications and banking facilities imply better access to markets.

Services available to rural communities should be no less than those provided to urban centres, including provision of local employment opportunities, education, banking and leisure facilities, sufficient and balanced nutrition, as well as appropriate medical treatment and vaccinations.

- Farmers will continue to work to maintain and enhance the vitality of the rural communities and their cultural values.

5. Promote diversity and sustainability in agriculture

Agriculture is the key industry performing economic and public functions such as: providing essential supplies of food, feed and fibre on a stable basis, protecting natural environments, providing renewable energy and helping to meet the Kyoto objectives on climate change, conserving water, maintaining scenic landscapes and preserving cultural inheritance. The diversity of agriculture, in its community and social context and as a means of sustainable development, must be continued and encouraged.

For farming to be sustainable, farmers need secure access to natural, economic and productive resources on a long-term basis. This includes: secure land tenure for farmers, secure water rights, access to credit with affordable interest rates, and access to genetic resources such as improved seeds and livestock.

Farmers must continue to be able to save seeds for use on their own farms and maintain control over traditional genetic resources.

Farmers also need access to training and research in agriculture in order to innovate and constantly improve their farming practises.

- Farmers pledge to manage their farms in a sustainable manner in order to conserve the valuable agricultural resource base, using the best farming technologies and scientific progress.

6. Eliminate hunger, malnutrition and rural poverty

Worldwide, most of the people suffering from hunger and poverty live in farm households. This means the greatest effort to end hunger and poverty should be in the rural areas where farmers live. The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals by many governments of developing and developed countries is enough evidence of the common agreement on the urgency to end world poverty and hunger.

Problems of hunger and malnutrition, as well as rural poverty, are a human tragedy for rural populations. To cope with these problems, governments must give priority in domestic and international policies to allow farming communities in all countries to develop to their full economic potential and land resources in a sustainable way, recognizing each farmer's different circumstances and conditions. Hunger is linked to poverty. It should therefore be a primary objective of all nations and their intergovernmental institutions to provide economic opportunities to farmers in order to eliminate poverty and hunger. In the poorest countries, land allocation must be encouraged in order to enable food production for families.

- Farmers will strive to feed a steadily increasing world population with quality food products in sufficient quantity, if given a favourable environment in which to work and invest.

7. Establish fair and equitable rules for agricultural trade

There must be a multilateral framework of clear rules and disciplines for agricultural trade which are fair and equitable for all countries, and which are coherent with development and international cooperation objectives.

International trade rules should reflect in a balanced manner the interests and positions of exporting and importing countries and developed and developing countries in order to ensure harmonious coexistence of diverse forms of agriculture. It is also important to create conditions which will develop national and regional trade.

- Farmers will support a multilateral rules-based system for international trade that brings real benefits to all farmers and their communities.

8. Balance power in the agri-food chain, and ensure that markets work competitively

A few large multinational companies now dominate both the distribution side and the farm supplies side of the agri-food chain. The consequences of concentration of the industry upstream and downstream of agriculture constitute a real challenge for preserving the profession and lifestyle of family farmers as entrepreneurs responsible for their own decisions and their own choices.

Policy settings that provide the opportunity for farmers to collectively bargain or to organise in the market are therefore critical. This includes the direct participation of farmers in companies for the preparation, processing and marketing of farm products, so that farmers are able to follow their product up the value chain. National governments should have, or put in place, appropriate legislation or professional frameworks to ensure that farmers are equitable partners in the food chain. Competition law should not prevent farmers from working together in a way which strengthens farmers' position in the food chain.

Farmer cooperatives can play a vital role in farmers' economic development. However, they must be allowed to function autonomously without political interference.

- Farmers' organisations will continue to strive for ways to empower farmers in the market so as to strengthen their situation in a highly concentrated global agri-food chain.

9. Address the special needs of women farmers and young farmers

Women farmers' contribution to improve agriculture and rural communities should be recognized, and measures must be implemented to address the specific problems that they face, including their access to land, education and training, credit, technology and farm inputs, as well as market opportunities. Rural services should support families and rural women's condition. Government policies should allow rural women to develop their full economic potential.

In order to encourage young farmers to enter agriculture, particular attention should be given to questions of transmitting farm holdings between generations, and particular attention should also be given to facilitate young people entering farming as a career. This process requires strong inter-generational cooperation between young farmers and older farmers, including transfer of local knowledge.

- Farmers' organisations will support women farmers and young farmers to be increasingly involved in leadership positions and so be in a better position to advocate their interests. Farmers' organisations will also support women farmers and young farmers in their role as farmers in production processes.

10. Promote International Cooperation

In an increasingly global world food system, national policies and programs must be coordinated and adapted to each other through increased international cooperation. This is particularly important in the areas of: harmonization of standards for food safety and traceability, coordination of national policy measures, and partnerships for research and development.

- Farmers from all over the world, working hand in hand with each other, will fully cooperate among themselves and with other stakeholders internationally in order to achieve world peace, common development and justice for the well-being of all the world's people.

CONCLUSION

Farmers from all over the world call on national governments, donor agencies, international institutions and other stakeholders to join with them in recognising these principles of the rights and duties of farmers throughout the world, and in a spirit of solidarity work together to implement these principles.