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## **Message to United Nations: Small Farmers Are Key to Reversing Climate Change and Feeding the World**

### ***Fair Trade and Small Farming Advocates Weigh In on Climate Solutions***

**PORTLAND, OR** - Fair World Project (FWP), a campaign of the Organic Consumers Association, the nation's largest network of green and ethical consumers, and The Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers' Organizations (CLAC), the largest network of fair trade farmers in Latin America, have joined together to call on the United Nations to put small farmers at the forefront of the upcoming climate change summit in New York. United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has convened a climate summit in New York for September 23<sup>rd</sup>; however, absent from both the UN, media and government discourse on climate change is the critical and hopeful message that small-scale organic farmers and pastoralists can cool the planet and feed the world.

"There are over 500 million smallholder family farms in the world," said Ryan Zinn, Political Director of Fair World Project. "Recent reports have demonstrated that small farmers, practicing organic and agro-ecological farming practices not only feed the majority of the world with less than one quarter of global farmland, but are actively sequestering carbon with ecological farming practices."

Industrial agriculture is a primary driver in the generation of greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), accounting for an estimated 40-50% of total emissions. Industrial agriculture practices, including Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), large-scale monocultures, overuse and abuse of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, fossil fuel intensive transportation, and genetically modified organisms (GMOs), among others, all generate significant amounts of greenhouse gases, and further perpetuate an inequitable and unhealthy food system.

However, small farmers and pastoralists could sequester significant amounts of carbon dioxide emissions and reduce methane and nitrous oxide emissions with a switch to widely available and inexpensive organic management practices. In fact, recent studies<sup>1</sup> demonstrate that small farmers already feed the world with less than a quarter of all farmland, while protecting biodiversity, reducing rural vulnerability and actively sequestering CO<sub>2</sub>. Though small farmers are, by and large, more efficient producers than industrial farms, small-scale farms and farmers are rapidly disappearing, while mega farms are increasing in size and number and generating increasing amounts of greenhouse gases.

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<sup>1</sup> "Wake Up Before It's Too Late" (UNCTAD) & Regenerative Organic Agriculture and Climate Change: A Down-to-Earth Solution to Global Warming," Rodale Institute. April 17, 2014. [http://rodaleinstitute.org/assets/RegenOrgAgricultureAndClimateChange\\_20140418.pdf](http://rodaleinstitute.org/assets/RegenOrgAgricultureAndClimateChange_20140418.pdf).

“There is no need for high tech solutions or expensive strategies, nor is it necessary to compromise agricultural or forest lands owned by rural, forest or indigenous communities, under risky carbon market schemes, such as REDD+, which are ineffective for real mitigation and threaten ecosystems, livelihoods, land and territorial sovereignty. We need political will to support and safeguard small farmers,” said Yvette Aguilar, climate change expert of The Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers’ Organizations (CLAC). "Rebuilding local food economies, advancing a global campaign for food sovereignty and supporting ‘Fair Trade’ are critical steps in addressing climate change and feeding a growing global population."

Small farmers and pastoralists are endangered—vulnerable to unfair trade agreements, collapsing financial markets, the global push of agri-fuels, the current privatization of rural economies via extractive megaprojects, land grabs, the unfettered expansion of financial speculation of the food market, and the privatization of genetic resources, among other threats. Prevailing policies and practices in trade, land use, energy use, and patent law contribute to climate change and jeopardize the ability of sustainable, small-scale farmers to stay on their land. Small-scale farmers must be the cornerstone of any global strategy to address climate change and hunger.

According to the United Nations, the growing global population will require an increase of 70 % more food production by 2050. This can only be addressed by shifting current industrial agricultural practices to diversified food systems focused on food security and agroecology. Fortifying and safeguarding small-scale farmers is the best remedy to address rural unemployment and poverty through participatory and decentralized approaches to managed resources like land and water. A combination of public policies, education efforts and market initiatives will be needed to address climate change and the challenges facing small-scale farmers and the planet. The UN recognizes that many initiatives like fair trade have positive impacts for rural communities and natural resource management. The Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers’ Organizations (CLAC), the largest network of fair trade farmers in Latin America, is fighting every day to defend family and small-scale agriculture in order to guarantee a more inclusive and equitable rural development.

"2014 is the UN International Year of Family Farming," Zinn noted. "Addressing the climate crisis requires that we confront the industrial agriculture food system and put small farmers in the driver seat. The time for swift action is now."

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***Fair World Project** is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote organic and fair trade practices and transparent third-party certification of producers, manufacturers and products, domestically and abroad. Through consumer education and advocacy, FWP supports dedicated fair trade producers and brands, and insists on integrity in use of the term “fair trade” in certification, labeling and marketing. FWP publishes a bi-annual publication entitled *For a Better World*. For more information, visit: <http://www.fairworldproject.org>.*

***CLAC** (Coordinadora Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Pequeños Productores de Comercio Justo - Latin American and Caribbean Network of Small Fair Trade Producers), is a network that represents, in Latin America and the Caribbean, organizations of democratically organized small producers, aimed towards the strengthening and development of grassroots associations. <http://clac-comerciojusto.org/>.*