



Rome-based Organizations Submission to Rio + 20 Outcome Document

1. Current development pathways have left 1.4 billion in extreme poverty, 925 million hungry and many more malnourished and food insecure.
2. Unsustainable models of development are degrading the natural environment threatening the ecosystems and biodiversity on which livelihoods, and food and nutrition security depend.
3. Globally, risks are increasing - erratic weather patterns, natural disasters, price volatility and market risks are all increasing uncertainty for global food and nutrition security.
4. An unsustainable agriculture and food system has contributed to these social and environmental failures but agriculture also offers many solutions for sustainable development and a green economy. There cannot be a green economy without sustainable agriculture.
5. A profound change of our agriculture and food system is urgently needed to achieve global food security, improve people's lives and manage the environment more sustainably.
6. Including and empowering hundreds of millions of smallholder households and landless farmers - many of them women - is critical to this reform.
7. Sustainability requires a reform of the overall agriculture and food system, from production to consumption.
8. Social protection and safety nets are essential to support resilient livelihoods, protect the most vulnerable and include them in sustainable development pathways.
9. Better and more coherent global, national and local policies are needed for sustainable development and to support the reform of agriculture and food systems at scale.
10. The Rome-based Organisations** will work together to advance the objectives and outcomes of Rio + 20 by supporting countries' efforts to build more sustainable agriculture and food systems.

*Agriculture = crops, livestock, forestry and fisheries

**The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), The U.N. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), The U.N. World Food Programme (WFP), Bioversity International



1 Current development pathways have left 1.4 billion in extreme poverty, 925 million hungry and many more malnourished and food insecure.

While the world has seen rapid progress in terms of poverty reduction over the past decade, globally there remain 1.4 billion men, women and children living in extreme poverty. At the same time, there has been no long-term decline in the absolute number of hungry people in the world, despite recent gains that have pushed back the figure below 1 billion. Many more suffer from hidden hunger caused by micronutrient deficiency. The first Millennium Development Goal target of halving the proportion of hungry people in the world by 2015 will not be achieved. In the absence of fundamental changes in our development model, the numbers of poor, hungry and marginalized people is not going to be reduced, and potentially billions of people will not be able to develop their full productive and cognitive potential, will not be able to contribute to economic growth, and will not be able to invest in the sustainable management of natural resources.

2 Unsustainable models of development are degrading the natural environment, threatening the ecosystems and biodiversity on which livelihoods, and food and nutrition security depend.

The world's ecosystems, biodiversity and associated goods and services are under increasing pressure from unsustainable models of economic development. Between 1900 and 2000, 75 per cent of crop diversity was lost and today 22 per cent of all plant species face extinction, while 32 percent of marine fisheries are overexploited, depleted or recovering. About 1.2 billion hectares – almost 11 per cent of the earth's vegetative surface – have been degraded by human activities over the past 45 years. Deforestation rates continue to be high, with over 50 million hectares of forest land lost over the past decade. Developing countries are confronting annual losses of arable land of 5-12 million hectares due to severe degradation. If unchecked, by 2100 average temperatures are likely to be a potentially catastrophic 4 degrees higher than pre-industrial levels. Unsustainable agricultural practices have been a significant contributor to this environmental degradation. Agriculture uses about 70 percent of available freshwater resources, and is also a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. Without fundamental changes in the way we practise agriculture and manage our natural resources, ensuring food and nutrition security for all will not be possible.

3 Globally, risks are increasing - erratic weather patterns, natural disasters, price volatility and market risks are all increasing uncertainty for global food and nutrition security.

There are growing levels of uncertainty and risk, challenging our efforts to ensure global food and nutrition security. Agriculture and food systems are exposed to more unpredictable and extreme weather patterns and conditions, deteriorating ecosystems, growing competition over scarce natural resources, and increasingly high and volatile food and energy prices. It is poor and marginalised communities in developing countries – both rural and urban - who are typically most exposed to these risks and least able to deal with them. Exposure to these risks – and the economic shocks that they impose – condemns many vulnerable households and communities to food insecurity, recurrent loss of assets and progressive impoverishment. This can also trap vulnerable smallholder farmers in risk-averse, low return and unsustainable production systems and livelihood patterns. With the growing impact of climate change exacerbating these risks, there is an urgent need to prioritize and scale up resilience building approaches, efforts and investments aimed at enhancing national and local capacities to manage risks and the emerging challenge of climate change.



4 An unsustainable agriculture and food system has contributed to these social and environmental failures but also offers many solutions for sustainable development and a green economy. There cannot be a green economy without sustainable agriculture.

On the one hand, unsustainable agricultural practices on large and small farm across the world have led to deforestation, degraded soils and over-used water, depleted marine fish stocks, and have resulted in loss of biodiversity, pollution of water ways and emission of greenhouse gases, and vast numbers of smallholder farmers in developing countries live in absolute poverty and in hunger. Yet on the other hand, agriculture provides livelihoods for 40 percent of the world's population, and in many countries can be a major driver of inclusive economic growth. Indeed, there are many examples from across the world of agriculture lifting large numbers of people out of poverty, using natural resources in a sustainable way, and providing environmental services such as soil and water conservation, biodiversity maintenance and carbon sequestration. These will all play a crucial role in the transition to a green economy.

5 A profound change of our agriculture and food system is urgently needed to achieve global food security, improve people's lives and manage the environment more sustainably.

By 2050, the agriculture and food system will face the challenge of feeding an estimated 9.3 billion people – over 2 billion more than now. In an increasingly resource-constrained world, with little new land available for cultivation, agriculture must become more productive, use natural resources in a more sustainable manner and provide a range of environmental services. Sustainable agricultural approaches that make full use of agro-ecological processes, modern technologies and traditional knowledge, and which are profitable for farmers – small as well as large, provide an important part of the response to this challenge. The agriculture and food system must also help communities and ecosystems to become more resilient to increasing risks – including climate change, and ensure access to nutritious food for all. Making the changes needed will require massive scaling up of successful initiatives; major policy changes throughout the agriculture and food system; significant investments in research, technology development and human capacity; as well as expanded market opportunities and supportive incentive frameworks for food producers and consumers.

6 Including and empowering hundreds of millions of smallholder households and landless farmers - many of them women - is critical to this reform.

The 500 million smallholder farming families in the world are the backbone of many rural economies, and custodians of a large proportion of the world's natural resources, including biodiversity. They farm up to 80 per cent of agricultural land in Africa and Asia. There are strong reasons to support them: economic growth originating in the agricultural sector is at least twice as effective for reducing poverty as growth originating elsewhere, and smallholders have the potential to make a substantially greater contribution to enhanced food supply and to green growth in the rural areas. They all – and particularly women who are often amongst the most marginalised – need strengthened rights to the natural resources on which they depend. They also need knowledge and skills that enable them to innovate, identify and exploit new economic opportunities and manage risk. Education, training and skills development are critical to this agenda. Membership-based organizations have a key role to play here, and in negotiating their members' interests with the private sector or government and giving them a stronger voice in the formulation of policies that affect them.



7 Sustainability requires a reform of the overall agriculture and food system, from production to consumption.

There are enormous inefficiencies in food use. Post-harvest food losses and waste along the entire food chain account for at least one-third of all the food produced in the world. Reducing losses and waste at every stage from production, through storage, transportation, processing, and retailing to consumer, would limit the need to increase food production and ease the pressure on the use of natural resources and energy. There are also increasing questions about the sustainability of modern diets. The populations of developed countries, and increasingly the middle classes in developing countries, consume high levels of animal products which require more land and water than plant-based products, thus putting additional pressure on natural resources. More sustainable diets are an important element of a shift towards sustainable development and a green economy.

8 Social protection and safety nets are essential to support resilient livelihoods, protect the most vulnerable and include them in sustainable development pathways.

Social protection frameworks and policies are an indispensable feature of sustainable societies and can promote an inclusive transition to a green economy. Social safety nets protect lives, livelihoods and human capital during crises and help the most vulnerable recover from shocks. They are essential to preventing the deterioration of food and nutrition security among the most vulnerable, and can help mitigate the risk of more people falling into the poverty trap. If well designed, social protection policies can help integrate marginal communities into mainstream development. Labour-based safety nets can empower the poorest, increase their productive potential and enhance community assets, for instance by contributing to sustainable natural resource management and ecosystem restoration at the community and landscape level. Linking food-based safety nets to local agricultural markets is one element of a comprehensive approach to sustainable agriculture and food systems. In a world that is becoming more risky for poor people, social protection and safety nets take on even greater importance; and they need to be considered critical for achieving food security for all and as a key element of sustainable development.

9 Better and more coherent global, national and local policies are needed for sustainable development and to support the reform of agriculture and food systems at scale.

The agriculture and food system is critical to achieving sustainable development, and new models can deliver the multiple objectives of food security and poverty reduction, sustainable environmental management and economic development – as synergies rather than trade-offs. The issues are complex, and they may take in, for example, fairer trade, energy, health, gender equity or rural-urban linkages – issues that often go beyond the scope of specific agriculture and food policies. This requires a comprehensive approach that cuts across inter-related disciplines, territories and institutions, as well as new ways of working and collaborating between governments, the private sector and civil society. Strong leadership at the national level must promote these urgently-needed comprehensive approaches, supported by international institutions and global agreements.



10 The Rome-based Organisations will work together to advance the objectives and outcomes of Rio + 20 by supporting countries' efforts to build more sustainable agriculture and food systems.

Rio+20 must result in a change of mind-set that puts us on a sustainable development path in which a reformed agriculture and food system plays a central role. The Rome-based organizations will reach out to new partners and together support countries' efforts to advance the objectives and outcomes of Rio+20, and build more sustainable agriculture and food systems as part of the transition to a green economy and as part of countries' respective sustainable development objectives. They will use their knowledge and experience to promote and finance innovations throughout the agriculture and food system and to scale up locally-developed initiatives; they will invest in actions and policies that enhance the livelihoods and resilience of food systems and societies; they will invest in rural communities, their knowledge and capabilities, and in the ecosystems and natural resources on which they depend; and they will assist rural populations to actively participate in creating, developing and promoting a model of sustainable development that reflects their needs and aspirations.