

## AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS HIGHLIGHT KEY AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS

### ISSUES IN THE REGION OVER CRISIS

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**USPA NEWS** - African civil society organizations meet and adopt a joint declaration ahead of FAO Regional Conference for Africa (ARC32). The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and other shocks hit the food security status and livelihoods of the most vulnerable populations the hardest – that was the central theme in a declaration at the end of a two-day regional consultation by civil society organizations (CSOs) ahead of the 32nd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa (ARC32). The consultation brought together small-scale producers' organizations and other civil society groups representing family farmers, fishers and fish workers, pastoralists and herders, indigenous peoples, consumers, forest workers, women and youth, in the region. The event was convened virtually by the regional CSO Steering Committee through the Regional Platform of Central African Farmers' and Producers' Organizations (PROPAC) on 28-29 March 2022.

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The participants discussed Conference agenda items and key issues relevant to civil society groups and communities in the region. Discussion topics included the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on agrifood systems, the implementation of United Nations Decade for Family Farming (UNDF), promoting ecosystems restoration, investment and trade for competitive agrifood systems, ensuring agrifood systems are inclusive of women, youth and the rural poor, and the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas.

On the second day, the participants adopted the CSO Declaration which calls for a set of key recommendations with commitments by CSOs. Those include but not limited to:

1. Strengthen inclusive multi-stakeholder mechanism including government, CSOs, producer organizations, other partners and stakeholders, at all levels from regional to country level;
2. Provide continuously technical support for the most vulnerable at the grassroots community level suffering the adverse effects of multiple-shocks including COVID-19;
3. Accelerate effort to implement the UNDF, Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication);
4. Promote the International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022; Agroecology; inclusive agrifood systems for smallholder producers, family farmers, fishers, pastoralists, including youth, women and the rural poor, enabling and empowering them to benefit from opportunities such as the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) and to overcome challenges and crises. The CSOs also selected three CSO spokespeople who will participate and present the CSO Declaration during ARC32 (11-14 April).

### ENGAGING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION FOR AGRIFOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

"The agenda of the 32nd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa focuses on subjects and phenomena that influence our way of life, affect our existence and sometimes even threaten our survival, in particular the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on agrifood systems, agroecology issues, the African Continental Free Trade Area, peasant rights, youth and women, to name but a few. Faced with this situation, as actors in the field, our point of view matters for the development of resilience actions," said Mr Kolyang

Palebele, President of the Centrale Regional Platform of Farmer's Organization in Central Africa (PROPAC), who is also President of the PanAfrican Farmers Organization (PAFO).

"Unlocking Africa's enormous potentials for Agrifood systems transformation calls for strategic partnership and cooperation with various actors, including the civil society and producers' organizations," said Abebe Haile-Gabriel, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Africa. "Civil Society Organizations play an important role in the joint effort to transform agrifood systems and achieve food and nutritional security, where women and youth playing a role in the activities of family production units, being key actors in each productive unit. The concerns and proposals for solutions from this social layer always contribute to enriching the debates prior to the decisions taken by FAO Members on regional priorities and the planning of activities to be carried out with the countries," said H.E. Francisca Eneme Efua, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock, Forests and Environment of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea and Chairperson of ARC32.

The regional consultation was attended by 55 civil society participants from 20 countries across the region. Their views have enriched the debate and recommendations on regional priorities going into the FAO Regional Conference, and contribute to further development of FAO's engagement with civil society and producers' organizations towards the common goals set in the 2030 Agenda through the transformation to more efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems in Africa.

The 32nd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa is scheduled to be held on 11-14 April 2022 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, both online and in person. Source: FAO Regional Office for Africa.

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