

International Federation of Agricultural Producers

CSD 16

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THEMATIC SESSION ON DROUGHT AND DESERTIFICATION

STATEMENT

Intervention from the Farmers' Group by

Mr. Nic Opperman, AgriSA, South Africa

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to intervene on behalf of farmers through IFAP by giving an example on sustainable land management program implemented in my own country, South Africa.

The National LandCare Programme is a community-based, government-supported natural resource management program. The concept of LandCare was first developed in Australia and involves the

participation of grassroots community groups, native populations, landowners, and government institutions. The success of the program is mainly dependent on the farming community, which is responsible for the identification, implementation and monitoring of the land base. LandCare in South Africa aims at developing and implementing integrated approaches to natural resource management which are efficient and consistent with sustainable development principles. LandCare is intended to ensure the sustainable management of agricultural resources in order to optimize production, food security and job creation. LandCare has established partnerships between the public sector, communities and the private sector. There are several themes which fall within the Programme: WaterCare, VeldCare, SoilCare, and JuniorCare.

Even though there has been significant progress, much remains to be done.

First, the road to sustainable agriculture and sound rural development implementation strategies around the world needs to encompass

participatory approaches. A farmer-centred approach to agriculture and rural development should prevail.

Second, farmers are doing a lot to follow sustainable agricultural practices and to provide ecosystem services. These efforts should be better documented so that they can be scaled up and replicated in other regions and countries. Further, farmers should receive incentive payments for the ecosystem services that they provide since they benefit the whole of society. I would like to thank Dr. Gonzales who supports this principle.

The role of the government has to be redefined in order to achieve this. Withdrawal of government support for agricultural services has destabilised rural areas and exacerbated the poverty problem. Governments need to re-engage with farmers, scientists and other stakeholders in order to exploit the full potential of agriculture to reduce poverty and conserve natural resources.