



**Joint Conference of the
International Federation of
Agriculture Producers
and
U.S. National Farmers
Union**



*in cooperation with
Center for American Progress*



“PROFITABILITY: FARMERS’ SOLUTIONS”

*Washington, D.C., USA
March 28-29, 2007*

STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION

Washington D.C, 29-03-07 - Farmer leaders from throughout the world, members of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) met in Washington D.C., USA, March 28-29, 2007 to exchange experiences on “farmer-driven solutions” to put profitability back into agriculture. “Whether a farmer is producing in the USA, in Africa, Asia or Latin America or in Europe or Australia, they all suffer from price pressure in the market” said IFAP President Jack Wilkinson. The trend to growing market concentration in the agri-food sector, with the power of farmers being eroded, makes it critical for farmers to become organized into strong producer organizations.

Welcoming farmer leaders to Washington D.C., the President of the National Farmers Union, Tom Buis, asked: “How can we work together in a positive manner, sharing creative and innovative ideas on how to get a profitable price out of the market?” The more farmers fight each other the more they have profitability problems.

Through a series of panel discussions on “making markets work for farmers”, the conference showed that producer group structures are the key to linking farmers to profitable markets and to strengthening the position of the farmer in the agricultural production chain.

Farmers called upon governments and private sector partners to facilitate farmers’ joint actions through the following 10 principles for action:

1. Generate the political will to give agriculture the priority it needs. Investing in agriculture is the most effective way to revitalize rural communities and reduce poverty in developing countries
2. Recognize farmers’ contribution to the world – providing food , feed, and fiber as well as new opportunities to produce energy (bio-fuels and electricity) to help address the serious environment challenge of reducing greenhouse gases, including by capturing carbon and environmentally-friendly farming practices
3. Provide a favorable policy environment for the development of agriculture, market opportunities, as well as providing farmers with the tools and the capacity to utilize those opportunities through producer organizations. Regulations should be science-based and outcome-focused
4. Fight against abuse of market power and unfair trading practices
5. Allow farmers to organise themselves, to group their products for sale, to participate in orderly marketing schemes and to consolidate their economic power, through means such as farmer co-operatives, producer groups or direct marketing. Farmers should also be able to organize themselves to have voice in farm policy
6. Facilitate inter-professional agreements among producers, manufacturers and distributors of food and agricultural products, and the drawing up production and marketing contracts between farmers and their food chain partners that are based on a fair sharing of the risks, the value-added and the profits.
7. Create incentives for farmers to invest in their farms through an appropriate regulatory framework, agriculture credit systems, risk management schemes and adequate rural infrastructure
8. Reduce the cost burden on farmers through reducing taxes on farm inputs and farming operations, and reducing the administrative burden on farmers through simplifying regulations and reducing the bureaucracy of farm programs.
9. Change competition policy, where necessary, to give farmers the opportunity for collective bargaining with input suppliers, as well as processors and traders on the prices of their products and delivery conditions
10. Adopt a “farmer-centered approach” to development programs of international organizations and bilateral donors in fighting poverty

Farmers worldwide will continue to provide consumers with safe, high-quality food, fiber and fuel. Farmers worldwide seek sustainable incomes, and they call on their national governments, international institutions, donor agencies and other stakeholders to join them in support of these principles for action in which farmers are empowered to take responsibility for the future of their industry. “Give us the tools and we will do the rest”, concluded Ajay Vashee a farmer leader from Zambia.