

# Supporting the Majority Food Producers

## Supporting the small-scale developers and sustainable users of agricultural biodiversity

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**The good news** is that more than 70% of the food people eat is still produced locally. The world's majority food producers are the women and men who farm, garden, raise livestock, fish and gather other wild foods under the cultural norms of customary institutions and who provide it to others through local food webs and local markets. They are also the ones who have sustained and continue to develop the basis of all our food: the agricultural biodiversity in all its dimensions from genes to landscapes. They have nurtured this vital sub-set of biodiversity through using it sustainably over millennia.

**The bad news** is that the seemingly inexorable spread of industrial agriculture, livestock production and fisheries - supported by unjust and biodiversity-eroding laws, rules, contracts and technologies - is dramatically undermining agricultural biodiversity, its related ecosystem functions and the lives and livelihoods of those who sustain and develop it.

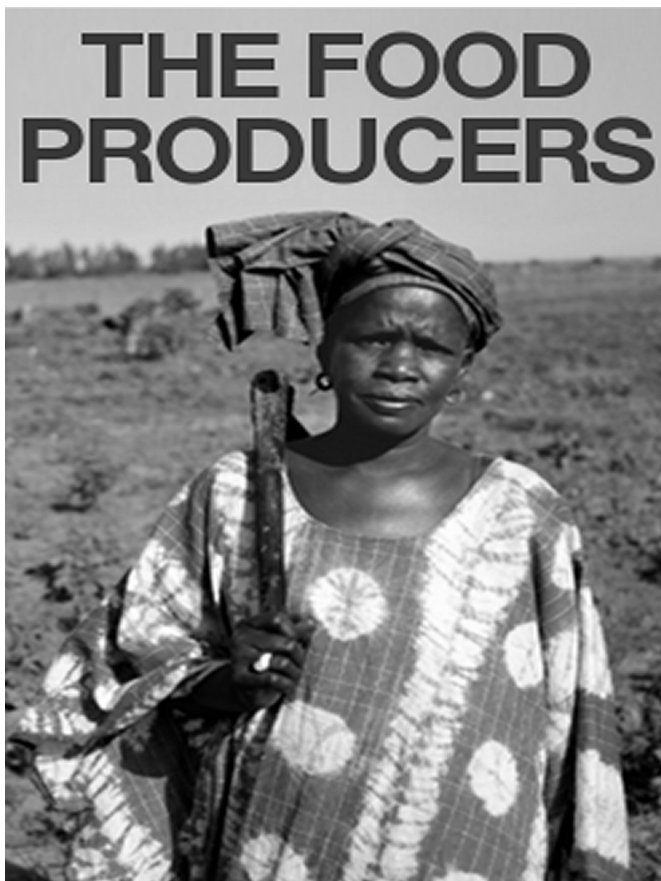
20 years ago governments recognised in the text of the Convention "that it is vital to anticipate, prevent and attack the causes of significant reduction or loss of biological diversity at source." Such losses are well-documented by now and their causes include the rapid spread of industrial production of commodities and livestock as well as unsustainable capture fisheries. They are facilitated among others by the legalisation of the enclosure of community rights to seeds, livestock breeds, aquatic organisms and their genes, by research that is driven by the imperative to develop and disseminate proprietary goods and services, by the globalisation of production and trade, and by the homogenisation of consumers' food cultures.

The bio-barons, as well as other distant corporations and financiers, who are behind the spread of industrial production, wish to extend their control over -and profit from - the global food system. If not stopped, they will further capture, control and ultimately destroy the markets, livelihoods and ecosystems of the bio-serfs, shackling them in food chains of input supply and produce markets.

This perilous situation can be averted by implementing what has already been agreed, and by working closely in support of the majority food producers themselves.

There is no shortage of priorities and actions, which have been adopted by governments.

- The Addis Ababa Principles on Sustainable Use are to show parties and other actors "how to ensure that the use of the components of biodiversity will not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity." The 'Guidelines on the Ecosystem Approach' further support this.
- The landmark 1996 Decision III/11 on Agricultural Biodiversity in its Annex 1 stated that "meeting the imperative of increasing agricultural production in such sustainable [agroecological] ways while conserving and prudently using biological diversity is **the major challenge** which we must urgently address" (emphasis added). This Decision provided the 'basis for action' of



the CBD's Programme of Work on Agricultural Biodiversity.

- Already since 1996, CBD decisions on Agricultural Biodiversity have reinforced the need to “prioritise work on promoting, supporting and removing constraints to on-farm and *in situ* conservation of agricultural biodiversity.”
- The International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) - sponsored by the UN and the World Bank and approved by 58 governments in 2008- found it necessary to move towards smaller-scale and more agroecological production systems that *inter alia* would sustain agricultural biodiversity.
- The International Seed Treaty (IT PGRFA) has inextricably linked articles on sustainable use, conservation and Farmers' Rights, debated in the 2011 session of its Governing Body, with commitments to action.
- The Second Global Plan of Action on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of PGRFA, adopted by FAO in 2011,

has a Priority Action to support ‘on-farm’ and ‘in situ’ conservation.

The Convention was empowered 20 years ago in Rio to challenge and change norms and practices that damage biodiversity and to do what is necessary to ensure benefits flow to those who conserve and continue to use it sustainably. In terms of agricultural biodiversity, this should have translated on the one hand into legally-enforceable international regulation of biodiversity-damaging industrial production, and on the other hand into globally actioned protection and support for small-scale, biodiversity-enhancing food providers, ensuring continued benefits through their sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity, for producing food, securing livelihoods and sustaining healthy ecosystems.

The evidence is clear. Actions are agreed. The small-scale providers of the world's food have shown through their promotion of the food sovereignty framework that they are willing and able.

What is the CBD waiting for?