



Innovation and Incentives for Farmers Needed to Protect World's Biodiversity

- Global Agricultural Coalition Welcomes International Day for Biological Diversity -

Brussels, 22 May 2010: Farming First calls on governments to enable agricultural innovation and empower farmers to safeguard the world's biodiversity while increasing global food production.

Sustainable agricultural production needs to be achieved through both accelerated research programmes and broader uptake of existing technologies by farmers. Public-private partnerships are key to identifying and addressing these innovation gaps as well as disseminating effective agricultural tools and technologies to farmers.

"Government leaders need to recognise how interconnected agriculture and biodiversity protection are. Today's farmers are the true stewards of our global ecosystem," says Ajay Vashee, President of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP).

The twin challenge of conserving ecosystems while ensuring future food security means that the role of the farmer is more crucial than ever. With 2.3 billion more mouths to feed by 2050, food production must increase by 70 per cent, according to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation, despite the threats of climate change and limited availability of natural resources.

Like biodiversity, agriculture benefits from fertile soils, fresh water and natural predators, and farmers can also play a role in maintaining natural habitats and other ecosystem services.

"Farmers around the world are facing competing pressures to grow more food while preserving the world's biodiversity. To succeed, agriculture and biodiversity conservation efforts must walk hand in hand," says Luc Maene, Director General of the International Fertilizer Industry Association.

The Farming First coalition supports the following principles for protecting biodiversity through agriculture:

- Safeguarding natural resources through sustainable agricultural practices such as sustainable use of land, water and energy resources, conservation agriculture, cultivation of local species and giving value to marginal areas such as wetlands and forests.
- Sharing knowledge of agriculture's role in preserving biodiversity through stewardship programmes for farmers and government mechanisms for incentivising biodiversity-friendly practices.
- Building local access to agricultural tools and infrastructure which help protect biodiversity, such as multi-cropping systems or crop rotation, without

jeopardising agricultural production.

- Protecting harvests by building storage facilities and transport mechanisms, whilst providing support to farmers in managing weather variations and minimising the amount of yield lost to prevent further expansion in land used for agriculture.
- Enabling access to markets via payment incentives for ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration, reforestation, measures against desertification and other sustainable land management practices as well as developing and supporting markets for underutilised local species which encourage local biodiversity.
- Prioritising research imperatives by addressing both farmers' needs and the specificities of local ecosystems as well as factoring in farmers' local expertise and providing resources such as seed banks.

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Farming First

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Farming First is a global coalition of 128 organisations calling for a broad-based, knowledge-centred approach to increase agricultural output in a sustainable and socially responsible manner. Its members include representatives of the world's farmers, scientists, engineers and industry.