

Network of Women Agriculture Ministers and Leaders (NWAML)

Report of the NWAML launch during the high level segment of the 16th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

May 14 2008, New York

The launch of the Network of Women Agriculture Ministers and Leaders during the high level segment of CSD-16 in New York was attended by about 50 representatives of governments and civil society. The Network was conceived and developed by Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and Heifer International. Its organization was supported through a contribution from the Government of Norway to IFAD. The summary below is followed by the meeting agenda and participant list.

Meeting Summary

Martha Hirpa, Board Chair of WOCAN and Director of Gender Equity at Heifer International, and Cheryl Morden, Director of IFAD's North American Liaison Office co-facilitated the meeting. They began with a round of introductions by all participants.

The co-facilitators explained that the idea for this Network originated from a side event organized by WOCAN, with support from IFAD and Heifer International, during the UNECE regional preparatory meeting for CSD in Geneva. The major aim of the Network is to connect women working at different levels, from Ministers to professionals to women farmers, in order to ultimately respond to women farmers' needs and concerns. The purpose of this launch meeting of the Network is to address issues put forward by small scale women farmers and leaders, and to have an interactive discussion about how such a Network might work and have impact. The co-facilitators expressed the hope that some of those participating will decide to carry the Network forward. The centrality of women's role has been acknowledged at this CSD - we have been sowing seeds and the challenge is what will it take to harvest what we have sown? How do we give impetus for what has begun? Women's leadership is critical to this.

Gerda Verburg, Minister of Agriculture, The Netherlands, thanked the organizers for initiating the Network and expressed her full support for the Network's call to enhance the representation and involvement of women in decision-making processes in the areas of agriculture and rural development. Women are the main producers of staple crops, they are the custodians of natural and productive resources and they are instigators of activities that generate agricultural and non-agricultural income. Women play therefore a key role in sustainable development, especially in agriculture. However, they are often excluded from decision and policy-making processes and they are lacking access to land and other natural resources. It is time for change and it is time to give women their equal rights and a voice in this crucial sector, be it at local, national or international level. The Minister expressed her commitment to support this process wherever possible.

Since the Beijing World Conference in 1995, the Netherlands has integrated the need for women's empowerment and the concept of gender mainstreaming more systematically in national policies. Gender mainstreaming implies the reorganization, development and

improvement of policy processes in such a way that gender equality can be achieved and integrated in the policies of government. This doesn't only mean that the Government should ensure that others take into account a gender perspective, promote women's rights and strive for gender equality, but this also applies to policies and institutions of the Government itself. From 2004 until 2007 the Commission on Emancipation has monitored and assessed the process of gender mainstreaming at the different ministries in The Netherlands, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. One of the positive outcomes of their assessment is that the Ministry works in a constructive way on diversity, interactive policy-making and gender equality. The Minister attached great importance to involve multiple stakeholders, including women, in sustainable innovations in agriculture and rural development.

Additional concrete activities are being undertaken. First, the themes of gender and diversity will be further strengthened within the Ministry's main themes of Food, Rural Areas, Nature and Sustainable Entrepreneurship and they will select several projects and programs in which gender will be part of our overall multi-stakeholder and diversity approach. Secondly, the Ministry will develop a community of practice where stakeholders and experts will exchange experiences on gender and diversity within policies. Thirdly, they are looking into possibilities to integrate diversity and gender in the training of staff members at the Ministry. Finally, the Ministry will actively stimulate the appointment of women at management level. These are small steps and there is a long way to go to ensure that the voice of women is being heard and that the needs of for example women farmers are seriously taking into account. But, she believes in the concept of "leading by example". This is also what she hopes the new Network will achieve: working together to create an enabling environment in which women can participate fully in decision and policy-making processes in the areas of agriculture and rural development.

Lulama Xingwana, Minister of Agriculture, South Africa, expressed the importance of opening the Network to all women leaders and women committed to gender equality and change, because you don't need to be a minister for this. This assembly will provide a firm platform where women can network and share experiences and she pledged her support to this goal and to the Network. The liberation of women has to be defined by the quality of life enjoyed by women, especially rural women in our countries. These women will need our concerted efforts as ministers responsible for agriculture, environment, water and rural development. Governments need to heed CEDAW and the rights of women in Africa to develop policies that will grant women access to land, and we have an obligation for this to take place to ensure the total emancipation of women. No one will liberate you from under development and oppression; you must do it for yourself. She called on women of the world to unite and we have nothing to lose but your aprons.

In South Africa, they have initiated a platform, Women in Agriculture and Rural Development (WARD), led by civil society women at the Congress of Rural Women in 2007 in Durban. The President of WARD, Cynthia Molo, is participating in this Network launch. They speak for themselves and their slogan is: "Nothing about us without us." Linda Nghatsane, the NAFU Female Farmer of the Year, is also present today and was awarded this title due to her commitment to disadvantaged individuals. Recommendations from WARD gave us the basis for our discussions at CSD 16. We are guided by the Freedom Charter, which states that people will share the wealth of our country. Agriculture is dominated by women at mostly low levels, and women workers are critical to the growth of our economy. The agriculture sector is dominated, controlled and owned by men. Women constitute the majority of people trapped by poverty, and

farming communities are mostly ignored. It is imperative that women influence local development plans so they are aligned and can improve their lot. Training and education at formal and informal levels cannot be neglected. High rates of illiteracy affect rural women and we need functional literacy to empower rural women. Women's role in agriculture remains unrecognized in both policies and investments and there are gender silent policies and practices. The South African documents were silent on gender, but the women intervened and mainstreamed gender into the report. South Africa adopted a biofuels strategy, but there is concern about the impact on security. When food production is increased, we must ensure that women are gaining in their side of the value chain. We need to mobilize as women in agriculture to increase economies of scale. We need to ensure that women can become entrepreneurs. We need to think big, from subsistence to commercial agriculture. Funding remains one of the biggest challenges to achieve full integration of women in agriculture, and so we call on partners and sisters internationally and support the idea of an emergency fund. The Minister expressed her hope that this Network will serve as a vehicle to accelerate women's role in agriculture and called on all participants to join the Network.

Rebecca Pearl, WOCAN Board Member and Coordinator of the Global Gender and Climate Alliance, provided information about the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment, which was the inspiration for this new Network on agriculture. The environmental network was launched in Helsinki in 2002 by Finland and several other governments and institutions. The Network is currently chaired by South Africa and Iceland, and facilitated by IUCN, UNDP, UNEP, WEDO, and WECF. Generally there have been two facilitating governments with South-North representation and a group of facilitating institutions that carry the network forward. The purpose of the environmental network has been to develop a common position on global environmental issues by piggybacking the network's meetings on global environmental negotiations. The most recent meetings of the environmental network were during the UNFCCC COP in Bali in December 2007, the UNEP Governing Council in Monaco in February 2008, and the upcoming CBD COP in Bonn in May 2008. In Bali, the governments and facilitating institutions that were present reaffirmed their commitment to the Network, expanded the network beyond ministers to other women leaders, developed a common position on gender and climate change, and appointed Iceland as a new co-chair. This new Network on agriculture could have similar goals and structure, and this CSD cycle is an ideal opportunity to coordinate a unified voice among women ministers and leaders.

Ngamau Munokoa, Minister of Agriculture, Cook Islands, explained that Cook Islands is a signatory of CEDAW and is interested in working on organic agriculture. She outlined the various agricultural challenges in the Cook Islands. She expressed her full support for the other statements that have been made in support of the Network.

Mona Brother, Senior Advisor/Ambassador, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Norway, stated that Norway is a leader in the area of gender equality and intends to be a leader in the Network. Women in Norwegian agriculture are empowered in that 13% of those involved are women, 25% of farms are owned by women, and after 1975 girls were able to inherit farms, which has been a transformative factor. The Norwegian government has a program to promote women in agricultural businesses and programs targeted to young women. No cooperatives without women are allowed. This happened because for eleven years we had a female Minister of Agriculture - women leaders were at the forefront of these policies. In relation to its global agenda, Norway is promoting legal empowerment and as a donor country is eager to partner with organizations.

They are supportive of the idea of including women leaders and not just Ministers in this Network.

Tiina Jortikka-Laitinen, Director of International Environment Policy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland, expressed her wholehearted support for this Network, which is important now more than ever. She commented that gender issues are emerging but there is still silence in formal discussions, there is need for an extra effort to make progress in this. She conveyed greetings from the President of Finland, who with president of Liberia has plans to organize a major event in honor of women's day, during which climate change and other issues will be discussed. This event will have provided inputs to the Copenhagen meeting on climate change in December 2009. She will be happy to inform the Network of progress on this initiative and they are very interested in collaborating with and exchanging information with the Network.

Claudia Challandes Binggeli, Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Switzerland, conveyed the interest of Doris Leuthard, Minister and Head of the Department of Economic Affairs, in this Network. She stated that when women are leaders, it makes a difference. Efforts to improve women's access to leadership positions in Switzerland, such as child care and subsidies, made it appealing to take her position. She will bring back this information to Minister Leuthard.

Estrella (Esther) A. Penunia-Banzuela, Secretary General, Asian Farmers' Association, the Philippines, stated that they still don't have women ministers in many of the Asian countries. She works in alliance with Asian farmers' organizations in 8 countries in Asia and empowers women members in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand to have separate women's structures. Action research and awareness raising activities led to increased recognition about the gender inequalities inherent in women's positions in agriculture. There has been affirmative action for women, at a level of 30% participation. In her role as the Secretary General, she sees that the government has the power to enact policies and she was happy to hear how the Norwegian women farmers are empowered. They are hopeful that this Network will be functional and influence some of the male-dominated UN bodies such as FAO and IFAD. The Network should continue to interact with women farmers in order to know what farmers need and be a venue for sharing information to empower women farmers of the world.

Linda Nghatsane, Farmers Union of South Africa, South Africa, thanked WOCAN for the opportunity to implement the saying "nothing about us without us." She stated that "The best culture there is agriculture. The best one to empower us is ourselves." Coming from the public health sector, it became unbearable for her to continue to see health problems without being able to help people get enough food. When she started farming, she was not taken seriously by commercial farmers. She looked for ways to integrate farming with public health. She was ignored, and thus had time to develop her farm. In 2004, she acquired 10 hectares of bare land and with the help of government programs for women and black farmers, she started with chickens. She now has 40,000 chickens. Women are scaling up egg production to meet demand. It is important to focus on girls to get girls to increase their interest in agriculture. She works closely with agricultural extension officers, schools and everyone who is interested. The challenges include cash flow and how to recycle poultry manure. She is looking at WOCAN for partnership, to building bridges between women at various levels. Women in South Africa asked for her to report back to them and share the lessons she learned with them.

The co-facilitators closed the meeting, recognizing that there was unanimous agreement in the usefulness of this Network, and that it should not be limited to Ministers. Many of the issues laid out overlap. There was much learning from each other and an affirmation that it makes a difference when women are in leadership. South Africa and The Netherlands were asked to take a leadership role in the Network. The Netherlands will take on leadership of the CSD Bureau next year.

As a follow-up to this meeting, the report will be sent to participants and there will be an opportunity to continue consultations electronically. Jeannette Gurung, Executive Director of WOCAN, will produce a short paper to move the Network forward.

Launch of the Network of Women Agriculture Ministers and Leaders

16th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development

Wednesday, May 14th, 6:15-7:45pm

UN Headquarters in New York, Conference Room B

Organizing partners

Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

Heifer International

Objectives

- Explore the role and purpose of the Network and affirm interest of participants
- Approve Network co-chairing and facilitation structure
- Priorities for CSD-16 and CSD-17

Agenda

6:15pm

Introductions and review of agenda

Co-Facilitators:

Martha Hirpa

*Chair of the Board of Directors, WOCAN and
Director of Gender Equity, Heifer International*

Cheryl Morden

Director, IFAD North American Liaison Office

6:30pm

Welcome addresses

H.E. Gerda Verburg *Minister for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality,
the Netherlands*

H.E. Lulama Xingwana, MP

Minister for Agriculture, South Africa

6:45pm

Goals and Structure of the Network

Co-Facilitators

7:00pm

Inputs from Ministers and Government Representatives

H.E. Ngamau Munokoa

Minister for Agriculture, Cook Islands

Mona Brøther

Senior Advisor/Ambassador, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Norway

Tiina Jortikka-Laitinen
*Director of International Environmental Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Finland*

Claudia Challandes Binggeli
Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Switzerland

Others to be determined

7:30pm

Inputs from Women Farmers

Estrella (Esther) A. Penunia-Banzuela
Secretary General, Asian Farmers' Association, Philippines

Linda Nghatsane
Farmers Union of South Africa

7:45pm

Closing and Next Steps

Accompanying handouts: Concept note on the launch of the Network
 Women's Major Group position paper for CSD-16

Network of Women Agriculture Ministers and Leaders
Participant List --- Meeting on May 14, 2008 during CSD-16

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Loretta Dormal-Marino	Deputy DG, European Commission	

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Eva Kjer Hansen	Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, Denmark	kch@fvm.dk

**For more information about the
Network of Women Agriculture Ministers and Leaders, please contact:**

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Appendix 1:

**SPEECH BY MINISTER GERDA VERBURG, MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE IN THE
NETHERLANDS**

Welcome address Side Event

Network Women Agriculture Ministers

CSDI6, 14 May 2008, New York

Madam Chair, colleagues and other participants,

Let me first thank the organizers for their kind invitation and of course for initiating this inspiring Network of women's leaders of agriculture.

I didn't hesitate to accept your invitation. I fully subscribe to your call to enhance the representation and involvement of women in decision-making processes in the areas of agriculture and rural development.

Women are the main producers of staple crops, they are the custodians of natural and productive resources and they are instigators of activities that generate agricultural and non-agricultural income. Women play therefore a key role in sustainable development, especially in agriculture. However, they are often excluded from decision and policy-making processes and they are lacking access to land and other natural resources. It is time for change. It is time to give women their equal rights and a voice in this crucial sector, be it at local, national or international level. You can rest assured that as the Netherlands' minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, I am committed to support this process wherever I can.

Since the Beijing World Conference in 1995, the Netherlands has integrated the need for women's empowerment and the concept of gender mainstreaming more systematically in national policies. Gender mainstreaming implies the reorganization, development and improvement of policy processes in such a way that gender equality can be achieved and integrated in the policies of government.

This doesn't only mean that as the Government we should ensure that others take into account a gender perspective, promote women's rights and strive for gender equality, but this also applies to policies and institutions of the Government itself.

From 2004 until 2007 the Commission on Emancipation has monitored and assessed the process of gender mainstreaming at the different ministries in The Netherlands, including my own Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality. One of the positive outcomes of their assessment is that the Ministry works in a constructive way on diversity, interactive policy-making and gender equality. I attach great importance to involve multiple stakeholders, including women, in sustainable innovations in agriculture and rural development. More concrete activities are being undertaken.

First, the themes of gender and diversity will be further strengthened within our main themes of Food, Rural Areas, Nature and Sustainable Entrepreneurship.

Therefore we will select several projects and programs in which gender will be part of our overall multi-stakeholder and diversity approach.

Secondly, the Ministry will develop a community of practice where stakeholders and experts will exchange experiences on gender and diversity within policies.

Thirdly, we are looking into possibilities to integrate diversity and gender in the training of staff members at the Ministry.

Finally, the Ministry will actively stimulate the appointment of women on management levels

I know these are small steps and there is a long way to go to ensure that the voice of women is being heard and that the needs of for example women farmers are seriously taking into account. But, I still believe in the concept of "leading by example".

This is also what I hope the new Network will achieve. Let us work together to create an enabling environment in which women can participate fully in decision and policy-making processes in the areas of agriculture and rural development.

Appendix 2:

SPEECH BY MINISTER LULU XINGWANA, MP, MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND LAND AFFAIRS IN THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE LAUNCH OF THE NETWORK FOR WOMEN MINISTERS IN AGRICULTURE

12 MAY 2008, ROOM B CSD, NEW YORK

Honorable Ministers, Representatives of Government of Various Countries, IFAD, Representatives of Major Groups on Women, Heifer International, Various Women Networks in Agriculture, Supporters of Women in Agriculture Agenda, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I derive great pleasure and feel honored to be associated with this very important and historic occasion – celebrating the **Launch of the network for Women Ministers in Agriculture**. Hopefully, our assembly and collective effort will provide a firm platform through which women in Agriculture and rural development, can network and share experiences.

The struggle to free women from the shackles of poverty and underdevelopment must continue in all our respective countries. Our liberation as women has to be defined by the quality of life enjoyed by women in our countries.

Madam Chair, emancipation and improvement of the quality of life of women, in particular those in the rural areas, will need our concerted efforts as Ministers responsible for Agriculture, Land and Rural Development. We have to urge our governments to give effect to the CEDAW Convention, particularly article 14 and the African Charter on the rights of Women in Africa by developing and implementing policies that will grant women access to land.

On the social and economic empowerment of rural women, we have an obligation to create a conducive environment for this to take place in order to ensure total emancipation of women. Women have the responsibility to close ranks and organize themselves.

The Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs has a mandate to grow and transform the Agricultural sector in our country. As a Ministry, we have a number of initiatives directed at the economic empowerment of historically disadvantaged, particularly women and the youth.

In South Africa, we have initiated a sector specific women organization that serves as a voice for women as well as a vehicle for women empowerment and rural development. This organization known as Women in Agriculture and Rural Development (WARD) led the civil society participation at the 4th World Congress on Rural Women that was hosted in South Africa by my Ministry on behalf of the South African government in Durban in April 2007. The recommendations/resolutions from that congress laid the basis for our discussion during CSD 16 session. I would urge all of us to access those recommendations as they cover global issues on rural women and development.

As the South African Government, we are guided by our Freedom Charter which upholds that “the people shall share in the wealth of our country”.

- Agriculture continues to be the largest industry sector which is dominated by women in mostly lower levels, particularly rural women as workers and it is critical for the growth of our economy. Like other sectors which have been male dominated for centuries, the agriculture sector is also dominated by men.
- Women constitute the majority of our people trapped in poverty in rural areas where most of large scale Agriculture is happening. This is also where farmers source their labour.
- The farming communities still remain poor, because the socio-economic conditions of labour-sending communities are mostly ignores. It is imperative for women to play a leading role in influencing the local development plans to ensure that they are aligned to the Labour and Social Plans of the agricultural sector to improve their lot.

It remains fruitless to talk of opportunities while neglecting training and education which are very important for the Agriculture sector as it is a progressive sector, requiring a skilled labour force. It can never be too late for one to learn. do not only speak of formal learning opportunities but informal education as well, which will be partly achieved through participation in the aforesaid structures.

As we may be aware, women's role in agriculture remains largely unrecognized in both policy and resource allocation. In developing nations, lack of platform for the voice of rural women and effective representation of the interest of grassroots women at national levels is a worrying factor. This permeates both policy formulation and practice, resulting in "gender silent policies and gender silent practice".

The current high and volatile prices of crude oil have renewed consideration interest in biofuels in the whole world. My country has adopted a Biofuels Strategy which still needs to be relooked into for further research and input.

The production of Bio-fuels cuts across many sectors. The agricultural sector will remain the key sector with regard to the production of primary feedstock. This presents great opportunity, especially for rural women, to participate in the cultivation of crops to be used as primary feedstock for Bio-fuels production.

It is important that some of the refineries that will process the crops to produce the bio-fuels are built in the rural communities nearby the source of the primary feed stock. This would provide many socio-economic benefits to these rural communities, including infrastructure development, skills transfer, job creation and accelerated growth for the rural economies.

In positioning ourselves, for such opportunities, we need to cooperate and mobilize ourselves as Women in Agriculture and rural women to increase our economies of scale, hereby ensuring our participation as emerging farmers. Women would have to see themselves more as commercial farmers and co-operatives and not merely involved in subsistence farming. We have to think big!

We have to move out of subsistence agriculture into commercial agriculture, down the value chain into the exporting industry. Currently, we are all aware that Agriculture has gained great prominence in the development discourse and practice globally, even more so today with the current global food price crisis. We have seen a surge of interest nationally and internationally to focus towards Agriculture as a vehicle for socio-economic empowerment and contributor to the achievement of the MDG's and related development goals. Funding still remains one the biggest challenges to achieve the full participation of the women.

I also would like to take this opportunity to urge women and our rural communities to intensify the struggle against poverty and underdevelopment in partnership with all spheres of government and civil society. We all need to keep rural development high on our national agendas so as to consolidate on the gains of platforms like UN CSD sessions that deal with relevant thematic areas for the development and sustenance of women including those in the periphery.

It is my sincere hope that today's historic launch of the International Network for Women Ministers in the Agriculture will bring some Hope for our women and will serve as a vehicle to accelerate the

economic stability of women in agriculture and farming to maintain a healthy, safe agricultural sector and produce more food and thereby push back the frontiers of poverty, and reduce unemployment in our rural areas.

Indeed we would all agree that such a network is long overdue, and is therefore urgently needed to tackle these challenges that confront most of our nations to fully employ the potential of women as farmers, and potential contributors to world food security and peace.

I am therefore fully confident that this network marks a new era of women leadership in the Agricultural sector and, we shall see more agricultural Ministers, who are committed to change the status quo of women by joining this effort and as a result create more opportunities for women in the sector.

I thank you