

**Speech by Charles Ogang
World Farmers Organisation**

Gender and Nutrition Roundtable

October 18, 2011

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I bring greetings on behalf of Madame Lucy Muchoki of Kenya who was meant to address you today. Unfortunately travel challenges have impeded her ability to attend.

Instead, I bring you thoughts based on the realities faced by the 3 million farmers I represent in Uganda. Over half of them are women. I hope that many of the things I will say would be thoughts shared by Lucy, and by my colleagues from other aspects of civil society and leadership like Michelle Bachelet of UN Women yesterday.

For decades, we've been talking about the particular challenges of women smallholder farmers. I hope today we can move past acknowledging the problems to focusing on the areas that require action.

To pull together the key strands of what is needed, you need to consider the many roles a woman plays. For a start, she is a farmer, and she needs to be good at what she does.

**So please consider what she needs when she is
GROWING a crop:**

- 1) Develop a registration process for land tenure is local, cheap, rapid, transparent and accessible for women.

- 2) Support women smallholder farmers by providing them with agricultural extension services, grain storage, infrastructure, information and technologies.
- 3) Provide microfinance services, especially banking and microcredit, to women farmers.
- 4) Ensure women farmers have access agricultural inputs and services.
- 5) Encourage and co-ordinate multiple local actors to ensure information and supplies get into farmers' hands, including a focus on women-to-women training.

Once she grows a crop, there is a need to be successful at **MARKETING it:**

- 1) Cut post harvest losses by building local storage facilities and transportation mechanisms.
- 2) Provide remote access to up-to-date market pricing information.
- 3) Develop well functioning markets through transparent information and fair prices
- 4) Make sure there is a road to get to market through sound infrastructure.
- 5) Encourage co-operative approaches to marketing
- 6) Improve smallholder farmers' marketing skills through entrepreneurship training

Then we must increase women's resilience by furthering her ability for **ADAPTING**

- 1) Provide early warning systems such as community based disaster preparedness and management, and early weather forecasting systems to help them make decisions relating to sustainability and productivity;
- 2) Ensure women farmers have access to flood /drought resistant seed varieties;
- 3) Invest in women farmers who are engaged in conservation agriculture to prevent soil erosion and land degradation;
- 4) Support programs that help women farmers to manage watersheds and water use more efficiently;
- 5) Protect wildlife habitat and biodiversity through an integrated ecosystems approach that incorporates women's knowledge and leadership;

But even then a woman gives us more. She is CARING and needs key infrastructure to look after her family.

- 1) Increase food security by investing in infrastructure, which includes roads, hospitals, clean water facilities, warehouses, schools and other initiatives to keep rural families together;
- 2) Require mandatory school programs for girls and boys along with social protection programs and available childcare;
- 3) Provide educational support for girls and women through training facilities, scholarships, extension services and other forms of technical assistance.
- 4) Ensure access to proper maternal health services for women and focus particularly on nutrition for the first 1000 days of mother and child.

Women do so many things, we need to be better at CONNECTING them.

- 1) Promote the development of village-based knowledge centres.
- 2) Increase the number of women extension agents and train male extension agents to become more gender sensitive.
- 3) Prioritize women's access to mobile phones and other technologies.
- 4) Establish open and transparent two-way exchanges that capture the 'voice of the farmer' in the process of policy formulation and implementation.

And in my own organisation, I see it all the time – the power of women. They should be LEADING!

- 1) Enhance capacity for leadership and alliances among rural women to build confidence, strengthen mutual support.
- 2) Develop advocacy and public speaking skills for influencing decisions that affect their lives.
- 3) Facilitate meaningful participation of women farmers in decision-making processes through mandatory quotas, benchmarks and indicators.

Growing, Marketing, Adapting, Caring, Connecting, Leading – these are the areas where we need to empower women smallholder farmers.

CFS exists to discuss policy. But I ask you today, what power does CFS have to focus implementation?

Passing the land tenure guidelines with a strong content encouraging protection of women's tenure rights – REGARDLESS OF MARITAL STATUS – is an important step.

And more action is needed to ensure programming by donors and by our national governments. For instance, we encourage countries to meet their CAADP commitments.

But what, too, can be done to look at the programming that exists, identify the gaps, and further connections between the programs around the world. We need leadership, here at CFS and at UN Women.

Because twenty years of talking about this problem is long enough. It is time to put meaningful programming in place.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.