

Statement of the Major Group Farmers
To the Closing Session of CSD 13
22 April 2005 – New York City

IFAP appreciates the attention given to the agricultural sector in the draft negotiating text. There is recognition of the importance of the role of the agricultural sector when dealing with water related issues, but no mention of farmers themselves.

Farmers are the custodians of natural resources important to achieving Millennium Development Goals. Agriculture is not just best practices and technological innovation; it is human labor and imagination. Therefore, one cannot talk about agriculture without referring to farmers and their role in participating in decision making processes.

Agriculture is being called upon to double production capacity over the next 25 years from essentially the same resource base to feed an additional 1.5 billion people by 2025. Agriculture already uses 70 percent of freshwater resources, so farmers will have to use the best practices available to produce “more crop per drop”.

Farmers are aware of the challenges ahead and they are proactive and willing to share responsibility for active implementation of productive strategies; no stakeholders should be put on the fringe of decision-making processes.

Water is necessary for food production, sanitation, and as a key to poverty alleviation, it is a public concern. We feel water is not a tradable commodity .

IFAP calls on national governments to give priority to investment in water for agriculture, with clear, set priorities regarding water use. While the quality of water is a prerequisite for sustainable development, its protection has to be shared by all stakeholders.

IFAP urges relevant international organizations to include not only gender balance and indigenous peoples’ rights, but also a requirement to engage with local farmers’ organizations, globally, as partners in all stages of development projects, including capacity building, especially women farmers and young farmers.

IFAP emphasises there is a crucial need to balance rural agricultural and urban strategies.

There is a need to develop incentive measures for farmers to demonstrate the benefit of adopting water efficiency practices, and a recognition of the key role of agriculture and farmers in water quality enhancement and control. There should be active measures for developing transferable technology mechanisms and for expanding the role of action research.

We feel the establishment of innovative partnerships does not mean total privatization of the water resources. Farmers recognize the usefulness of public/private partnerships, and while the private sector has a role in water delivery, it will not be cost-effective to do it in remote rural areas. This must be a government responsibility.

IFAP calls for the mobilisation of all sources of funding; for the achievement of the 0.7 percent of GDP for ODA , and for the increased coordination of donors and international financial institutions to avoid resource duplication.

IFAP fav ors the creation of national and international solidarity funds to support sustainable water management initiatives where farmers’ organizations are systematically associated.