

From: Facilitators of the Working Group on investment of the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM)

To: Organisations and movements interested to give input to the consultations on responsible agriculture investment (rai)

Agricultural investment will be a topic of broad, global consultations in the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

Why is it important to participate?

Big investors, agribusiness corporations and several governments are pushing for large-scale industrial agricultural production that results in land and water grabbing on the pretext of addressing hunger and poverty. Although the smallholder sector produces food for more than 70% of the world population, their needs and rights are ignored and even undermined by governments, multilateral agencies and corporations. Since they are by far the largest group of “investors” in food production, smallholders need adequate and effective public support!

What is happening?

This year and next year a consultation process on investment in agriculture and food production is taking place organized by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), to get inputs for negotiations on “principles for responsible agricultural investment” (rai). The consultation process is the result of a decision in the CFS 37 in 2011 following from the rejection of the World Bank blueprint for Principles on Responsible Agricultural Investment in 2010, which prompted the CFS to set up a broad consultation process on agricultural investments. The rai principles are expected to be adopted by governments at the CFS Annual Session in October 2014.

Why is it important to participate?

There are three major reasons why strong engagement by organisations of smallholders and supportive organisations and academics is important:

1. Block false solutions by agribusiness: For big business and investors the agricultural sector has become a “hot sector” to invest in since the food crisis. Besides land and water grabbing, transnational corporations (TNCs) are pushing a second green revolution (not only, but especially in Africa), selling their fertilizers, pesticides and GM/hybrid seeds to increase food production. Strong national legislation is necessary to regulate their actions, and all principles and guidelines from the CFS should promote and support such regulation.

2. Push for public investments and policy frameworks to support small-scale food producers and providers: Smallholder food producers and small-scale food providers are the largest investors in food production. They represent at least 70% of all investments, not counting their efforts through labour and knowledge to improve their production and maintain soil fertility. All public policies should enable smallholders to enhance their investments. Further, governments should increase public investments in infrastructure, research, credit systems and other forms of support for smallholder, small-scale food production and provision. These should be central issues in the consultations on agricultural investment and central concerns in any text on agricultural investment adopted by the CFS.

3. Assure that agricultural investment policies are shaped in the CFS: As civil society and social movements, we have pushed for the CFS to be reformed. Now the reformed CFS is the central space in the United Nations (UN) system for decisions on food and agriculture. Through the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) we have the right to fully participate in the CFS, although the decisions taken remain the responsibility of the governments. To use and strengthen this space is more important than ever, as agribusiness-led solutions are pushed forward through non-legitimate and anti-democratic initiatives such as the New Alliance of the G8, and World Bank proposals for principles of agricultural investments and Doing Business in Agriculture Index.

How can we participate?

All actors involved can give their inputs and fully participate in the negotiations that will take place in the CFS. Civil society is organized through the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) and a Working Group on investment coordinates our inputs into the final negotiations as well as the consultation process leading up to the negotiations.

We propose to set up autonomous civil society consultations to develop our own proposals for principles, which will be based on the results of the civil society consultations and work already done so far on this issue in other processes in the CSM.

For further information

For a more detailed description of this process see the Background Information for CSM Consultations (Annex 1). You can go to the CSM website where you will find a background document package www.csm4cfs.org and/or write to csm.ag.investment@gmail.com

Appendices

- 1 – Background Information for civil society consultations
- 2 - CSM Annotated Outline

With best regards,

CSM working group technical support team