Words Won't Feed Us

Six Priorities of the People Who Already Do

Family Farming is a term that should highlight the wide diversity of food producers, including peasants, pastoralist, and fisherfolk. CSIPM has developed these key messages in consultation with smallholder farmers, peasants, pastoralists, fisherfolk and Indigenous Peoples across a balance of regions. Through these key messages, a clear call is made for States to step from commitment to action to support family farmers. CSIPM calls on policy-makers to take action on the demands below.

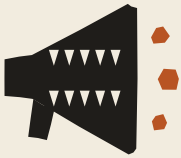
1. **Rights holders must take part in decisions.**
2. **Policy coherence is political, not technical.**
3. **Youth must shape the programs meant for them.**
4. **Agrarian reform and an end to the criminalization of peasants and Indigenous Peoples.**
5. **Redirect public finance to smallholders, territorial markets and fair prices.**
6. **A gender lens in every policy.**

● CFS POLICY INSTRUMENT AND PARAGRAPH

● CASE FROM THE TERRITORIES

● PUBLIC POLICY ASK

1 Rights holders must take part in decisions.



Family farmers, peasants, Indigenous Peoples, pastoralists, fisherfolk, agricultural workers, women and youth are rights holders, not beneficiaries. Policies should protect their rights to land, seeds and water; their right to organize and unionize; and their right to healthcare. Participatory councils and dialogue forums enable meaningful participation, give legitimate decision-making power, and build policy coherence locally. They make visible groups that do not fit the image of the "default family farmer": agro-pastoralists, fisherfolk, women and gender-diverse people.

CFS POLICY INSTRUMENT AND PARAGRAPH

CFS 2011, para v.
"Actively involve organizations representing smallholders and agricultural workers in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies..."

CFS 2013, para 9
Build inclusive participatory processes that engage smallholders, women, youth, private sector, and other relevant organizations. Promote legal recognition and respect of the rights of smallholder farmers – including the right to organize democratically and to have a voice in policy debates

UNDROP (2018); UNDRIP (2007)
The right to participate in decision-making processes for peasants and Indigenous Peoples.

CASE FROM THE TERRITORIES

Rhode Island, USA – Food Policy Council

Institutionalized participatory governance can give small and urban farmers a collective voice in policy-making and help translate their demands into legislation.

National Committees for Family Farming

Under the UN Decade of Family Farming these forums are key for political dialogue with the rights holders.

PUBLIC POLICY ASK

- → **Guarantee the right to organize and unionize, including for agricultural workers.**
- → **Set up permanent participatory councils with a mandate to monitor policy (UNDROP art. 10).**
- → **Uphold peasants and Indigenous Peoples rights in law and constitutions, and adopt national plans to implement UNDROP and UNDRIP, ensuring that, as rights-holders, they enjoy the minimum rights set out in UNDRIP (Article 43).**
- → **Grant participatory councils decision-making and budgetary powers, and ensure that autonomous farmers' organizations form a majority within them, with public funding provided without any conditions attached.**

2 Policy coherence is political, not technical.

Policies can be perfectly coherent with an agro-export model while working against family farms. Coherence must be judged by who benefits, how policies contribute to equitable distribution of power, and effective participation of producer organizations. To achieve this, policies must align with UNDROP, UNDRIP, the VGGT and the CFS Gender Guidelines.

CFS POLICY INSTRUMENT AND PARAGRAPH

UNDROP (2018), UNDRIP (2007), VGGT (2012)
Human rights and tenure standards against which coherence should be judged.

CFS Gender Guidelines (GEWGE, 2023)
Gender equality and women's empowerment in food security and nutrition.

CASE FROM THE TERRITORIES

The Green Morocco Plan

The stated objective was to reconcile economic growth and social inclusion. However, public investments have been heavily skewed in favor of modern agriculture rather than family farming.

In the Taliouine region, saffron production was historically a local peasant activity. The Green Morocco Plan introduced new market and investment dynamics, with a decrease in land available to small-scale producers and increased dependence on intermediaries. This caused more vulnerability of young farmers and pressure on water resources. This initiative shows how a policy can be internally coherent with an agro-export model while working against family farms.

PUBLIC POLICY ASK

- → **Assess policy coherence by who benefits, not by internal consistency alone, and align national policies with UNDROP, UNDRIP, the VGGT and the Gender Guidelines.**
- → **States should implement affirmative action in favor of Indigenous Peoples based on General Recommendation No. 32 of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**
- → **Regain public control over the foreign trade in staple foodstuffs (strategic stocks, public procurement, regulation of cereal imports) in order to break free from food dependency.**

3 Youth must shape the programs meant for them.

Policies should not assume what farmers, fisherfolk and pastoralists want, particularly youth. Pushing youth towards digital farming and new technologies can create lock-ins and dependencies and concentrate power in food systems. Young people need viable routes into agroecology and food sovereignty projects. Generational renewal depends on including youth in program design and on access to and sovereignty over resources including land, seeds, water, training and finance.

CFS POLICY INSTRUMENT AND PARAGRAPH

CFS 2022, rec. 4.c
Finance the development of training and vocational programs that build youth skills, including in agroecology.

CFS 2022, rec. 4.e
Inter- and intra-generational exchange through internships, mentorship and peer-to-peer engagement.

CFS 2022, rec. 3.a
Support youth equitable access to land, water, seeds, fisheries and forests, including through redistributive reforms, consistent with the VGGT.

CFS 2022, rec. 3.e
Provide flexible, inclusive financing, with attention to young women farmers, including collateral-free and low-interest loans, and provision of seed capital grants.

CFS 2022, rec. 1.e
Support meaningful youth participation and leadership in governance and decision-making at all levels.

CASE FROM THE TERRITORIES

Mali – Nyeleni International Training Centre (CIFAN/CNOP)

By 2025, 2,671 farmer trainers had been trained (37% women, over 72% young people); they trained about 32,300 people in six regions. The farmer-to-farmer model fills the advisory gap left since the structural adjustment of the 1980s.

India – Chizami

Farm Schools and participatory films make young people keepers of agroecological knowledge, not just entrepreneurs in value chains.

PUBLIC POLICY ASK

- → **Fund and officially recognize farmer-led agroecology training centers, and integrate farmer-to-farmer advice into national extension and vocational systems.**
- → **Make youth land access part of redistributive agrarian reform, including public lands and land redistributed for collective use, with secure tenure, start-up support, advice and market access.**
- → **Provide grants and low- or zero-interest credit that accepts agroecological farm plans.**
- → **Involve youth in designing youth programs, fund food sovereignty projects (not only digital farming or entrepreneurship), and give youth seats in the National Committees for Family Farming.**

4 Agrarian reform and an end to the criminalization of peasants and Indigenous Peoples.

Land and resource grabbing must end. CSIPM calls for equitable, inclusive and participatory agrarian reform: protecting rights, recognizing collective and customary tenure; redistributing land, water and decision-making power; restitution and reparations for dispossessed communities; caps on land concentration; and recognition of social and cultural function of land. Reform should be planned at territorial level, including local markets, processing and fair prices, and should protect peasant's and Indigenous Peoples' seeds from corporate control. Those who defend land, water, seeds and agroecology must not be criminalized; doing so exposes the dishonesty of state rhetoric about empowering family farmers.

CFS POLICY INSTRUMENT AND PARAGRAPH

CFS 2022, para 3.a
Recognize and respect all legitimate tenure right holders and their rights and support youth equitable access, sustainable use, conservation and protection of land, natural resources, water, seeds and biodiversity, fisheries and forests by adopting appropriate policies, legal measures and programs at the national level, retributive reforms consistent with VGGTs.

CFS 2013, para 12
"Strongly promote responsible governance of land and natural resources with emphasis on securing access and tenure for smallholders, particularly women, in accordance with VGGT"

VGGT (2012); UNDROP (2018) art. 17; UNDRIP (2007)
Legitimate tenure rights and the rights of peasants and Indigenous Peoples to land.

CASE FROM THE TERRITORIES

Mauritania – pastoralists

Collective rights to grazing land and water are not recognized. This leads to informal land grabbing, and pastoralists' struggles are criminalized or ignored.

Panama – Ngäbe-Buglé Indigenous fishers

Conservation closures, some linked to the global 30x30 target, have cut the Ngäbe-Buglé off from four of their five ancestral fishing islands. When fishers protested a new ban in 2025, authorities ignored the negotiated agreement and arrested them, leaving communities in a severe food crisis.

PUBLIC POLICY ASK

- → **Legally recognize pastoralism and collective or customary tenure over rangelands, transhumance corridors and water points (VGGT; UNDROP art. 17).**
- → **Carry out comprehensive, popular agrarian reform: redistribute land and water and cap land concentration (property ceilings, progressive taxation).**
- → **Provide restitution and reparations to dispossessed communities, and plan land use with participation and a gender lens. Restitution of land and territories to Indigenous Peoples.**
- → **End the criminalization of peasants, pastoralists, fishers, Indigenous Peoples and youth who defend land, water, seeds and agroecology.**
- → **Enshrine the social function of land in law, including the expropriation of land that has been hoarded or left fallow for the benefit of communities, and the cancellation of leases and concessions granted without free, prior and informed consent.**

5 Redirect public finance to smallholders, territorial markets and fair prices.

Small-scale producers are the largest investors in food systems, yet most financial flows, including public subsidies, favor industrial agriculture. Public support should be grant-based and non-debt-inducing, go directly to small-scale producers' organizations, prioritize agroecology, and use eligibility rules designed for family farmers rather than for scale. Governments should strengthen territorial markets and collective ownership models, guarantee smallholders access to public procurement at fair prices and invest in market infrastructure, rather than push integration into global value chains, ensuring smallholders retain sovereignty over the value they create.

CFS POLICY INSTRUMENT AND PARAGRAPH

CFS 2011, para i
Ensure that public investment, service and policies for agriculture give due priority to enabling, supporting and complementing smallholders' own investment with particular attention to women food producers

CFS 2013, para 13
Prioritize public investment…specifically in support of smallholders' own investments

CFS 2016, para 10
Inclusive financial systems adapted to smallholders: special lines of credit, start-up capital and insurance.

CASE FROM THE TERRITORIES

Puerto Rico – who is a "bona fide farmer"?

Sales-tax (IVU) exemptions and state incentives only go to farmers who plant a full cuerda (about 0.4 ha) of a single crop or keep 10,000+ chickens or 50+ cattle. Diversified agroecological family farms cannot qualify.

PUBLIC POLICY ASK

- → Rewrite eligibility rules for subsidies, tax exemptions and incentives around who farms and how (family, diversified, agroecological), and remove minimum-scale thresholds that exclude family farms.
- → Redirect support instruments for family, peasant, pastoral and agroecological production, rather than making them compete with agro-industry.
- → Channel public grant finance directly to family farmers and their organizations, not through public-private partnerships.
- → Cancel debt of small-scale producers.
- → Expand public procurement from family farms and their organizations, particularly for school canteens, with accessible procedures and guaranteed payment terms
- → Invest in storage, preservation, processing and transport.
- → Support collective marketing and contract negotiation by producer organizations
- → Establish transparent mechanisms for monitoring costs, prices and unfair commercial practices. Publish the share of public agricultural spending that reaches family farms

6 A gender lens in every policy.

Women are the backbone of food systems and are affected by policies in specific, differentiated ways including by lack of recognition of unpaid care and reproductive work. Gender-blind policies have held back more than half of family farmers. Every family farming policy should integrate a gender lens in its design and implementation, and seek to transform the structures of ownership and production. Gender discrimination particularly affects gender-diverse people.

CFS POLICY INSTRUMENT AND PARAGRAPH

CFS 2013, para 5
Mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment...encourage gender-specific support services in view of the critical role of women.

CFS 2016 Para 19
Empower smallholders, especially women and youth by strengthening their access to and control over productive assets and resources.

CFS Gender Guidelines (GEWGE, 2023)
Guidance on advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

CASE FROM THE TERRITORIES

Mexico (Veracruz) and the MENA region

VIDA A.C., a network of women coffee producers, makes unpaid care work visible and defends women's rights to rest, health, land, seeds and water. Across MENA, rural women's work remains largely invisible despite their central role.

PUBLIC POLICY ASK

→ **Adopt gender-transformative policies: public care services and social protection, individual or joint land titles for women, and priority for women-led organizations in procurement.**

→ **Monitor implementation of the Gender Guidelines in family-farming policies.**

REFERENCES

CFS 2011	CFS Policy Recommendations: How to Increase Food Security and Investments that Benefit Smallholder Farmers	2011 Committee on World Food Security (CFS)
CFS 2013	CFS Policy Recommendations: Investing in Smallholder Agriculture for Food Security and Nutrition	2013 Committee on World Food Security (CFS)
CFS 2016	CFS Policy Recommendations: Connecting Smallholder to Markets	2016 Committee on World Food Security (CFS)
CFS 2022	CFS Policy Recommendations: Promoting Youth Participation and Employment in Agriculture and Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition	2022 Committee on World Food Security (CFS)
UNDROP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (Resolution A/RES/73/165)	2018 UN General Assembly
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Resolution A/RES/61/295)	2007 UN General Assembly
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests in the Context of National Food Security	2012 Committee on World Food Security (CFS)
GEWGE	CFS Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition	2023 Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

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