
# Rio+20

## What are the options

### - when “Business as usual” is not an option?

# Time to act

**20 years after the Rio Earth Summit, the planet is in a deeper environmental, energy and financial crisis. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 might be just another high-level conference stating the need to eradicate hunger and poverty, stop climate change, the loss of biodiversity, soil erosion and other serious environmental problems – and then, after the conference, life goes on as before. But it can be different. It has a historical opportunity to make important decisions and agree on actions that actually do eradicate hunger and poverty, and save the environment. It’s time to act!**

# Rio+20:
# What are the options?

In his preface to the World Economic and Social Survey 2011, BAN KI-MOON, Secretary-General of the United Nations argues that humankind's progress has come at the lasting cost of degradation of our natural environment. He further notes that the publication of this *'Survey' capturing this disturbing state of affairs"is especially timely as the world prepares for next year's Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development"* Ban Ki-Moon highly recommend it to policy-makers, non-governmental partners, business executives and concerned.

Quote from the report:

## " 'Business as usual' is not an option

*While humankind has made enormous progress in improving material welfare over the past two centuries, this progress has come at the lasting cost of degradation of our natural environment. About half of the forests that covered the earth are gone, groundwater resources are being depleted and contaminated, enormous reductions in biodiversity have already taken place and, through increased burning of fossil fuels, the stability of the planet's climate is being threatened by global warming. In order for populations in developing countries to achieve a decent living standard, especially the billions who currently still live in conditions of abject poverty, and the additional 2 billion people who will have been added to the world's population by mid-century—much greater economic progress will be needed.*

*Continuation along previously trodden economic growth pathways will further exacerbate the pressures exerted on the world's resources and natural environment, which would approach limits where livelihoods were no longer sustainable. Business as usual is thus not an option".*

*(United Nations. 2011. World Economic and Social Survey 2011)*

## ... and Governance as usual is not an option

We, the undersigned civil society organization, agree on the now popular mantra in major reports (UNEP, WESS, IAASTD) on the road to Rio, that "Business, as usual, is not an option" - a repetition of the theme made famous by Barack Obama. The pertinent policy point for civil society, however, is the fact that while business as usual is not an option, neither is 'governance, as usual!'

# Time to act

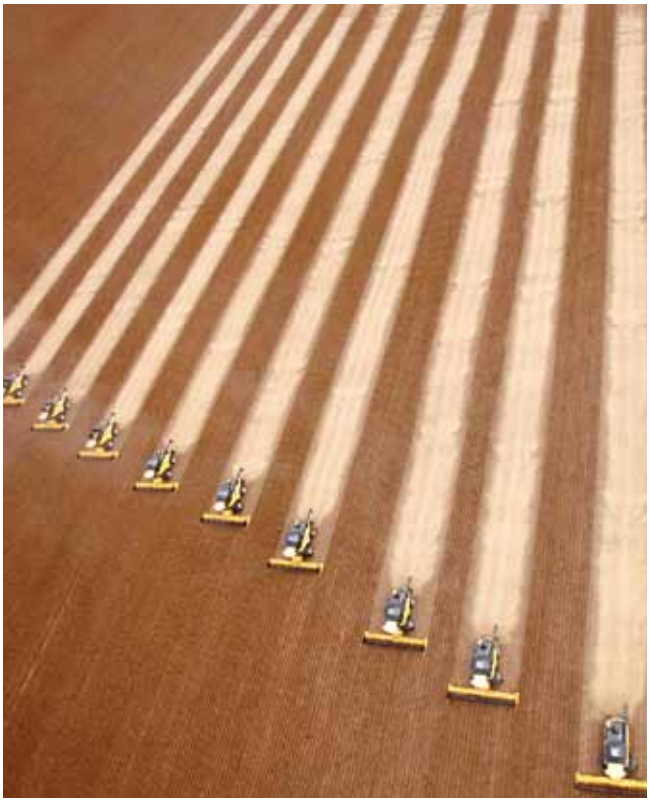
The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 might be just another high-level conference stating the need to eradicate hunger and poverty, stop climate change, the loss of biodiversity, soil erosion and other serious environmental problems – and then, after the conference, life goes on as before. But it can be different. It can make important decisions and agree on actions that actually do eradicate hunger and poverty, and save the environment. **It's time to act!**

*In this document 'agriculture' is used in a broad sense to refer to multiple types/systems of includes cropping, livestock husbandry, pastoralism, fisheries, forestry and other natural uses for food production, gathering and harvesting in urban and rural areas – if nothing else is specified or clear from the context.*



# Agriculture – a main problem …

Industrial food systems and other unsustainable practices are causing dramatic environmental damage, including reduction of biodiversity and soil fertility, overuse and pollution of water, and are substantially contributing to climate change. These kinds of food systems and food production undermine the possibilities for producing enough and healthy food for actual and future generations. At the same time these industrial food systems impoverish millions of small-scale food producers, are creating increasingly bigger waves of poverty, hunger and migration, and are causing health problems at a large scale. There are one billion people food insecure but at the same time abundant unhealthy foods and diets are affecting at least 2 billion people, causing obesity, heart disease, cancer, type 2 diabetes and other diseases, and serious pandemics are likely to occur in the near future.



# … and the main solution

Viable food systems exist. They have evolved and adapted over millennia in traditional forms of agriculture and are now more relevant than ever. They can be combined, if appropriate, with latest science on agro ecology and other forms of sustainable production. Small scale food producers provide the food for about 70 percent of the population today, and small scale agroecological and other forms of sustainable agriculture and food production, developed in the framework of food sovereignty, can

- drastically reduce climate change and its impact
- eliminate most of the hunger and poverty,
- restore biodiversity, soil fertility and water resources,
- improve livelihoods and provide rewarding employment for billions of people,
- produce enough, high quality, diverse and nutritious food for 9 billion people or more.



# UNCSD in Rio 2012 should

**1. Ensure that agriculture in all its dimensions is a core issue at the UNCSD in Rio and subsequently in global policy and practice.**
Agriculture it is both a main cause and solution to the world's environmental, climate and social problems. Industrial food production is a key cause of environmental and social harm and needs urgently to be reduced in size and impact. The solution is in smaller-scale, ecological food production systems, currently practiced by millions of small-scale food producers, whom if supported can substantially increase availability of food, eliminate hunger, increase equity and reverse environmental degradation. These systems, which currently deliver food for 70% of the world's peoples and could provide more, if supported and protected, are mainly sustainable, resilient, (agro)ecological and biodiverse. They are essential for the survival of humankind, for the preservation of biodiversity, helping reduce climate change and for socially fair and ecologically sustainable development and poverty eradication.

**2. Give strong and increasing support to small scale, agroecological and other forms of sustainable, ecological food production,** research in this area and enabling conditions, to ensure a shift away from environmentally and socially destructive industrial food production in order to produce enough and healthy food for the projected 9 billion people or more; create employment, vibrant communities and fair economies for billions of people; help reduce climate change; maintain and enhance ecosystem functions, biodiversity and other natural resources. The important role of women in agriculture and their special needs must be recognized and supported.

**3. Regulate, encourage and support the transformation of industrial and other forms of unsustainable agriculture** towards smallholder based agroecological and other forms of sustainable, ecological food production. Governments should in cooperation with farmers' and peasants' organizations develop policies and concrete actions necessary for such a transformation thus providing small farmers access to land, water, local seeds, local markets, credit, agroecological technologies and participatory education schemes. Governments should regulate and make the industrialized agriculture pay for its negative environmental and health impacts.

**4. Support food sovereignty as the overall framework for food and agricultural policies** and encourage communities, peoples, states and international institutions to recognize and realize food sovereignty. Food sovereignty puts the right to sufficient, healthy and culturally appropriate food for all individuals, peoples and communities at the center of food, agriculture, livestock and fisheries policies, rather than the demands of markets and corporations that prioritize internationally tradable commodities. It localizes food systems and values the knowledge and skills of small-scale food providers, and works in harmony with nature through using smaller-scale, ecological forms of food provision.

**5. Emphasize the important role of the organizations of small scale food producers.**
Strong social movements are vital for making the changes in policies and practices which are needed, as well as for democratic and sustainable development of societies. It is therefore of utmost importance to support and help strengthen the organizations of peasants / small scale food producers and food providers, and especially to strengthen the participation and role of women. It is also important to pay special attention to and support active participation of youth and women in these organizations. The organizations of peasants / small scale food producers and providers must be consulted on all relevant issues and given a leading role in defining policies and actions for food and agriculture.

**6. Welcome the reformed UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS)** as the governing body for food, agriculture and rural development policy and related financial issues, and as the interlocutor on these issues within the proposed new UN environmental network (see no 12);







**7. Give the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) a mandate** to identify current deficiencies and shortcomings impeding the implementation of existing plans and proposals, and to develop a work plan for implementing the decisions of UNCSD 2012, Chapter 14 of Agenda 21 and UNCSD 16/17, the findings of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD, ) and the recommendations on agroecology by the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on the right to food in his annual report 2010 submitted to the Human Rights, making sure that the views and concerns of small scale food providers are taken into account and responding to their mandate to increase food security

**8. Call for all countries to establish their own structures/mechanisms for following up**
the implementation of the findings of the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) with full participation of small-scale farmers, peasants, pastoralists, fishers and other small scale food providers.

**9. Support the adoption of a UN Declaration on Peasant Rights.**
Across the world, peasants and small farmers, agricultural workers and landless people are victims of violent oppressions, criminalization, discrimination, expulsion from their lands and alienation from their livelihoods. In order to address these unique patterns of violations, there is a need for specific provisions and mechanisms to fully protect the rights of peasants. An international instrument to respect, protect, fulfill, and uphold peasants' rights should therefore be created within the UN.

**10. Resist the commodification and commercialization of nature and all forms of carbon trading,** such as REDD+, the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) etc, that would include agriculture and soil carbon sequestration in the carbon market. Such market-based mechanisms do not address the root causes of greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture but tend to provide perverse incentives to polluters and benefit the emitters;

**11. Condemn multi-genome patent claims and encourage governments to block or rescind such claims.**
Governments must also develop a clear intergovernmental process for examining the impact of intellectual-property regimes on living materials and processes;

**12. Establish a new, broad, participatory and transparent UN environmental network.**
Within this network, Southern governments, backed by civil society, can coherently address the full range of climate, environmental and social issues currently covered by a variety of treaty bodies, funds and offices;

**13. Commit the UN - in 2012 to a negotiating process leading to an international technology assessment (bio, nano and geoengineering) and information mechanism** that strengthens national sovereignty and choice and respects the Precautionary Principle and builds the capacity of developing countries and communities to assess the health, environmental, economic and social impacts of new and emerging technologies;

**14. Assert the integrity of the multilateral community over technologies intended to address climate change.** This requires the establishmenting of a legally-binding prohibition on all forms of geoengineering;

**15. Underline that the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities must be respected.**
That industrialized countries should pay their ecological and climate debt to developing countries, including payment for the damages caused by their historical greenhouse gas emissions.



# 20 policies Rio+20 can adopt immediately

Below are practical policy initiatives that can be implemented now that will immediately strengthen food sovereignty, reduce environmental damage and support the innovative work of peasants / small scale food producers and providers.

## Policies to deal with the food crisis:

**1. Restore public support for agriculture to address the food crisis.** Corporate concentration in the food chain has, since at least the 1970s, severely reduced public-sector support for both research and rural development. Agricultural assistance declined from $8 billion in 1984 to $3.4 billion in 2004 (2004 US$). Governments should cooperate to place an annual $5 billion surtax on the food oligopolies over at least the next 25 years to recoup a portion of these losses. The recovered funds should go directly to peasants' organizations to support their initiatives.

**2. Convert "land-grabs" to peasants' fields.** There is growing international recognition that public or private internal or cross-boundary land grabs are destructive of the environment and food security. The estimated 80 million hectares of land involved in these transactions should be made available to peasants and converted into 26.7 million farms of roughly 3 hectares each.

**3. Convert biofuel land to food.** In 2007, both the US and EU devoted $11 billion to state subsidies and tariffs in support of biofuel production. As of 2006, 14 million hectares (1%) of all arable land was being used for biofuel production (providing only one half of 1% of global primary energy use.) New policies should transfer biofuel land to landless or land-poor peasants (4.6 million families could get 3 hectares each) – potentially doubling farm production (average farm size in Africa and Asia is currently 1.6 ha.) The $11 billion annual subsidy should support agro-ecological developments on the farms.

**4. Secure sufficient, nutritious and appropriate food for at least 9 billion people by 2050.** Today, the cereals used for animal feed could meet the annual caloric needs of more than 3.5 billion people. The current world population is just under 7 billion. There is no technological barrier to meeting our future food needs.

**5. Adopt policies that reduce soil erosion to protect long-term food security.** Today, the industrial food chain leads to an annual loss of topsoil amounting to 75 billion tonnes and costs the world $400 billion. An oligarchy of ten global fertilizer companies discourages good soil management. Peasant soil conservation systems utilizing naturally occurring soil microorganisms are responsible for fixing 140-170 million tonnes of nitrogen – equivalent to $90 billion in chemical fertilizers. Policies must support these conservation strategies. Improved land management, especially using peasant techniques, could increase agricultural GDP between 3% and 7%.

**6. Reduce crop losses.** Today, annual food losses equal more than half of the world's cereals crop (2.3 billion tonnes), meaning unnecessary production of roughly 500 million tonnes of GHG. Food losses in industrialized countries range between 90 and 111 kg per person per year. New policies should immediately lower OECD crop losses by 90% – at least to sub-Saharan African and South Asian levels of 9–11 kg per person per year.

## Policies to transform the food chain into a food web:

**7. Strengthen the food web and break up the food chain.**

Oligopoly in agricultural inputs reduces efficiency and discourages the resiliency necessary to respond to new health and environmental challenges. Today, six corporations (Monsanto, DuPont, Syngenta, Dow, Bayer, and BASF) control 71% of crop chemicals, 58% of commercial seed sales; and (with their biotech partners) control 77% of the world's so-called "climate-ready" crop patent claims. The 6-company oligopoly stifles innovation, encourages energy waste and promotes their polluting chemicals. Competition policies must break up the food chain. New policies must encourage market diversity and research support for agro-ecological systems. Market diversification, for seeds alone, could reduce prices by at least 30% saving the world's peasants more than $9 billion per annum.







**8. Advance the rights of women food producers:** Women account for 60 to 80% of peasant growers and produce 90% of food in Africa and about half of all food worldwide. Yet in sub-Saharan Africa, only 15% of landholders are women and they receive less than 10% of credit and 7% of extension services. Policies that address gender inequalities could, conservatively, increase yields on women's farms by 2.5% to 4%.

**9. Diversify food processing and retailing.** Today, the largest supermarket oligopolies control 40-50% of the food market in Latin America, 10% in China, 30% in South Africa and 50% in Indonesia. The leading 100 processors control 77% of global packaged foods and 10-11% of world retail food sales. Peasant systems feed 70% of the world – including the most vulnerable. Competition policies should eliminate oligopolistic practices. New policies must diversify consumer options, reduce the need for processing and support local food storage and distribution.

**10. Ban Terminator-type agricultural technologies.** Today, while there is a global moratorium on Terminator technologies, there are moves by some governments to overturn this moratorium in 2012. Rio+20 must establish a global ban. In Ethiopia, approximately 90% of the total wheat area is planted in farm-saved seed. If Terminator seeds were commercialized and Ethiopian wheat growers were forced to buy new seed every time they planted, it would cost an estimated $66 million per year. Brazilian soybean growers who now save and re-use soybean seeds would be forced to spend an estimated $407 million per year if the Brazilian ban on Terminator seeds were lifted. In the Philippines, an estimated 59% of the rice crop is planted with peasant-saved seeds. If these rice growers were forced to buy new seed every time they planted - they would spend an estimated $172 million per annum. If Canadian wheat growers (who now grow wheat on 8.36 million hectares with peasant-saved seed) were forced to buy Terminator wheat seed, the total cost per annum would be $85 million.

**11. Reduce freshwater waste in food and beverage processing industries.** Five global food and beverage corporations – Nestle, Danone, Unilever, AnheuserBusch, and Coca-Cola-consume enough water to meet the daily domestic needs of every person on the planet. Today, it takes, for example, 12,000 L of water to produce and process a half kilo of chocolate. The water required to produce 65 million kgs of ground beef – the amount recalled and destroyed due to food safety violations in the US in 2008 – was equivalent to the water required to irrigate 100,000 hectares of dry land for a year. Peasant production models that privilege local consumption waste little or no water. Policies must prioritize local consumption and heavily tax wasteful processing companies.

## Policies to shrink agriculture's environmental footprint and improve health:

**12. Improve health and reduce environmental damage.** Today, the average adult in an OECD country eats an unnecessary and unhealthy extra meal each day (roughly an extra 750 Cal). About 25% of the energy and water – and the associated greenhouse gas produced used in OECD countries goes to "waste food." At least 50% of OECD adults are overweight or obese. Obesity costs the OECD states almost $300 billion per year – an amount that is more than enough to meet all of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, with around $100 billion leftover.

**13. Reduce OECD meat and dairy consumption.** According to UN estimates, demand for meat and dairy products will double by 2050. Per capita OECD meat consumption is 10 times that of the global South. A 25% reduction in livestock product consumption worldwide would reduce our GHG emissions by 12.5%.

**14. Eliminate waste and environmental devastation in the fisheries industry.** Today, industrial fish farming takes 6 tonnes of wild fish to produce 1 tonne of fishmeal and between 1.5 and 3 tonnes of meal to harvest 1 tonne of farmed salmon. Peasant fishers and family fishponds recycle nutrients and have almost no waste. Policies must incorporate this waste into industrial fish farm taxes.

**15. Strengthen urban and peri-urban food systems.** Today, British consumers throw away 243 L of water per day in wasted food. This amounts to 6% of total UK water usage and one and a half times more than personal daily fresh water needs. Today, 25 to 30% of fresh water – about 45 billion litres – in urban areas is lost through leaky pipes costing municipalities $14 billion a year. The urban water wasted through leaky pipes could provide the water needs of 200 million people or 4.5 million urban micro-gardens. If the 243 L of water lost each day from food thrown away were available to urban gardeners it could produce 18,000 tomatoes per annum, 3,240 lettuces every 60 days, 900 cabbages every 90 days or 9,000 onions every 120 days. Policies should promote urban agriculture (including its access to safe water) that will improve water efficiency, recycle wastes, and support local nutrition.







## Policies to encourage innovation and diversification in the food web:

**16. Support in situ peasant conservation strategies.** There is general agreement that the adaptation of agriculture to climate change will depend upon the conservation and introduction of crop wild relatives. Current efforts, however, are only collecting 700 species. Peasants conserve 50-60,000 species of wild relatives. Their in situ conservation and community breeding must be supported.

**17. Encourage breeding and production of underutilized crops.** Today, the industrial food chain concentrates on 150 species with almost all research going into 12 species. The peasant food web breeds and nurtures 7,000 food crops, offering enormous potential to respond to climate change. Policies must strengthen their efforts to diversify the food web.

**18. Restructure research priorities to support peasant breeding.** Over the last half-century, industrial breeders have produced about 80,000 plant varieties (including 7,000 from international research centres). Almost 60% of private commercial breeding has been ornamental. Over the same time, peasants have contributed close to 2.1 million food and feed varieties. Policies must surrender breeding direction to peasant organizations, duplicate gene bank accessions for peasant breeding and inter-farm exchange, and eliminate monopolistic regulations that inhibit innovation. Public spending on research on agriculture must increase and the bulk of research should be refocused to agroecological solutions for the challenges ahead by promoting biodiverse and resilient farming systems.

**19. Promote resilient livestock breeds and species diversity; and re-introduce traditional and local animals on farms.** Today, 3-4 multinationals control breeding stock for each of the four key livestock animals (cattle, pigs, broiler chickens, laying hens and turkeys). In total, about 100 breeds account for almost all commercial meat and dairy production. Furthermore, three agribusinesses account for 43% of veterinary medicines and three others control 25% of industrial feeds world-wide. While the industrial food chain continues to narrow the range of species and breeds available to meet climate changes, peasants maintain 40 livestock species and 7,616 breeds that may otherwise become extinct. Policies must support peasant conservation and breeding of these animals and the rights of traditional livestock keepers. Grass-fed meat and dairy and animal feed production on farm or locally should be promoted. All not therapeutic use of antibiotics in animal production should be eliminated.

**20. Conserve and promote marine and freshwater fishing.** Today, industrial fisheries commercialize 363 species and the industrial system has wiped out 20% of all freshwater species while overfishing virtually all popular marine species. Peasant fishers protect and harvest more than 22,000 freshwater species alone. Policies must strengthen support for peasant fishers.

## Organizations supporting this document: *(29.08.2011)*

African Biodiversity Network (ABN), AS-PTA – Agricultura Familiar e Agroecologi (Brazil), ANGELS Foundation (Nigeria), Bangladesh Krishok Federation, Biovision (Switzerland), Center For Environmental Education And Development (Brazil), Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy (Malawi), Centro Ecológico (Brazil), Cercle pour la défense de l'environnement - CEDEN (RDCongo), CIPRES (Nicaragua), Development Fund (Norway), EcoNexus (International), ETC-group (International), Federación de cooperatives para el desarrollo (Nicaragua), FIAN Belgium, FoodFirst (USA), Fundaexpresion (Colombia), Improved Stoves Association (Kenya), Katosi Women Development Trust (Uganda), Latin American Scientific Society of Agroecology (SOCLA), MAUDESCO / FoE (Mauritius), More and Better (International), National Fisheries Solidarity Movement of Sri Lanka, SINERGIA (Bolivia), Support for Women in Agriculture and Environment – SWAGEN (Uganda), The Royal Norwegian Society for Development (Norway), Third World Network (International), Transnational Institute (The Netherlands), USC Canada, World Family (USA), World Forum Of Fish Harvesters & Fish Workers (International)

There has been a very short deadline for signing on to the document, so more organizations will sign in the coming weeks.

## Comments and support

If you have comments and suggestions for changes in this document, and if your organization wants to support the document, please send a mail to **rio2012agcso@gmail.com**

A new version of the document will be produced in October 2011 based on inputs and discussions.

This document in English, French, Spanish and German; and a version of it with references, is available on **www.timetoactrio20.org**