

***Opening Plenary of the Open-Ended Committee of
Permanent Representatives (OECPR) in preparation for UNEA-6***
Farmers MGFC: DRAFT Statement for inclusion in deliberations
Presented by Kelly Sheridan

My name is Kelly Sheridan and I am speaking on behalf of the Farmers Major Group. The Farmers MGFC seeks to improve our level of participation in the deliberations of the UNEP and UNEA. The Farmers Major Group members are united in our shared goal to enhance the capacity of countries to design and implement environmental policies that foster all dimensions of sustainability and advance agricultural solutions to global challenges.

The term “Farmers” represents all ‘farmers, ranchers, foresters and fishers’ who increasingly face both old and new environmental challenges in their endeavors. The perpetual challenges that ‘farmers’ face with invasive pests, zoonotic diseases, global conflicts, occupation, trade disruptions and changing climate can generate some of the greatest threats to humanity.

Farmers must be at the center of all discussions and decision-making about the environmental pressures facing our food system. Significant input will be needed from a wide range of farmers and farmers’ organizations who play a key role in the implementation of the global environmental agenda and yet they often find themselves at the receiving end of decisions taken elsewhere. **Science-based decision making**, in conjunction with **farmer and indigenous innovation**, must be the foundation for the adoption of accessible and locally appropriate technologies and practices for sustainable agricultural production.

As farmers committed to nurturing the land and its inhabitants, we are deeply alarmed by the devastating impacts of armed conflict and occupation on farmers, local agriculture, food security and the environment which include deforestation, pollution, overexploitation, and inaccessibility to natural resources. We honor the memory of farmers who made the ultimate sacrifice while providing sustenance for their communities.

The Farmers MGFC will work to convey the importance of agriculture to UNEP and UNEA-6. Recently, an international “call to action” document emerged that quietly replaced the terms “agriculture” and “farmers” with “food system” and “front line actors”. The following is a ‘feedback’ reply that provides a more straightforward framework for the Farmer’s narrative:

“A reliable food supply has never been more essential for humanity to be able to live and thrive on earth. Agriculture, in all of its many dimensions and forms produces that supply, day after day, against a long list of challenges, disruptions and misunderstandings by those who often feel entitled to have access and control of it and its distribution. Farmers are not “actors” on the stage of humanity. Farmers have built the stage that allows humanity to exist and act out the tragedy, drama or enlightenment of our existence.”

Thanks to hard work, indigenous and local knowledge, innovation and technology, and uncommon collaboration among farmers, including ranchers, fishers, and foresters, who make their living off the land, agriculture is poised to bloom, grow, and emerge as a primary solution pathway towards the achievement of *all* sustainable development goals.

Thank you,