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UN Commission on Sustainable Development

7 May 2008

Thematic Discussions: Land

Mr Chairman

Delegates and Panelists

I wish to address this topic with reference to Waged Agricultural Workers.

Waged-Agricultural Workers are women and men who labour in crop fields and livestock units and primary processing facilities to produce the world's food and fiber. They do not own or rent the land they work nor the tools they use, they are therefore a group distinct from the farmers. They depend on the wages from their labour working on the land. The wages are pegged on the output of their labour for example of they are paid according to the kilo of crop picked, row weeded, hectare sprayed. The terms and condition of their employment are diverse: seasonal, part time, casual or permanent (full time). Their livelihood is linked to the land and they earn their wages by working on the land. Any land issue affect them for example:

1. Land reform.

Waged agricultural workers are victims of land reforms, change of land ownership usually lead to their evictions sometimes violently without any compensation. They are not consulted on land reform as they are often excluded from the decision making process the farm or the nationally.

-this leads to loss of employment that forces the displace workers and their families to look elsewhere for alternative means of livelihood. They may end up in urban areas where they join the growing urban poor with all their social misfits.

2. Extreme weather, floods or droughts negatively on the productivity of the workers, in such conditions there will be low productivity, decreased earning and even loss of jobs usually forcing workers and their families to migrate to other places to look for employment, often to the urban centers. This also have impact on rural labour market.

Labour migration in this condition is due to desperation and the need to survive. This situation forces the workers to accept the lowest wages in bad working conditions. In order to meet their survival need, child labour is employed to supplement their meager income.

3. Change of land use also affect the waged agricultural workers, for example from agriculture land use to construction of buildings. Where there is no program on "transition" to alternative work.

4. The only asset possessed by waged agricultural workers is their labour, hence the importance of improving the productivity of their main asset and therefore their livelihood.

Workers and trade unions recommend that

The CSD 16 in its conclusion notes the importance of promoting the ILO Decent Work Agenda that includes respect of Rights at work, secure and safe employment, social protection and social dialogue.

Initiate and support multistakeholder dialogues process on land between and among all the stakeholders (governments, intergovernmental organisation and the Major Groups)

Omara Amuko
Panelist