Rio+20 declaration a milestone for sustainable agriculture

The declaration on a global sustainable development adopted today by Heads of State and governments sees sustainable agriculture and food chains as a key element for the fight against hunger in our world and for keeping our planet habitable for future generations. For Biovision foundation, this is an important milestone for its commitment to ecological agriculture and support for smallholder farming structures.

After the initial draft did not even include a chapter on the subject of sustainable agriculture, Biovision and its partners managed to get their wording into the draft during pre-negotiations. Although these passages were somewhat weakened in the final negotiations here in Rio, a clear commitment to the need to support sustainable agriculture survived the strong attacks of various interest groups.

Another boost for our cause came from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, when he presented his vision of a world without hunger today. Titled „Zero Hunger Challenge“, the vision stresses the key role of sustainable agriculture in fighting hunger. Ban Ki-moon urged that all food systems had to become sustainable and demanded greater opportunities for smallholder farmers – especially women – who produce most of the world’s food, to empower them to double their productivity and income.

"This vision is largely in line with the demands of Biovision, because smallholder farming structures have been proven to generate the biggest benefits for the environment, food security, the fight against poverty and promote the self-determination of these farmers," said Hans R. Herren, President of Biovision.

Ban Ki-moon noted that in a world of plenty there were still nearly one billion people suffering from hunger. By 2050, the world’s population is expected to rise to over 9 billion. According to the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), a fundamental change in course in global agricultural policy is an absolute necessity. In addition, the global food chain, right down to the individual consumer, has to rise to the challenge.

With the backing of the declaration of the Earth summit and Ban Ki-moon’s vision, and the continued support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Biovision will continue its work on the ground even stronger. This means offering smallholder farmers in our target areas in Africa support for self-help in different aspects of their lives; be it their work in the fields, access to markets, right up to investments and land rights. The last point is of particular urgency for women, who form the majority of smallholder farmers in many countries, as they are subject to patriarchal judicial structures denying them basic rights.

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