

22 September 2009

**To: Jacques Diouf, Director-General, Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

**Hafez Ghanem, Assistant Director-General, Economic and Social Development Department, FAO**

**Alexander Müller, Assistant Director-General, Natural Resources Management and Environment Department, FAO**

We, the undersigned civil society organizations from around the world, look with anticipation to the upcoming High-Level Expert Forum on “How to feed the world in 2050” to be held at the FAO 12-13 October. The Forum is expected to provide the global community with the chance to examine the state of knowledge on how to reduce hunger and poverty, improve rural livelihoods, and facilitate equitable environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable development, so as to ensure that we can indeed feed the world in 2050.

This was in fact the same charge given to the 400+ experts of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), initiated by the FAO and the World Bank and sponsored by additional UN agencies. We are however very concerned that next to none of the preparatory or background documents for the Expert Forum contain reference to the IAASTD, which was a four-year, multi-disciplinary and twice-peer-reviewed assessment that was formally accepted by 58 countries in 2008. Nor are any of the experts who contributed to this assessment mentioned as panelists on the Expert Forum website.

If the FAO is to effectively and credibly address the question of “how to feed the world” it cannot ignore the findings of the most recent and comprehensive global agricultural assessment. The IAASTD has been called “the IPCC of agriculture” and contains the most complete and authoritative set of options for addressing hunger and poverty through equitable and sustainable development. We know there are forces within the organization that want nothing better than to forget that the IAASTD process ever happened, reflecting individual and institutional discomfort with the “inconvenient truths” that the IAASTD has unveiled. The fact is, however, that the consultative, multi-stakeholder process that created the assessment imbues the findings and proposed policy options with a profound legitimacy. The IAASTD’s findings were welcomed by many of the developing countries that suffer the effects of hunger and food insecurity most severely.

The conclusion of the assessment, that “business as usual is no longer an option,” should indeed serve as the starting point for conversations in Rome on 12 October, if the Expert Forum is to provide valuable guidance on how to feed the world in 2050. We are seriously concerned that should the IAASTD findings and its expertise be ignored by the Expert Forum, this would simply imply a process and approach that are very much business as usual.

All the negotiated Summaries for Decision Makers and the Executive Summary of the Synthesis Report can be found on the [agassessment.org](http://www.fao.org/agassessment.org) website and these documents should be included in the list of background documents for the Forum (<http://www.fao.org/wsfs/forum2050/wsfs-background-documents/wsfs-background-docs/it/>). Each summary contains the names of the authors and their respective institutional affiliation, making it relatively easy for the organizers of the Expert Forum to identify and contact experts involved in the IAASTD process. In addition to involving a range of these experts in the Expert Forum, an overall presentation of the IAASTD findings should be included in the meeting agenda, ideally given by the Director of the Assessment, Professor Robert Watson, now chief scientific advisor at the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The problem of hunger is one of the most pressing issues facing humanity. It will not be solved by repeating mistakes of the past or by ignoring solutions because they challenge too fundamentally the status quo. The IAASTD provides a rich array of policy and investment options to strengthen the productivity and resilience of the world’s food and agricultural systems, while prioritizing social equity and sustainability. We demand that the FAO highlights the findings of the IAASTD and engages the expertise of its authors in the upcoming Expert Forum.

Sincerely,

Doreen Stabinsky, and 90 co-signers

Doreen Stabinsky, Greenpeace International  
 Marcia Ishii-Eiteman, Pesticide Action Network North America  
 Chee Yoke Ling, Third World Network  
 Martín Drago, Friends of the Earth International  
 Joost Martens, Consumers International  
 Marcus Arbenz, International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM)  
 Ramesh Singh, ActionAid International  
 Christine von Weiszacker, Ecoropa  
 Flavio Valente, FIAN International  
 George Dixon Fernandez, MIJARC, International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth  
 Arze Glipo, Asian-Pacific Network for Food Sovereignty  
 Clare Westwood, Pesticide Action Network Asia-Pacific  
 African Biodiversity Network  
 Mariam Mayet, African Centre for Biosafety, South Africa  
 Muna Lakhani, IZWA, South Africa  
 Rose Williams, Biowatch, South Africa  
 Gebremedhin Birega, ECO Yeshemachoch Mahiber / ECO Consumers' Association of Ethiopia and Coalition for Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development, Ethiopia  
 Sue Edwards, Institute for Sustainable Development, Ethiopia  
 Million Belay, MELCA Mahiber, Ethiopia  
 Mamadou Goïta, IRPAD, Mali  
 Dominikus Collenberg, KAITE, Zimbabwe  
 Mburu, ICE, Kenya  
 Wahu Kaara, Kenyan Debt Relief Network (KENDREN), Kenya  
 Zachary Makanya, PELUM, Kenya  
 Jane Kathure, NIADES Formation International, Kenya  
 Alhassan Musah, RAINS, Ghana  
 Burn Guri, Center for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development, Ghana  
 Dr. Bernd Bornhorst, MISEREOR, The German Catholic Bishops' Organisation for Development Cooperation  
 Dr. Bernhard Walter, Brot für die Welt, Germany  
 Katrin Hänel, Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz e.V (BUND), Germany  
 Benedikt Haerlin, Foundation on Future Farming, Germany  
 Georg Janssen, Die Arbeitsgemeinschaft bäuerliche Landwirtschaft (AbL), Germany  
 Thomas Dosch, Bioland, Germany  
 Rudolf Buntzel, EED (Church Development Service), Germany  
 Brigitte Kunze, Action for World Solidarity (ASW), Germany  
 Evelyn Bahn, INKOTA-netzwerk, Germany  
 Christof Potthof, Gen-ethical Network, Germany  
 Gretta Goldenman, ECOSPHERE, Belgium  
 Kyriaki Zannettou, FEEO (Federation of Ecological and Environmental Organizations), Cyprus  
 Geza Varga, Hungarian Food Sovereignty Alliance  
 Luca Colombo, Fondazione Diritti Genetici, Italy  
 Peter Melchett, Soil Association, UK  
 Patrick Mulvany, Practical Action (formerly ITDG), UK  
 Peter O'Reilly, GM Freeze, UK  
 Rajesh Makwana, Share the World's Resources, UK  
 Anthony Jackson, The Soy Alliance  
 Stefanie Williamson, Pesticide Action Network UK  
 Angelina Munzara, Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, Switzerland  
 Gabriel Paun, Agent Green, Romania  
 Maryam Rahmanian, CENESTA (Centre for Sustainable Development), Iran  
 Dale Jiajun Wen, Action 2030 Institute  
 Shoaib Aziz, ActionAid Pakistan  
 Sabir Farhat, Pakistan Rural Workers Social Welfare Organization  
 Kuch Rosal, CBO-Cambodia  
 Vanaja Ramprasad, GREEN Foundation, India  
 Debal Deb, Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies, India  
 George John, THREAD and Orissa Nari Samaj, India  
 Aruna Rodriguez, Sunray Harvesters, India  
 Sagari Ramdas, Yakshi and Adivasi Aikya Vedika, India  
 Nitya Ghotge, ANTHRA, India  
 Vandana Shiva, India  
 Bali Organic Association, Indonesia  
 Charito P. Medina, MASIPAG (Farmer Scientist Partnership for Development), Philippines  
 Antonio and Javier Claparols, Ecological Society of the Philippines  
 Sr. Nelda L. Balaba, OND, Justice and Peace -- Social Action Center, Philippines  
 Lee Aruelo, Network Opposed to GMOs-Philippines  
 Sr. Aida Velasquez, OSB, Lingkod-Tao-Kalikasan-Philippines  
 Sonia Mendoza, Mother Earth Foundation-Philippines  
 Grace Chua, Consumer Rights for Safe Food-Philippines  
 Rene Pineda, Concerned Citizens Against Pollution-Philippines and Partnership for Clean Air-Philippines  
 Paul Pedro I. Borja, SEARICE, Philippines  
 Meriel Watts, Pesticide Action Network Aotearoa New Zealand  
 Falguny Guharay, SIMAS, Nicaragua  
 Javier Souza Casadinho, RAPAL, Argentina  
 Flor Rivera Lopez, CECCAM (Center of Studies for Rural Change in Mexico)  
 Felipe Iñiguez, MAELA, Mexico  
 Adelita San Vicente Tello, Semillas de Vida, Mexico  
 Paula Alvarez, Grupo Semillas, Colombia  
 Alejandro Argumedo, Asociacion ANDES, Peru  
 Fernando Ramirez, Central American Institute for Studies on Toxic Substances, Costa Rica  
 Peter Riggs, Forum on Democracy and Trade, USA  
 Annie Shattuck, Food First, USA  
 David Kane, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, USA  
 Christina Schiavoni, World Hunger Year, USA  
 Jim Harkness, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, USA  
 Andrew Kang Bartlett, Presbyterian United Nations Office, Presbyterian Church, USA  
 Wallace Ryan Kuroiwa, Justice and Witness Ministries, United Church of Christ, USA  
 Larry and Catherine Goodwin, PLANT (Partners for the Land & Agricultural Needs of Traditional Peoples), USA  
 Philip Bereano, Washington Biotechnology Action Council and 49th Parallel Biotechnology Consortium, USA  
 Kristie Knoll, Knoll Farms, USA  
 JoAnn Jaffe, University of Saskatchewan, Canada

**Reply from Hafez Ghanem, Assistant Director-General, Economic and Social Development Department, FAO**

Date: September 23, 2009

To: Doreen Stabinsky, cc Alexander Müller

**RE: Civil Society open letter to FAO regarding the High-Level Expert Forum on "How to feed the world in 2050"**

Dear Ms Stabinsky,

Thank you for sending me by e-mail a copy of the Civil Society Open Letter concerning the forthcoming High-Level Expert Forum on How to Feed the World in 2050.

I am pleased that the numerous organizations signing the letter are looking forward, as we are, with keen anticipation to the discussions in the forum. We believe that it will be an invaluable precursor to the World Summit on Food Security that will bring world leaders together in Rome in November.

I share your view that the IAASTD assessment has made an invaluable contribution to the process of trying to find workable solutions to the world's food security problems – which, of course, was why FAO initiated the whole process in partnership with the World Bank – and it was certainly an important component of the discussions at the Expert Meeting in June.

And I can also, naturally, assure you that “business as usual is no longer an option” is at the heart of all our thinking on this subject, as has repeatedly been stressed by our Director-General. It is, indeed, the starting point for discussion at the Forum next month. We know that if concerted and purposeful policy action is not taken by governments around the world, there will still be many hundreds of millions of hungry people in 2050 – an unacceptable prospect.

It is a particular satisfaction to me that Ms. Judi Wakhungu, co-Chair of the IAASTD has agreed to be one of panellists at the Forum. As well as articulating her own views, I am sure she will bring an IAASTD perspective to the discussions. Other participants who were also IAASTD contributors will have many opportunities to make reference to the assessment and its conclusions during the forum discussions.

I am pleased to inform you that we have established a link from the Forum website to the IAASTD site. We would also be happy to distribute a two-page summary of the IAASTD conclusions to participants at the forum.

Hafez Ghanem

Assistant Director General, FAO