



**IBON International Submission to the Zero Draft Consultation Paper on  
“Investing in Smallholder Agriculture for Food and Nutrition Security”  
30 January 2013**

*IBON International welcomes this opportunity to provide inputs to the zero draft on smallholder investments in agriculture. The report opens opportunities for greater policy and advocacy work discourse in support of smallholders. As a southern INGO providing capacity development for southern social movements, grassroots groups, and advocates for democracy and human rights, IBON stands for a development framework centered on human rights, including promotion of policies that support genuinely sustainable production systems that uphold the rights and welfare of marginalised sectors. IBON International is likewise a member and provides secretariat hosting to the People’s Coalition on Food Sovereignty (PCFS), a global coalition of small-scale food producers including peasants, women, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples and their advocates working for food sovereignty as a campaign and advocacy platform in Asia, Africa and Latin America.*

**1. Food sovereignty as an overarching framework.** Even as 500 smallholder farmers support over two billion people, they remain among the most poor and vulnerable at the global level. The zero draft recognises poverty as among the constraints faced by smallholders but does not cite structural causes engendering poverty especially in the south. Poverty is not caused by material scarcity, but by limited and unequal access to productive resources. The lack of control over basic resources such as land remain a fundamental concern especially in developing countries. Control and ownership of sustainable food production systems primarily benefitting communities and domestic populations is the essence of food sovereignty.

**2. Enabling environment.** Discussion on enabling environment should foremost include the inalienable right of small farmers to land and seeds, and not just the right to farm as cited in the report.

**3. Role of Women.** Greater attention should be given on the rights and welfare of small holder women who comprise a majority of the world’s smallholder farmers. Rural women in particular take on burden of raising families and providing food on their table, as the report notes, but lacks clear discussions on how exactly smallholder women’s issues including unpaid farm work can be addressed.

**4. Participation in policy and other decision-making processes.** Mechanisms starting from the community to national levels for genuine and meaningful

representation especially in national processes of smallholders must be in place. Indeed smallholder organisations must be strengthened and they must own the policies that impact on their lives.

**5. Private investments.** The report cites contract agriculture as an opportunity for smallholders in developing countries but actual experiences have shown that these have served the interest of private corporations and not the smallholders themselves. Private investments in agricultural land and natural resources must be strictly regulated to ensure that they do not further increase monoculture-based and export-oriented agriculture. Private funding can only work for the benefit of poor farming communities if investors fit under “genuinely country-led food security plans that target the most marginal farmers”. (*UNSR on Right to Food Olivier de Schutter, 2011*). In relation to this, promotion of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) need a closer examination in terms of who exactly benefits from these.

**6. Protection against land and other resource grabbing.** There is no reference to the phenomenon of large-scale land acquisitions or land grabs which are made possible through investment and other policies in agriculture. Investments in agriculture should not be used to justify land acquisitions that further deprive smallholder farmers of their right to land and seeds.

**7. Development cooperation.** Development cooperation and aid should promote equitable and mutually beneficial exchange of food and agriculture technologies and resources among communities and nations. It should not be used to facilitate corporate interests in agriculture which are destructive to local food systems, health and environment.

**8. Public expenditures and investments.** These must supplement rural self-financing, especially for major public works and industrial projects that primarily benefit local food production systems.

**9. Evidence-based studies on smallholder agriculture.** Research in agriculture and in relevant investment policies must be based on evidence-based studies that are hinged on how to strengthen domestic food production systems.

**10. Agrarian reform and comprehensive rural development.** National strategies for food security and food sovereignty must include genuine agrarian reform programs that provide support to masses of smallholder farmers. These should be mobilized through producers’ cooperatives, growers’ associations, local savings and credit associations, etc. to ensure financial needs of sustainable food systems. Smallholder investment policies should promote these.#