



Asia Pacific CSO Statement

Food System and Nutrition Pattern

Delivered by: Wali Haider. Roots for Equity, on behalf of APRCEM

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COVID-19 and farmers

Among the worst sufferers during this COVID-19 global pandemic are the small, marginalized and landless farmers including women, majority of whom work as daily wagers both in rural and urban areas. They bear the brunt of this raging public health crisis and weak social security services which results from the failed neoliberal global economic system that privileges the rich over the poor. Governments' responses have been militarist and disproportionately repressive against the poor and the farmers.

Many documented evidences show that the core problems for the entry point lie in industrial farming with monoculture, genetic uniformity and heavy reliance on chemical inputs. Heavy use of antibiotics in industrial poultry and livestock farming have produced a host of devastating zoonotic diseases such as avian flu, SARS, and now Covid-19. For this, we need to hold big corporations in extractive industries and agribusiness accountable,

Specific comment on Entry point 3:

Food, nutrition and agriculture intersects with many other goals in the SDG framework viz. SDG 1,2,3,4,5,6,8,9,10,11,13 and 15, Without significant progress on each of these goals, sustainable food systems and nutrition patterns will not be achieved We welcome GSDR analysis on systemic issues, highlighting the mega merger of agribusiness companies and its impact to seed monopoly However, it's concerning that there was no mention on land grabbing, and the overly focus on science and technology without any discussion on the threats it poses to livelihood, environment and society.

Today's food system is highly unsustainable as shown by its adverse environmental impacts including huge greenhouse gas emissions, and high economic costs and susceptibility to price spikes and artificial shortages. It is also extremely unhealthy as evidenced by persistent malnutrition.

The most important underlying factor beneath unsustainable food system has been looking at food system in isolation with the well being of farmers and especially small, landless farmers and food producers. The estimated 500 million small farmers in developing countries are among the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. Globally 80% of the extreme poor and 75% of the relatively poor live in rural areas and most of these work in agriculture. In many countries (like

India) farmers' debt have risen by 400%; while their incomes have dipped by 300% in the last decade.

The results of the Asia Pacific survey show that financialization of food systems; unjust trade policies and agreements; increasing corporate control on the entire food chain including over land, seeds, and other natural resources; dispossession and lack of secure land tenure especially for women farmers; rising input costs and indebtedness; the increasing adverse tradeoff between food and energy and meat industry, and the siloed approach to food and agriculture on one hand, and health and nutrition on other, threaten food and nutrition systems and put agriculture and farmers in precarious conditions.

Recommendations:

On governance, in all developing countries we urgently need: security of land tenure, genuine agrarian reforms, check on diversion of land for non agricultural purposes, agroecological approaches with prevention of using hazardous pesticides, and protection to small farmers and their products from predatory trade practices and dumping etc.. Corporate control and consolidation in the food, agriculture and nutrition sectors must be curbed and regulated, under stringent competition policies and global oversight under the UN to protect global food security and human well-being.

Finance: In all developing countries agriculture faces diminishing public investment and increasing reliance on private funding skewed in favour of profit than social and ecological sustainability. Similarly, policy bias is also manifest in urban infrastructure and services as compared to rural and agricultural infrastructure. This results in farming remaining unprofitable. Increased investment is also required in education and research and development in agriculture.

On individual and collective action, Recognize the role of small farmers in producing 80% of the world's food, and their innovations in producing many stellar examples in food production, we need mixed farming, non pesticidal management, adopting technology and strengthening local food systems and ecological conservation.

On science and technology, farmers' traditional knowledge in sustaining food systems and enhancing nutrition must be recognized in science and technology. Technological innovations produced from laboratories and formal institutions need to be based on actual needs and conditions of farmers and must be **culturally appropriate, gender responsive, economically feasible and ecologically sustainable**. Local innovations, indigenous knowledge systems and endogenous technologies must be encouraged and promoted, and solutions to problems should not be solely limited to technological options.

While technology including digital technology and 4IR can be beneficial, current policy approaches reflect limited recognition of the adverse economic, social and environmental impacts of new and emerging technologies which are in reality under the control of a few mega corporations. These include span impacts on employment and livelihoods, incomes, citizen's rights and privacy, policy independence across sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, services, health, finance and environment, and on grass root constituencies. The UN should undertake more in-depth analysis of all kinds of new technology including digital technology and on new regulations and policies being adopted by some governments in the region to ensure future policy space, and ensure the protection of the environment and domestic businesses especially SMEs, people's access to services, and citizen's privacy.

We reiterate that sustainable food systems and nutrition patterns demand uncompromised emphasis on food and seed sovereignty agroecological approaches and enhanced protection to small farmers and food producers including women farmers and dismantling corporate control over agriculture which neither helps farmers nor ecological sustainability.