



## Speaker Summary Note

**Session:** East Asia

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**Title:** **Re-thinking How Each Should Do Business:  
Regional and actor perspectives**

- 1. Introduction.** First of all thanks to IFPRI for giving us the opportunity to share our perspectives in this high level conference. I work as secretary general of Asian Farmers Association or AFA. We are an alliance of national farmers' organizations, currently having 10 members, with 10 million small scale women and men farmers, fishers and indigenous peoples as members, in eight East Asian countries—Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea. Here, I would like to share xxx points.
- 2. Links between agriculture, nutrition, and health.** For many of us, we are very sure that there is a link between agriculture, nutrition and health. Some farmers have gone sick because of mis-techniques in fertilizer application. Some farmers have experienced inability to catch protein rich mudfish from their paddy fields because they already died from water pollution. In the Philippines we have a folk song “Bahay Kubo” (“My Nipa Hut”), where it says even if the nipa hut is small, there are different kinds of vegetable around the house. When Per said yesterday that to see the link, you have to work with a woman who is a farmer and a mother, that I find is very true. My first involvement in rural development work was as a community organizer for eight years on nutrition and health. We formed mothers' groups at village levels, conducted nutrition and primary health care classes. The mothers established herbal and vegetable gardens in their homelots and the sides of the paddy fields, made ointments and syrups out of herbs and trees, and cooked vegetables and beans in different ways in efforts to make these more nutritious, palatable and exciting to their children.
- 3. Paradigm shift.** The work of 400 scientists, called the International Assessment for Agricultural Knowledge, Science, and Technology for Development or IAASTD, commissioned by the World Bank and the FAO, called for the fundamental way we do farming. Business as usual is not an option, rather, investments on small-scale farmers and sustainable, integrated, diversified, agro-ecological and organic methods are the way forward and investments in this kind of family farming, will significantly respond to the interrelated issues of poverty, hunger, food insecurity, financial crisis and climate change. With this paradigm shift, we need a re-thinking on several areas.
- 4. Re-thinking on production.** East Asia is a success in green revolution. But chemical-intensive farming has degraded the quality of our soils and our forests. At the same time, we need to adapt to

the changing climate. We should also do our share in mitigating climate change because we are also citizens in this one planet. To address these concerns, we need to upscale our sustainable, agro-ecological approaches. As farmers' organizations, we help build capacities for this through farmer-to-farmer exchange, training of farmer extensionists, in situ demonstration farms, farmers field schools, learn and earning farms, on-site action research with local agriculture institutes, NGOs and involving farmers as researchers, even crop breeders, participatory plant breeding and community based genetic resource conservation. In Cambodia, our partner NGO CEDAC and our member Farmer and Nature Net has successfully practiced the system of rice intensification, and now it is supported by the Ministry of Agriculture. In Bohol Island in the Philippines, an ordinance declaring the island as a sustainable agriculture province has been done, thanks to a lot of advocacy from the church, the NGOs and the farmers' groups. The transition from chemical to low-input, organic farming is difficult and we need studies and policies on how to support farmers who are in this phase. The re-discovery and further development of flood and drought resilient crops, as well as establishment of early warning systems and community based disaster preparedness and management and crop insurance are likewise necessary and is being advocated with governments.

5. **Re-thinking on energy use.** In the last BBC world challenge, one of the winners was a Philippine NGO promoting ram or impulse pump, a device which uses the energy of falling water to lift a lesser amount of water to a higher elevation than the source. We had a meeting with the NGO who is promoting this two weeks ago and was excited to know that they have various simple, community-based technologies not only for irrigation but also for energy use—using wind and solar energy. I remember the villages in Attapeu province in Laos which we visited last year. They had a big river, and mountains, and unirrigated ricefields, and they can hardly grow vegetables. We have this belief that the ram pump can be an affordable answer to their need. Our member in Indonesia is also promoting charcoal briquettes from coconut; and, in Cambodia, fuel efficient stoves. It will be good if we further develop and promote small-scale renewable energy technologies.
6. **Re thinking on marketing.** We have long been organized as associations for political advocacy and claim making, but now we see the need to organize ourselves around commodity clusters, inspired by the highly successful village-level Production and Marketing Teams of Taiwan. We are starting with commodity clusters of organic rice, coconut, sugar, organic vegetables in Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam. Inspired by the marketing strategies in Japan and Korea, we call on investments in the development and improvement of traditional local markets, including wholesale markets owned and managed by local governments in partnership with organized farmers' groups. We are working for direct supply to traders. We are also starting to work on value addition. In the Philippines, we are organizing the clusters of producers of Philippine lemon, and they want to produce lemon "calamansi" concentrate, involving the women in these clusters. Inspired by Brazil, our Philippine member is negotiating with the Social Welfare Department that it use organic rice in its feeding program and that our members supply this organic rice. We will need support for soft loans for start-up capital for trading and marketing, capacity building for business management, and subsidies for basic pre- and post-harvest facilities. We will need support for consumers to patronize sustainable agriculture products and food sustainably processed by rural communities—make it more affordable and accessible to the poor—as they also have the right to safe and healthy food.
7. **Re thinking on access to natural resources.** Access and control of land, water, and common property resources by small-scale farmers, fishers and indigenous peoples are critical in sustainable agriculture. For fishers in the Philippines, the main policy needed is delineation of municipal waters to protect them from the intrusion of commercial fishers. With the emerging phenomenon of large-scale land investments by some developed countries some in East Asia, affecting developing countries some of which are in East Asia, we need policies to secure women and men farmers' land, water, and common property rights. And educate and organize farmers so that they have strong bargaining power when they negotiate for contract farming and joint ventures.

8. **Re-thinking on gender.** The work of empowering women always starts with helping women reflect on their situation, and then inspiring them by making them realize about their human dignity, their rights, and what other women in similar conditions do. Organizing, capacity building and leadership formation and training will be key programs as well. Also, as farming in many developing countries is a family endeavor, the one important thing also that can greatly help women farmers is the support that they will get from their husbands and male leaders/members of their organizations. In households where both the man and the woman have been sensitized to the dynamics of gender and believe in equal rights and opportunities, the full potentials of a woman farmer are harnessed to the fullest.
  
9. **The main role of Farmers' Organizations (FOs).** Our mandate is to empower ourselves—politically, socially, economically—so that we can claim our rights as citizens of our countries, of our region, of our world; so that we can decide and do by ourselves what we think we should act or do to improve our conditions, and being able to get the necessary support from others. Politically, we increase the awareness of our members about our situation and our rights. We develop our capabilities to analyze these situation, to present confidently our policy and program proposals to our governments, decision makers, and other stakeholders. We organize ourselves to put pressure to our governments to listen, dialogue with us, make laws and policies that will benefit us. Economically, we exchange experience and expertise on various sustainable agriculture technologies. We form commodity clusters, production and marketing cooperatives. We develop our capacities in making market researches, business plans, feasibility studies. We facilitate links to markets, add value to our products, develop direct farmer-consumer relationships. All of these to have better lives, stronger health.

A shift of development finance going directly to FOs will be a worthwhile investment. We believe that FOs are key pillars of social change and national development. If empowered and consolidated enough in terms of magnitude and competence, we have the potential to effect serious and substantive economic, political, and cultural changes in society. A financing approach called Farmers Fighting Poverty espoused by international agri-agencies is worth looking into.

In official development assistance, we call on policies that will strongly encourage governments to involve CSOs and FOs in the decision making processes in planning , implementation and monitoring. The work of IFAD through the farmers; forum processes, the work of FAO through the civil society mechanism of the reformed CFS, and the work of GAFSP in involving CSO members in the Steering Committee—these are steps in the right direction. We hope that various ODAs in agriculture, nutrition and health will develop organized FOs as well. And that assistance be provided to strengthen their capacities for such meaningful involvement.

Thank you for your attention.