



## THE UN FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT +2 STOCKTAKING MOMENT- JULY 2023

### CARITAS CONFEDERATION<sup>1</sup> KEY MESSAGES

On the occasion of the upcoming UN Food Systems Stocktaking Moment to take place in Rome, Italy from 24-26 July 2023 with the aim to provide opportunities for countries to report on progress made at the national level since the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021 and their contributions to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, Caritas organizations messages on the upcoming moment include the following:

#### Caritas Key Messages

- **Food is a public common good that plays a specific role in the life and wellbeing of every human being. It is not a commodity, and should not be treated as such.**
- **Food systems transformation must be oriented by the Integral Ecology paradigm, where all interconnected issues are taken into account. To that effect, policies at global, national and local level - need to consider food systems holistically and support a sustainable transformation to ensure a good future for all.**
- **Government policies, strategies and programs in the food system transformation agenda should be farmer-driven and based on inclusive planning and implementation processes.**
- **Industrial agriculture harms the climate, while the changing climate disrupts the food system. It also ignores the millions of small-scale farmers who produce the majority of food. This calls for the need to move away from a focus on efficiency and profit maximisation in the food system, and instead focus on sustaining local supply chains.**
- **Agroecological practices are the only alternative to combine food quality, environmental protection and response to climate change, human health, employment and social inclusion. Governments must invest in Agroecology for locally driven sustainable food system solutions.**
- **Recognition of traditional seed is very important in improving and sustaining food systems and it will also help in upholding and sustaining small scale farmers' knowledge on seed sovereignty.**

#### *Concerns on the Global Food System Governance and the current transformation agenda*

1. **Corporate capture of global food governance:** The concentration of power in a limited number of huge agri-food transnational corporations threatens a balanced global and local food governance. These corporations, whose size is often more than enough to compete directly with governments in terms of bargaining and economic power, introduce an imbalance towards an industrialized model of food production and consumption. The promotion of the **“UN” Food Systems Summit** still has several concerns for the **high risks of corporate capture**. This includes its limited level of transparency and accountability; limited adoption of a human rights-based

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<sup>1</sup>Caritas Internationalis is an international confederation of Catholic charities made up of more than 160 member organizations operating in over 200 countries and working at the grassroots

approach at its foundation; limited participation of key actors (smallholder farmers, consumers, indigenous people, women and youths); and neither provides channels for the identification and settlement of potential conflicts of interest, nor for ensuring independence from commercial interests. For decades, governments have done little to protect small-scale farmers and food producers, but instead have pushed them out of the business by growing corporate companies<sup>2</sup>. **Caritas is concerned that the food system transformation still has a narrative and a *modus operandi* based on profit-driven approaches, presented as “solutions”, without tackling the structural injustices that have led to the current food crisis.** According to several Caritas organisations working on these issues in Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America, Corporate power and the industrialization of agriculture, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture, and market concentration in food systems have advanced tremendously during the past decades at different levels.

2. **Multistakeholderism- that brings limited involvement of farmers in the food system:** Trends towards multi stakeholder governance is overshadowing the need for more democratic and accountable multilateral governance of key global processes, **and this has affected small-scale farmers who cannot compete with losing out in competition from large-scale multinational companies.** An important policy failure has **been a lack of support to small-scale farmers, which could accelerate sustainable food systems transformation.** This affects the **rights-based strategies for the sustainable transformation of agriculture and food systems.**

Inclusive multi-stakeholderism can have a role in enhancing food systems governance by facilitating linkages between actors, thereby increasing adaptability and learning. However, by cancelling the distinctions between stakeholders, right holders and duty bearers, it shows a twisted landscape, where policy processes are unclear and unaccountable. Caritas firmly stands beside the right holders, whose voice is often unheard; and supports the demands coming from the farmer organisations, the popular and grassroots movements for a more Just food systems world, where human dignity and human rights are promoted at all levels.

Further and from 2021, some of the criticisms reflected fears of overreliance and overrepresentation of global corporates, and a much less important presence of civil society and grassroots organisations. In this regard, and from experiences on the ground, the current approaches seem less promising and may have limited capacity to justly transform food systems.

Additionally and from Caritas testimonies<sup>3</sup> from communities, Caritas Internationalis concludes that an inclusive holistic approach based on human rights is needed to tackle all the interconnected issues linked to agriculture. Caritas advocates for agroecology, supports knowledge sharing on this and considers that the corporate interests influencing the UN Food Systems Summit represent a threat for the development and implementation of locally lead agriculture practices and approaches that embrace agroecology.

### What we call for

- ❖ **A Human Rights-based Approach to Food Systems:** Despite the wide consensus about the right of everyone to have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, consistent with the universal human right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, this

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<sup>2</sup> FIAN International report on Corporate Capture FIAN Comic: The Corporate Capture of Food Systems | ESCR-Net

<sup>3</sup> [Caritas Internationalis Policy Brief: localization as a response to enhancing resilience of the food systems, 2022](#)

right is still unaccomplished in a just and equitable way for the 828<sup>4</sup> million people affected by hunger today.

Caritas urges firmly stating that any debate on food systems must have **justice and human dignity** at their centerpiece, to live out the “*leave no one behind*” principle underpinning Agenda 2030. The voices of every human being and stakeholder must be considered in the stocktaking moment, and those who bear special responsibility (public decision-makers, the private sector) can no longer be indifferent to the sufferings of the poor and to the devastating exploitation of natural resources. **A human rights-based approach to food systems puts people – and their living environment - before profits. Human rights standards ensure that markets serve social needs and oblige States to grant people adequate social protection, inclusive participation, accountable institutions, access to means of redress.**

- ❖ **The democratization of decision-making processes regarding food systems is crucial** - not just an ancillary aspect - in order to legitimize authorities’ decisions and reach fair solutions respectful of human rights and of different cultures, knowledge and practices, which make sense to the people directly affected at every stage of the food systems. **Monitoring and accountability** of all actors bearing special responsibilities should also be part of the future food systems transformation agenda. Caritas organisations advocate for uncovering injustice and for food systems where corporate actors are made accountable through adequate **national and international normative frameworks on corporate responsibility and due diligence**.
- ❖ **Agroecology as a Path to Just, Equitable and Sustainable Food Systems:** Among the negative effects of industrial agriculture, we count water waste and shortages, species extinction, high greenhouse-gas emissions, soil degradation and land grabbing. These effects cause social, healthy, economic and ecological damage that harms the livelihoods and wellbeing of rural communities and the ability of ecosystems to adjust to the already noticeable effects of the climate crisis. The business model followed by large international companies promoting the large-scale use of pesticides and industrial seeds is based on the “Green Revolution” concept, whereby the objective of raising yields would be achieved through the massive use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Strong policy responses are needed against the unregulated importation, manufacture and use of agro-chemicals, which are a big threat to food systems in many countries, posing huge health risks to farmers themselves and to the population.

Agroecology is an approach to agriculture that is firmly based on science and traditional wisdom; it is founded on ecological principles, the food sovereignty approach and the right to adequate food. **It aims for a socially just and ecologically sustainable transformation of the agri-food system, where food producers, workers and consumers are put at the center of policymaking and of food systems governance.** These include Agroecological -based farming techniques and systems that use local and natural products and practices reinforced by a context-specific approach that focuses on biodiversity protection, knowledge sharing and the socio-cultural values of food for each community.

Despite limited institutional support, Agroecology is widely practiced and has been developed by farming communities worldwide, and is being promoted by social movements around the

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.fao.org/home/en/>

globe. Further and in Caritas experience, this has contributed to enhancing the sustainability of local food systems, and to climate change adaptation and mitigation.

- ❖ **The role of public, national and sub-national, authorities is key** to bring together all concerned actors, including community-based sectors of the economy, and guarantee meaningful participation of local producers and consumers in identifying and adopting appropriate policies. The same principle holds true at **global level**: governments and public international authorities have to maintain democratic, inclusive and accountable policy spaces to dialogue with all concerned parties.
- ❖ **Women** must play an essential role in food systems transformation. Empowering women, land tilting to enhance the security of Land Tenure in agriculture *vis-a-vis* food and nutrition security are crucial in the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2 and 5. **Equal access for women to resources and effective participation in decision-making**, recognition of their economic and political **leadership** are necessary requirements to transform food systems consistently with Integral Ecology and food justice.