

## **CSM statement on the adoption of RAI - October 2014 (CFS 41)**

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The Civil Society Mechanism is fully committed to the CFS and we seek to strengthen its work and outcomes because we believe in its potential to help achieve the Right to Food. It is in this spirit that we engaged in the negotiations on the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems, and it is because of our commitment that we are disappointed to say that for the constituencies of civil society – peasants, fisher-folk, pastoralists, landless, urban poor, agricultural and food workers, women, youth, consumers, indigenous peoples, and NGOs – the document is not useful.

As civil society we developed our position on responsible agricultural investment through extensive global consultation. Regrettably the Principles do not meet the key points on which our position is based, as elaborated below:

1) *Be anchored in a rights-based framework*

The Principles refer to human rights but only in the letter not the spirit because this is undermined by repeated references that seek to subordinate human rights to trade agreements and rules, which is unacceptable. Unjust trade rules have removed from governments the resources and policy space needed for responsible investment which can help achieve the Right to Food.

2) *Clearly recognise small-scale producers and workers as the main investors in agriculture*

In the two paragraphs specially addressing smallholders, this is recognised, but the rest of the document subsequently ignores this and places the emphasis on facilitating large-scale investment. Further, the term “smallholders” used in the document leaves out the millions of people who are landless but deeply involved in agricultural investment

3) *Include a commitment to create decent work and respect workers’ rights, and to overcome discrimination against women*

We are glad that these issues are indeed taken up in the Principles. However we know that workers rights are harmed by unjust trade rules and women usually lose out the most in situations of trade liberalisation, so again what has been gained is compromised by the priority given to trade agreements.

4) *Support peasant-based agro-ecological production systems, and local food systems and markets as well as the defence of peoples’ access to and control over land, forest, water, seeds and fisheries*

There is a refusal throughout the Principles to acknowledge that different production systems have different environmental impacts. This silence allows business as usual for agricultural practices that damage people and the planet, which can now be carried out in the name of responsible agricultural investment.

The issues of land, water and resource grabbing was the driving impetus behind the Principles, but the Principles refuse to name these, and offer no protection for struggles on the ground. In fact attempts to block the accepted principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent for Indigenous Peoples is unacceptable. The CFS should base decisions on the UN’s minimum accepted standard on human rights of Indigenous Peoples.

5) *Prioritise effective public policies and investment that support and defend small-scale producers, workers and local food systems*

The Principles do not prioritise public policy at all. They prioritise an enabling environment for market-based solutions without any recognition of power imbalances. Markets do not work for the vulnerable and there is thus a strong need for market regulation to address problems that occur for instance in public-private partnerships, contract farming and abuse of concentrated market power.

6) *Include a strong role for States for monitoring of the Principles in an inclusive way*

The Principles reduce national level monitoring to measuring without actually doing anything about problems.

The Principles stand or fall as a whole and their foundation is fundamentally flawed. They will not help small-scale food producers and workers overcome the economic, environmental and political constraints that hamper their capacities, and they will not assist people who are struggling to defend their land, seeds and territories.

Civil society is concerned that the weakness and incoherence in the Principles will be used to legitimise irresponsible investments. We remind States that they have an obligation to act according to the highest human rights standards. We call upon the CFS to accept responsibility for monitoring what is done in the name of the Principles.