

## Securing Land Tenure Rights for Sustainable and Inclusive Food Systems in Asia

### ***Key messages from ILC Asia Independent Dialogue at the UN Food Systems Summit***

The entire food system of the world is inextricably connected to land. Land is where people grow food, hinge upon for its storage, selling, cooking or preparation and utilise to manage food waste. Hence, who owns and controls land has a significant impact on how food is produced, processed, marketed and consumed.

Secure land rights lead to planned food systems based on individual or collective community choices. Land tenure rights serve as a strong foundation for economic empowerment through adoption of selective crop production. It is a recognition of the human dignity of all communities including women, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, local communities and landless farmers, forming the foundation for the right to food among these communities and beyond.

During the Asia Independent Dialogue at the UN Food Systems Summit on May 4th, 2021, ILC members in Asia expressed their ideas and solutions to counter the challenges faced by local communities in securing their right to land and producing food. The discussion was centred on four thematically identified groups - women and youth, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, and landless and smallholder farmers.

In Asia, a large proportion of women live in rural settings and contribute to the agricultural sector - on average 43% of Asian farmers are women. Despite this huge contribution, women are often not recognised as farmers in many countries and left with little or no decision-making powers over the land that they are engaged with. Governments are encouraged to make policy decisions for landowners, women and young farmers to gain access to bank loans, credit, seeds, markets, technical assistance, social welfare and other relevant government services in order to strengthen their economic empowerment.

Pastoralist communities that are mostly spread across Central and South Asia meanwhile have a unique relationship with nature and territory. Their contribution to the food systems is clearly different to the agribusinesses, but it is equally important that pasture users gain access to land to guarantee a sustainable and healthy food production. Governments need to recognise how their nomadic practices have been key to ecosystem restoration and sustainable food production.

With the increasing involvement of big corporations in food production, indigenous communities frequently face forced evictions from their traditional lands. This hampers the food produced by indigenous peoples using traditional knowledge, increasing food scarcity within these communities.

The absence of legal provision in some Asian countries to recognise collective land rights of the people adversely affects the food production sustained by landless and smallholder farmers. If land tenure security is provided, smallholder farmers can play a productive role to increase the economic capacity of their localities by engaging communities in post-harvest and value-added activities such as food processing, marketing, catering, etc.