



Joint Response of the Rome-based Organizations¹ to the Rio+20 Zero Draft Outcome Document

Bioversity, FAO, IFAD and WFP are grateful to the organizers and Member states for the opportunity to make this joint response. We are pleased to see food security highlighted as a priority area in the zero draft, as well as the determination to free humanity from hunger and to redouble efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger.

Rio+20 represents a unique opportunity to ensure that growth is green and benefits all. However, agriculture is central to this agenda: there can be no green economy without sustainable growth in agriculture², and a green economy will not contribute to sustainable development if it does not lift people out of hunger and poverty.

For growth to be sustainable, agriculture and food systems, as the foundation of food security, will have to change. This represents a huge challenge, and the outcome document should recognize both the scale of the required change and the urgency with which it is needed.

Agriculture impacts more of the world's surface area than any other human activity and thus has a critical bearing on the natural environment. Greening agriculture is needed to reduce deforestation and land degradation, improve water use efficiency, strengthen ecosystem resilience and reduce the adverse effects of agriculture on the climate. Sustainable, “climate-smart” agriculture that makes full use of agro-ecological processes, modern technologies and traditional knowledge provides an important part of the response to this challenge. Depending on the context, it can deliver multiple benefits such as more sustainable resource use, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, enhanced resilience and reduced food waste and losses, while at the same time increasing productivity and profits for farmers, small as well as large, and contributing to national food and nutrition security and development goals.

Smallholder agriculture is absolutely vital to the livelihoods, income and food security of 500 million rural families, and critical to meeting the food needs of a growing urban population. To fulfill their potential, smallholder farmers need policies and investments in the infrastructure and services that enable them to invest in more productive and sustainable agriculture, and manage the risks they face in doing so. They also need improved access to markets and a more equitable trading system. They need strengthened rights to natural resources. They need the knowledge and skills to innovate and exploit new economic opportunities; and they need their own organizations to negotiate their interests with the private sector and government and to shape the policies that affect them. And while all smallholder farmers share these needs, the need is greatest amongst women, who are often the most marginalized producers.

¹ 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

² Agriculture includes crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture.



The outcome document also needs to recognize that sustainability cannot be achieved if billions of food insecure, hungry and poor people continue to be excluded from development and forced by their immediate and pressing needs to degrade the lands, forests and water resources and the biodiversity on which their livelihoods and food security depend. An inclusive green economy will contribute to breaking the existing cycle of hunger, poverty, social marginalization and environmental degradation and empower vulnerable communities to manage natural resources in a sustainable manner. This requires a global effort to invest in social protection and safety nets to ensure equitable access to nutritious food; protect lives, livelihoods and human capital during crises; and help the most vulnerable recover from shocks, manage risks, build resilience and move to sustainable livelihoods.

Rio+20 must generate the political will to improve governance, reform policy and target public investment to realize the necessary transition of agriculture and food systems towards sustainability. Targeted public investment in public goods and institutions, including support for participatory research and local innovation, needs to underpin private investment and help to drive innovative solutions. Policies need to create incentives for producers and consumers alike to encourage the adoption of sustainable practices. Better governance that recognizes the centrality of food and nutrition security for achieving the transition to a green economy is needed at all levels to implement policies and investment at scale. Last but not least, Rio+20 will need to initiate a profound change of mind-set that puts us on a path to sustainable development and the *Future We Want*, in which agriculture and food and nutrition security will necessarily play a central role.

Thank you.