



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission for Social Development

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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and  
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:  
priority theme: strategies for the eradication of poverty to  
achieve sustainable development for all**

### **Statement submitted by Bäuerliche Erzeugergemeinschaft Schwäbisch Hall w.V., a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## **Statement**

Recommendation of reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development in rural areas by establishing cooperation between farmers associations in South-North and South-South

## **Introduction**

According to FAO, 815 million people were suffering from hunger and poverty in 2016. More than 80% of the world's poor live in rural areas. Family farmers and small-scale food producers are not only providing the main part of food worldwide, but they also are of vital importance for the socio-economic environment and the ecological landscape of their regions. Nevertheless, small farmers suffer from the industrialization of agriculture, exploitation of their natural resources and indigenous knowledge as well as the consequences of global climate change. Lack of education, information, and infrastructure prevent them from having access to regional and international markets. Supporting sustainable agricultural growth in low-income countries is the most effective way to reduce poverty, achieve food security and contribute to the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Growth.

## **Summary**

The Farmers Association of Schwaebisch Hall/Germany (BESH — [www.BESH.de](http://www.BESH.de)) has successfully implemented rural development projects with small-scale farmers and rural societies in developing countries within the last 16 years under the project scheme “SEEDS OF HOPE”. Project areas are in Kerala/India, Zanzibar/Tanzania and Serbia. The project approach is to enable the local small scale farmers to gain a fair and sustainable income through their own hands and their own local resources by providing access to local and international markets and ensuring a fair share in value chains.

SEEDS means the spices grown by the local small-scale farmers as cash crops alongside their subsistence farming. HOPE means the sustainable income out of their own valuable products, which provides hope for a better future free from starvation and under improved living conditions. The goal is to enable farmers groups and rural societies to share development and prosperity based on their own natural and human resources instead of receiving donations and charitable giving from industrialized countries.

## **Background**

The BESH is a regional farmers association of small- and medium sized farmers in the region of Hohenlohe/ Southern Germany. Initiated with 8 farmers in 1988, 1480 farmers are members today. It is the farmer's enterprise for the implementation of rural development projects in the area of Hohenlohe with a yearly turnover of more than 150 Mio. \$. Its success is based on the following measures and activities:

1. Promotion and implementation of organic, sustainable and social farming practices with its partner organization Ecoland
2. Implementation of biodiversity projects for the rescue of autochthone breeds and seeds

3. Development of animal welfare schemes
4. Establishment of own processing facilities along the value chain such as slaughterhouse, meat processing factory, cheese dairy, farmers markets
5. Development of markets for farmers products and promotion of direct marketing
6. Achievement of fair prices for organic products
7. Promotion of sound farm structures with sufficient income
8. Promotion and implementation of rural development projects
9. Endorsement for farmers by providing information, support for their interests, cooperation with consumer-organizations and environmental groups

Solidary business is one of the core values of the BESH, i.e. all member farmers have the same rights and duties and they receive the same fair prices for their products. The prices guaranteed by the BESH are nearly twice as high as the general market prices. This can be achieved due to well-planned marketing measures and the organization of the production process completely in farmers' hands — “from field to fork”.

Due to this example of sustainable production, successful marketing of high-quality agricultural products and fair distribution of profits along with protection of biodiversity, social and cultural support of farmers, BESH became an important advocate for the interests of small-scale farmers in its region and beyond. To provide further support for farmers in Hohenlohe, BESH has established the foundation “Haus der Bauern (HdB) — House of Farmers”. The foundation promotes social fairness, cultural self-determination and the rights of rural populations worldwide. The House of Farmers foundation maintains the “Academy for Organic Farming and Nutrition” offering seminars, congresses and cultural events, organized with a network of partners like Ecoland, Demeter and other organizations promoting organic farming as well as several European universities.

Together with La Via Campesina, FIAN, Brot für die Welt and numerous international organizations and stakeholders the foundation House of Farmers organized an international congress on “Peasants Rights” in March 2017, attended by app. 400 farmers and NGOs from all parts of the world ([www.Global-Peasants-Rights.com](http://www.Global-Peasants-Rights.com)). The goal of the congress was twofold: to increase awareness of the situation and the requirements of global small farming and to support the UNHRC-working group for the “Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas”. The House of Farmers contributes to coordinated actions together with La Via Campesina and FIAN in order to advance this project in the UNHRC. The Declaration will provide the framework to protect indigenous farmers and small-scale food producers from land-, knowledge and genetic grabbing and will build the base for a long-term secured development and social justice for the rural societies.

### **SEEDS OF HOPE projects as models for sustainable development**

Experience and knowledge of BESH, ECOLAND ([www.ECOLAND.de](http://www.ECOLAND.de)) and House of Farmers are serving for 16 years as model for the establishment of cooperation with indigenous farmer groups in low-income countries like India, Tanzania, and Serbia. The project “SEEDS OF HOPE” introduces and supports the organic cultivation of indigenous herbs and spices and their fair trade directly to

BESH/Germany. Local farmers are getting up to double prices for their products compared to world market prices.

The “SEEDS OF HOPE” (<https://vimeo.com/193183322>) project provides the indigenous farmers with knowledge and assistance for the implementation of organic practices, quality management and market access. Spices have always been the cash crops of smallholders. “SEEDS OF HOPE” is based on the autochthonous herbs and spices as well as the local and traditional farming methods, which meet the principles of bio-dynamic agriculture to a large extend.

“SEEDS OF HOPE” supports the establishment of local structures for production and marketing, promotes the sustainable cultivation of high-quality products that can be exported and helps smallholders to increase productivity. It assists partners to develop brandings and marketing strategies for local and export markets and to create value chains that ensure a fair share for the small-scale producers.

Rural communities in the project are enabled to participate actively and with an equal status in global economics and social developments by the measures of:

- Project management and establishment of solidary business after establishing farmer cooperatives and farmer associations with legal status
- Qualification and training of farmers leaders for operating cooperatives and associations
- Introduction of organic and bio-dynamic farming methods and training of farmers
- Establishment of QM-systems and international food standards
- Establishment of local certification organizations for organic farming and food processing
- Support for the registration of Geographical Indications in order to save the local products as common assets and intellectual property of the local producers
- Establishment of facilities for harvesting and processing the crops for local and export markets
- Establishment of value chains under fair conditions, direct participation of the producers in sharing the value of the final product
- Establishing monitoring and evaluation processes through BESH

Furthermore, the smallholder groups are supported in the fields of education, farm management, empowerment of woman farmers and the application and preservation of indigenous knowledge. Biodiversity is protected and autochthonous varieties are secured and preserved as e.g. in the “Arc of Pepper” in Kerala and the knowledge-center of the traditional local “Vrikshayurveda” agricultural practices.

An important principle of “SEEDS OF HOPE” is the fact that the products, i.e. spices are cultivated in the climatic regions of their origin: Pepper, Cardamom, Pimentel and Muscat in India; Cloves, Vanilla and Cinnamon in Zanzibar; Red and Green Pepper, Fennel, Brown Mustard and Soya in Serbia.

The supra-regional approach of the project brings the particular projects together, promotes peer-learning and creates synergies in North-South and South-South cooperation. With “SEEDS OF HOPE” the BESH/ECOLAND Organization has established stable and sustainable partnerships with more than 12 000 farmers in three low-income countries so far. The projects are subsidized with 50 % of its costs

by the German Development Aid. Based on its results and achievements it is considered to be a successful model in the struggle against poverty and hunger and shows high potential to be extended to further regions.

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