



## **INCREASE FUNDING FOR THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF WATER RESOURCES AND PROMOTE AGROECOLOGICAL PRACTICES THAT CONSERVE WATER RESOURCES**

**PRESS RELEASE ON THE WORLD FOOD DAY  
16<sup>th</sup> October 2023, Kampala, Uganda**

### **Background:**

On 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023, ESAFF Uganda joins the globe to commemorate World Food Day under the theme ***“Water is Life. Water is Food”***. Today, it is a global event that raises awareness about the importance of food security and eliminating hunger. This year, the world is emphasising the fundamental role that water plays in our ability to nourish the world's growing population. Water, a precious resource that sustains life, is inextricably linked to food production, processing, distribution, and consumption. Access to clean and safe water is not only essential for hydration but also for agriculture, which provides sustenance for billions of people worldwide. Because of water, small-scale farmers' capacities are enhanced to produce and feed the world. Agriculture accounts for approximately 70% of global freshwater withdrawals. Efficient water management is imperative for sustainable and equitable food production.

The World Food Day commemoration comes just a day after the International Day for Rural Women, commemorated under the theme Digit ALL: Innovation and Technology for Gender Equality. Rural women's role in preserving natural resources can't be underestimated. On that note, ESAFF Uganda, through the ESAFF Women Forum, called for addressing all inequalities against women.

### **Water challenges:**

Numerous water challenges concerning availability, quality, and purity are encountered in Uganda. Climate change exacerbates water scarcity issues, with irregular rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts, and flooding events threatening crop yields and food security.

Limited water sources are available to provide clean drinking water to the entire population. Surface water sources are often highly polluted, and infrastructure to pipe water from fresh, clean sources to arid areas is too costly.

Dangerous industrial farming practices like Industrial (chemical-intensive) farming that destroy the quality of water and endanger the aquatic lives of different species, soil degradation when the chemical leaches, and cultivation in swamps and other water resources.

Additionally, we, small-scale farmers in Uganda, face several challenges that hinder our productivity and profitability. These challenges include limited access to finance, where we often struggle to access credit and other forms of finance to boost production. We, small-scale farmers, struggle to invest in their farms and improve their productivity without adequate financing. Many small-scale farmers often suffer from poor infrastructure as most live in rural areas with poor infrastructure, including inadequate roads and limited access to water for agricultural production.

### **Solutions:**

Through agroecology, we, small-scale farmers, are able to produce sustainably while protecting soil and the environment. We, small-scale farmers, are essential to maintaining biodiversity because we frequently cultivate a variety of crops, which helps to preserve genetic diversity and offers protection against crop failure. Additionally, we, small-scale farmers, frequently employ more environmentally friendly farming techniques like crop rotation and organic pest control, which can help maintain the health of the soil and lower the need for hazardous pesticides and fertilizers.

However, we, small-scale farmers, confront numerous difficulties despite playing a vital role in providing food for the world. It is important to note that the world's food supply is critically dependent on small-scale farmers and their endless efforts to cultivate crops and keep cattle, frequently with little access to resources or technology. Despite these obstacles, they can produce enough food to feed their communities and help ensure food security worldwide.

### **Call to action:**

We, the small-scale farmers, make the following call to action:

1. The government should prioritize and protect our water resources, ensuring they are used wisely and equitably to feed a growing world population. Together, we can combat hunger, promote sustainability, and work towards a future where no one goes to bed hungry.

2. The government and stakeholders should promote access to water for agricultural production so as to increase their production and profitability to provide food for future generations.
3. The government, through MAAIF, should subsidise the small irrigation system powered by solar to make it affordable for all farmers.
4. The government should increase access to financial access, enhance infrastructure, improve information sharing, and create climate-resilient farming techniques by promoting sustainable agroecology. Such as rainwater harvesting, small dam construction, Soil and water conservation techniques, etc.
5. The government should block the importation and use of toxic chemicals that damage the quality of water resources.
6. The government should promote agroecology in practice and policy because agroecology ensures that water is protected as a component of an agroecosystem.
7. Fish farming is one way of earning for the farmers; however, illegal cage fish farming ends up polluting the water bodies, MAAIF should come out strongly to regulate this practice
8. The government should put strict penalties on companies and individuals polluting our water bodies.
9. NEMA shouldn't look like a compromised entity let them not spare anyone when it comes to the protection of our natural water catchment areas if we are fighting the challenges of desertification and desilting.

### **About ESAFF Uganda**

ESAFF Uganda is the largest small-scale farmer-led advocacy movement in Uganda, formed in 2002 to facilitate processes through which small-scale farmers' development concerns can be solicited, articulated and ultimately addressed through policies and programs. ESAFF Uganda currently has a membership in 54 districts. ESAFF Uganda is also part of a bigger network of small-scale farmers in the other 15 countries in eastern and southern Africa.

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