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Rural Women

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Madame Chairwoman, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

For decades, we have talked about the challenges that women smallholder farmers face. Today, I hope that we can proceed beyond identifying the problems and focus on the areas that require specific action.

To pull together an action plan, we need to consider the many roles a woman plays. For a start, she is a farmer, and she wants to be good at what she does. Please consider what she needs in five areas:

Improving crop and animal production:

1. Develop a registration process for land tenure that is local, inexpensive, rapid, transparent, and most importantly, accessible to women.
2. Support women smallholder farmers by providing them with agricultural extension services, grain storage, infrastructure, and technologies.

3. Provide microfinance services, banking and microcredit, to women farmers.
4. Ensure women farmers have access to agricultural inputs and services.
5. Encourage and co-ordinate multiple local actors to ensure information and supplies get into farmers' hands.
6. Ensure women farmers have access to most suitable seed varieties.
7. Invest in women farmers who are engaged in conservation methods to prevent soil erosion and land degradation by planting cover crops and trees.

Successfully marketing the harvested crop

1. Cut post harvest losses by building local storage facilities and efficient transportation. Build roads.
2. Provide access to current market price information in multiple markets.
3. Teach cooperative approaches to marketing.
4. Improve smallholder farmers' marketing skills through entrepreneurship training.

Provide knowledge based training

1. Promote the development of village based knowledge centers.
2. Increase the number of women extension agents and train male extension agents to become more gender sensitive.

3. Expand best practices sustainable farming methods through an approach that incorporates women's knowledge and leadership.
4. Support programs that teach women farmers to manage watersheds and water use more efficiently.

Support family services for women

1. Improve services by investing in infrastructure, which includes roads, hospitals, clean water facilities, schools and other initiatives to keep rural families together.
2. Require mandatory education for children along with social protection programs and 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.

Encourage women farmers to organize and participate

1. Encourage women to speak up during the process of policy formulation and implementation.
2. Enhance capacity for leadership and alliances among rural women to build confidence and strengthen mutual support.
3. Develop advocacy and public speaking skills among rural women.

4. Facilitate participation of women farmers in decision making through mandatory quotas, benchmarks and measurement indicators.

Training, serving, listening, supporting and organizing – these are the areas where we need to empower women smallholder farmers.

Passing the land tenure guidelines with strong encouragement of women's tenure rights, **regardless of marital status**, is a top priority. More action is needed to ensure programming by donors and by our national governments. For instance, we encourage countries to meet their CAADP. Our organization works in our member countries to help accomplish that goal.

We also need leadership at FAO, IFAD, and at UN Women to analyze the programming that exists, to identify the gaps, and to facilitate connections between programs around the world. This is the time for action.

Thank you, Madame Chairwoman, for the opportunity to present the views of the World Farmers Organisation.