

# **International Federation of Agricultural Producers**

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**Multistakeholder dialogue – 10 May 2007**

## **FARMERS GROUP STATEMENT**

**by Mr. Jack Wilkinson, President  
International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)**

My name is Jack Wilkinson, I am a farmer from Canada and I am here as the President of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP).

Mr Chairman, I would like to address the following points regarding sustainable energy and climate change:

First, agriculture is the sector which the most impacted by climate change and its effects.

In this regard, I would like to point out the critical role of agricultural research for adaptation and in particular when it relates to climate change and transfer of technologies. Research needs to introduce new crop varieties to adapt to changing weather patterns such as drought resistant plants.

Technology transfer is critical. Small scale farming agriculture needs to benefit from research findings in this field.

Existing knowledge is underutilised and the use of existing research findings is lacking. There is thus an urgent need to transfer existing information and technology to developing countries.

Second, the development of bioenergy may provide an answer in giving economic hope to rural areas. Therefore, the production of bio energy represents an opportunity for farmers to improve incomes in rural areas and therefore to fighting poverty. It provides an additional market for farm products.

This production has the potential to create employment and benefit farmers in particular, small scale producers provided proper regulations are put in place by governments. Bioenergy production also has the potential to balance market concentration.

Farmers can produce food, fibre or bio energy, depending on what the market demands. What farmers care about is improving their incomes to provide a good living for their families and rural communities.

This leads me to the third point regarding the “food versus fuel” issue, which is of concern to many of you.

We too often forget to point out the positive role of Bioenergy and biofuels and particularly, in stabilising world commodity prices. In many countries, biofuel production created additional markets for agricultural products.

Besides, in this debate, we too often hear that the production of bio energy raises the cost of food for poor people. We need to take the positive side of the increase in food prices.

In fact, most of the poor people are living in rural areas, and this will continue until 2015, and the majority of them are farmers. For too many years, the prices of food have been too low and considerably hurt farm incomes causing poverty, in particular in developing countries. If the development of bioenergy helps farmers to receive better prices for their products, then this will improve the livelihoods of their families and rural communities. There well may be a negative impact of rising food prices on urban poor people but this is an issue that must be addressed at the governmental level. For too long, there has been an urban bias in government which favoured a 'cheap food policy'. This needs to change.

Regulatory and support mechanisms need to be put in place to help poor people buy food. It is not the responsibility of farmers to manage the social consequences of competing uses for their products. The responsibility of farmers is to produce high quality crops, using sustainable farming practices that are environmentally friendly.

Governments need to create enabling investment environments and support mechanisms to make sure farmers own the value chain from production to distribution of bioenergy. Bioenergy in rural areas has the potential to bring hope in rural areas. Farmers need to become real partners in the formulation of national and international strategies regarding energy efficiency.

Thank you for your attention.