

Declaration of African Rural Women

“MEASURES FOR AFRICAN WOMEN TO ADVANCE AFRICAN AGRICULTURE”



PAFO WOMEN RURAL FORUM

October 2023

On 23 and 24 October 2023, the 4th edition of PAFO African rural women forum for members of national platforms of farmers' organizations and agricultural producers belonging to regional networks affiliated to PAFO was held in Tunis, Tunisia, alongside the work of the 6th General Assembly of the Pan-African Platform of Farmers' Organizations (PAFO). These are EAFF, PROPAC, ROPPA, SACAU and UMAGRI. In keeping with PAFO's vision of a dynamic, prosperous and sustainable African agriculture that ensures food security and sovereignty, including socio-economic and cultural development, the participants engaged in cordial discussions with a view to guiding PAFO's actions in favor of the socio-economic development of women farmers and the advancement of African agriculture.

African rural women, the hope of nourishing Africa, are still under the weight of socio-economic and cultural obstacles.

The participants unanimously agreed that, despite their demographic importance and their unfailing contribution to the continent's agro-sylvo-pastoral development process, rural women are still experiencing difficulties in asserting themselves and fully playing their inevitably decisive role in the development of family farming, agricultural sectors and African territories. This is why :

- Actors and artisans of change in the agricultural sector, rural African women are nevertheless limited in their access to essential production factors such as low-lying farmland, developed land and inputs (seeds and fertilizers). In addition, African women and girls have been disadvantaged by the gender divide in farming, and take on secondary tasks;
- Rural African women are remarkably present in the "processing" and "marketing" of agri-food products. They process up to 80% of agricultural products on the continent. However, they face obstacles in gaining access to equipment, processing technologies and institutional markets;
- Given the persistence of socio-cultural constraints, the continent's women have low levels of literacy and little access to knowledge, know-how and opportunities in terms of the development of agriculture and Africa's territories;

- In a context of worsening armed conflicts and the impact of climate change, which has led to the disappearance and migration of men and young people, the responsibility of rural women in the management of households and farms has increased, while rural poverty is rampant and unfortunately affects women and girls;
- Progress for technically competent African rural women will require easy access to production factors and financing.

With a view to improving PAFO's contribution to the empowerment of African rural women and the development of sustainable, ecological and resilient agricultural systems, African rural women invite the governments of African States, African and international intergovernmental institutions, technical and financial partners in the rural world and pan-African and international solidarity NGOs to focus on ten (10) recommendations, namely:

- 1) **WORK** towards harmonized strategic planning, legislation and regulations on the continent in order to remove gender-specific barriers and stereotypes that discourage action by African women in general and rural African women in particular;
- 2) **TAKE AND IMPLEMENT** "affirmative action" or "positive discrimination" measures to ensure that rural women are represented in consultative bodies at national, Pan-African and international level. Quotas of at least 30% must be set aside for women;
- 3) **SUPPORT** all non-political processes for organizing and structuring rural women around promising agricultural sectors, upstream for the intensification of production and downstream for the sustainable processing and quality of agricultural, livestock, fishing and hunting products;
- 4) **EQUIP** women with knowledge, skills, equipment, technologies and various factors to increase the productivity of farms while respecting the environment. Rural women affirm their commitment to agro-ecology, which is a sustainable system of production and processing;

5) **MOBILISE FUNDS AND DEVELOP INNOVATIVE FINANCIAL PRODUCTS** to support women's initiatives to produce, process and market agri-food products "made in Africa". All of which means protecting women against land grabbing by multinationals, local organizations and dignitaries. In this respect, African women already regret the disruption of African agri-food markets by imports.

6) **PROMOTE** the free movement of agri-food products both within the continent, through compliance with the AfCFTA, and international trade laws. Rural women therefore encourage any trade agreement offering preferences to African food exports;

7) **ESTABLISH AND EFFECTIVELY DRIVE** a platform of African rural women within PAFO with a view to constantly formulating proposals promoting the socio-economic empowerment of rural women on the continent;

8) **PROMOTE** the practice of digital agriculture by rural African women in the context of the information society, where information and communication technologies can undeniably play an important role in all agricultural value chains;

9) **CREATE AND CO-OPERATE** at various levels for information and knowledge management systems and tools for rural women, in order to bring them closer to opportunities linked to capacity building and the financing of their activities;

10) **BUILD** the capacities of rural women for advocacy and effective participation in decision making at the various levels – local, national, regional and continental.

Faced with the persistent constraints and challenges that are holding back the development of rural African women and for a united, strong, prosperous and food-sovereign and food security in Africa, rural African women will remain committed to these recommendations and will make it their duty, on the one hand, to raise awareness among their grassroots members to support their diagnosis and proposals. On the other hand, rural African women will above all have a duty to individually and collectively call on the policy makers to show flexibility in decision-making so that rural African women are

technically competent in farming, economically competitive in the markets, and socially a leader and committed in the public arena.

Solidarity between rural women in Africa!

Long live PAFO! Long live Africa!

Tunis, 24 October 2023

