



QUNO

Quaker United Nations Office

To: Federal German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
From: Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO)¹
Date: March 23, 2017
Subject: Written Contribution to the Berlin Charter on Rural Development

We thank you for the opportunity to take part in shaping the *Berlin Charter*.

Comments on *Preamble*:

QUNO's Food & Sustainability Programme welcomes the reference in the *Preamble* to the joint vision of shared responsibility across nations and societies for sustainable global development of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We believe that the indivisible nature of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides for an opportunity for a more integrated and inclusive approach to rural development.

The *Preamble* also highlights the importance of the youth – as agents of change – and their role in 'making sure that no one will be left behind.'² We agree with that. At the same time, we would like to see a reference in the *Preamble* to another agent of change– small-scale farmers. This is particularly important in the context of rural development and the need to make rural life and the activities of small-scale farmers an attractive option to youth.

Half the world's food today is produced by 1.5 million small-scale farmers. Small-scale farmers are stewards of biodiversity; they maintain, adapt, improve, and distribute plant varieties. The agricultural biodiversity they enhance and develop provides a major contribution to global food security, health, and nutrition. They find ways to deal with new pests and disease. They are also active players in critical ecosystem processes, developing and adapting ideas for nutrient cycling, effective water use and the maintenance of soil fertility, both traditional and from elsewhere.³

The paradox is that small-scale farmers are often resource poor and food insecure themselves and are undernourished with a deficient nutrient intake and/or without timely access to food year-round. Small-scale farmers occupy the majority of the planet's marginal lands under cultivation without access to productivity-enhancing inputs, lack access to markets and essential infrastructure, do not have secured land rights and are vulnerable to socio-economic marginalization. Small-scale farmers also tend to be disadvantaged within

¹ The Food and Sustainability Programme of the Quaker United Nations Office addresses the complex and intertwined issues of trade and innovation policy and how they relate to poverty, hunger, and food security. We look at these issues with a particular focus on small-scale farmers, including fisherfolk, forest dwellers and pastoralists, a critical yet largely unheard voice in trade and innovation policy-making. For more information, please visit our website at <http://www.quno.org/areas-of-work> (last accessed March 22, 2017). This note was prepared by Nora Meier, nmeier@quno.ch with input from Susan Bragdon shbragdon@quno.ch

² United Nations General Assembly. Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A/RES/70/1. (2015). Available from: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E (last accessed March 22, 2017).

³ Susan H. Bragdon (2017), *The foundations of food security: Ensuring support to small-scale farmers managing agricultural biodiversity*, Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva.



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inequitable food chains and lack the freedom of choice to opt out of dominant food systems or to choose quality inputs.⁴

This is, in part, due to the drive to produce non-food export commodities in order to generate revenue, which is prioritized by governments and programs that seek to small-scale farmers to markets. However, overcoming vulnerability and local food insecurity requires more than increasing productive capacity; it requires increasing the capacity of farmers to meet their own needs and respond to local challenges and opportunities, as locally defined. Small-scale farmers have intimate knowledge of their natural surroundings, the expertise needed to experiment with new tools and management practices and to observe subtle changes over time, and the capacity to adapt to changing environmental and socio-economic conditions. Supporting small-scale farmer innovation means strengthening these capacities, and by extensions, contributing to both local and global food security, rural livelihood improvements, and agroecosystem resilience.

A crucial part of rural development is to make life in rural areas attractive again, as stated in the *Preamble*. The decline of small-scale farmer livelihoods in often neglected rural areas has increased rural-urban migration rates and is threatening the very existence of small-scale farmers. The number of small-scale producers is declining due to decreasing public support for agriculture and small-scale farming as well as unfair market structures and environmental threats that disenfranchise them.

Hence, we agree with the statement made in the *Preamble* which calls for integrated development strategies but we would like to include the need for coherent national food policies that put small-scale farmers and agricultural biodiversity at their core.

Consequently, and considering the creativity, innovative capacity, and the importance for the improvement of rural livelihoods of small-scale farmers, we would like to see this population added in the first point of the *Preamble*. It would then read “[...] *use the energy, creativity and innovative capacity of youth and small-scale farmers* [...]”.⁵

Furthermore, in point five of the *Preamble*, we would like to add agricultural biodiversity. This would then read as follows: “[...] *that foster the sustainable conservation, augmentation and*

⁴ Susan H. Bragdon (2015), *Small-scale farmer innovation systems: A literature review*, Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva. Available from: <http://quno.org/sites/default/files/resources/SSF%20Innovation%20Systems%20-%20Literature%20Review.pdf> (last accessed March 22, 2017). Susan H. Bragdon (2015), *Realizing the right to food in an era of climate change*, Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva. Available from: <http://www.quno.org/resource/2015/8/realizing-right-food-era-climate-change> (last accessed March 30, 2017).

⁵ QUNO's Food & Sustainability programme works to ensure that innovation policy supports, rather than undermines, the critical role of small-scale farmers for ensuring local and global food security in biodiverse environments. Such works includes convening discussions about small-scale farmer innovation; commissioning research about different approaches to intellectual property protection of seeds and genetic resources, and impacts of these; promoting awareness of farmers' and other stakeholders' experience and interests in relation to intellectual property discussions that affect agriculture; improving understanding about the range of policy options available; and undertaking human rights-based impact assessments of intellectual property protection for seeds. See our website for more information <http://www.quno.org/areas-of-work/innovation-and-agriculture> (last accessed March 30, 2017).



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*use of natural resources, including water, soils, forests, fisheries and livestock, **and agricultural biodiversity**, for income generation [...].”*

Comments on the Section “This Charter Provides Important Stimulus for”

In the second point, we would like to see added small-scale farmer activities. It would then read as follows: “[...] *people-centered economies, promoting youth employment **and supporting small-scale farmers and their agroecological practices including the maintenance and development of agricultural biodiversity**, and women’s economic empowerment [...].”*

Comments on the Section Global Opportunities

In the second point, we would also like to add small-scale farmer for the above-noted reasons. It would then read as follows: “[...] *Three of the world’s greatest, yet underutilized and under supported resources are its youthful population, women, **and small-scale farmers (the majority of whom are increasingly women)**, for whom [...].”*

In the fifth point, we would like it to read as follows: “[...] *The demand from changing diets can be met by rural areas, in particular **small-scale farmers producing diverse crops and varieties**, provided these areas **and populations** are well connected and incentives for producing diverse healthy foods are in place [...].”*

In the sixth point, we would like it to read as follows: “[...] *The bio-economy **and agroecology** offer great potential [...].”*

Comments on the Section Global Challenges

In the fourth point, we would like to see a reference to the need for an integrated approach to rural development.

In the eight point, we would like it to read as follows: “[...] *Many production systems in rural areas, **such as industrial agriculture**, are unsustainable [...].”*

Comments on Section Elements of a New Rural Development Paradigm

(2) Entrepreneurship and Jobs

We welcome the sixth point in this section in particular and would like to highlight QUNO’s work in this area. We aim to ensure that trade and innovation policy are supportive of, and do not undermine, the critical role of small-scale farmers in providing local and global food security and the resilience we will need to face ever-increasing environmental change. In that regard, QUNO has been developing an online tool to help explain the complex relationship between food security measures and the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) trade rules. The tool is a web-based programme that explains and analyzes over 60 important food security

policy measures. It defines each food security measure, why the measure is important, the circumstances in which its use might be needed, its relationship to other policy measures, and its relation to global trade rules⁶.

In the seventh point, we would like to highlight that while changing the perception of agriculture, it is crucial to promote agroecological systems rather than industrial agriculture, which is a major driver of biodiversity loss, contribute upwards of 30% of greenhouse gas emissions in the world, uses over 70 % of the freshwater resources available on our planet, causes water and land pollution. In short, industrial agriculture hurts the health of people and our planet.

(4) Sustainable Landscapes and Climate Resilience

In the third point, we would like it to read as follows: “[...] *Climate resilience and adaptation within rural population, **in particular small-scale farmers engaging in agroecological practices**, is a key priority for action [...].*”

In the fourth point, we would like to replace climate-smart agricultural practices with **agroecological practices**.

(7) Sound Governance, Finance and Funding

In the fifth point, we would like it to read as follows: “[...] *and the must include mechanisms to support dialogue amongst stakeholders, including the youth, **women, and small-scale farmers** [...].*”

Comments on Section Call for Action

In the third point, we would like to include women and small-scale farmers. It would then read as follows: “[...] *of local stakeholders and communities, in particular youth, **women, and small-scale farmers**, based on shared evidence-based diagnoses [...].*”

Thank you.

⁶ For more information, please read the project brief entitled *An Interactive Trade Policy Tool*(2015), Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva. Available from: http://quno.org/sites/default/files/resources/QUNO%20Project%20Brief_Interactive%20Trade%20Tool%20December%202015.pdf (last accessed March 22, 2017) or contact QUNO Food & Sustainability Programme Representative Susan H. Bragdon at sbragdon@quno.ch. We are currently looking for funding to take this tool to the next stage with the goal to allow users to share their own experience and information. In this way, it could act as an evolving resource for stakeholders to easily find clear, reliable information.