

Bali, 22nd of February 2010

Key messages from the Farmers (Major Group) to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its eleventh special session

Dear friends,

As a representative of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers it's a pleasure for me to highlight the key messages on behalf of the farmers of the world.

First of all let me remind you of the importance of farming for the society. It ensures adequate food supply for a world with an increasing population. Farming also provides other multiple services to society, such as production of non-food products, delivery of ecosystem services and land stewardship to enhance and protect biodiversity. It also plays a key role for rural development and rural employment and it also contributes to economic growth and to reduce poverty and hunger in developing countries. Three out of four people in the world are farmers most of them being small scale family farmers in developing countries and many of them being women. Thus, farmers are the largest ecosystem managers.

Farmers are currently facing many challenges, such as climate change, water scarcity, flooding, soil damage and erosion, loss of agrobiodiversity as well as fluctuating agricultural and food prices. Society and all relevant stakeholders have a shared responsibility to help and encourage farmers to face these challenges, to improve practices to become more sustainable and to ensure a fair income while remaining competitive in the market. These efforts need to be undertaken simultaneously otherwise we will have to face food security problems and compromised ecosystems.

About the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions:

Agriculture is currently depending on the input of agrochemicals in order to produce enough high quality food for the world population at affordable prices. Plant protection products are crucial in order to use the full potential of the soil and plant growing capacity.

- Farmers have so far had little involvement in the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam conventions as well as in the process of developing synergies between them. It is crucial that farmers are involved in the process with their expertise as they are the main users of agrochemicals thus also the most exposed group.
- Farmers would like to emphasize the need for more awareness raising and dissemination of information on how to minimize the risks for health and for the environment when using agrochemical products. According to FAO, food production needs to double by 2050 due to the increase in the number of people in the world. At the same time food production will face new pest problems due to climate change which will increase the need for pest control in parts of the world. Therefore there must be strategies in place to ensure the availability of plant

protection. So safer products and alternatives to harmful pesticides must be developed.

For **sustainable development, ecosystem services and biodiversity** the main message from agriculture is to be involved in the process on all levels; international, national and local levels. Farmers are the main eco system managers and have the greatest possibilities in ensuring sustainable development and protection of biodiversity and thereby contributing to the green economy.

It is important to promote socially, environmentally and economically sustainable agriculture that helps to increase the fertility and resilience of the ecosystems, without damaging it so that farmers can continue to provide food and other products for society today and in the future.

To ensure sustainable agriculture that can meet the needs of society and provide economic stability the farmers call on governments and international policy makers to ensure:

- Policies that make it possible and profitable to produce in a sustainable way at affordable consumer prices.
- We must ensure land tenure rights and ownership of the land
- It is important to create positive incentives to encourage farmers to produce sustainable and change practices when necessary
- Farmers should be rewarded for land stewardship that protects and enhances biodiversity
- We must create and strengthen partnerships with all relevant stakeholders and policy makers in society.
- There must be proper acknowledgement of the indigenous knowledge of local resource management and conservation that farmers already possess.

On the basis of all I have said, sustainable agriculture is the core of the green economy and farmers should be properly involved in the discussions on all of these topics and on all levels. Global solutions are needed since ecosystems have no borders.

Thank you!