POLICY ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND ADOPTION OF NEW AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGIES

Working Draft, October 2016

This is currently a working draft policy. Should you have any questions for clarification or other input to the policy, we welcome your feedback. Please send input to John Coonrod, Executive Vice President at john.coonrod@thp.org.

Introduction

Agricultural production in most developing countries is under severe stress from uncontrolled human activity, threatening the survival of millions of lives, the environment and the performance of The Hunger Project (THP)’s mission. This stress most severely affects women, who produce most of the food and are the traditional caretakers of the environment, yet face discrimination in accessing agricultural training, tools and inputs.

THP thus accepts that it must, as part of its core activities, work to ensure agro-ecology-based Climate Resilient Sustainable Agriculture (CRSA)1 in its program countries, at all levels of its operations – in its own practice, as a participant in a community of practice, and as a participant in public policy dialogues. We are committed to do this in ways which first and foremost empower women and smallholder farmers.

THP aspires to contribute to improving agricultural production and productivity while minimizing their negative impact on the environment. We at THP strive to achieve this by adopting environmentally sound technologies and fostering responsible crop production approaches in our program countries and at all levels.

The mere supply of grains, however, does not end hunger. THP is committed to farming approaches that promote improved nutrition and diet diversity, and respect communities’ rights to Food Sovereignty2.

THP is committed to the development of robust and documented systems to implement, measure, monitor, and disseminate excellent, gender-sensitive CSRA practices both within our areas of work and to the broader communities in the world.

Purpose

The aim of this Policy is to integrate a philosophy of sustainable agriculture into all the organization’s activities and to establish and promote sound crop production practices in our operations.

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2 http://www.ukabc.org/foodsovpaper.htm
Policy

Sustainable Agriculture Development

THP commits itself to sustainable agricultural development through:

- Promoting awareness about environmentally sustainable agriculture;
- Analyzing proposed agricultural practices and removing barriers to women and smallholder farmers gaining full advantage;
- Participating in efforts to improve sustainable agriculture and understanding;
- Using our own professional expertise, where possible, to assist in the development of solutions to sustainable agriculture;
- Striving to improve sustainable agricultural performance continually through intensification and diversification of production systems;
- Prioritizing the use of natural/traditional agricultural practices known to be compatible with the environment, e.g., mulching or minimum tillage, composting, biologically controlling pests and using conventionally bred seed;
- Working to reverse current trends of land degradation to restore and safeguard soil quality and nutrients for future generations;
- Promoting knowledge and use of meteorological information for small producers.

Adoption of New Agricultural Technologies

THP’s policy on new agricultural technologies consists of:

Evaluating alternative agricultural technologies based on their short, medium and long-term impacts on women and smallholder farmers, applying the principles of sustainable agricultural development outlined above.

- Promoting a sound adoption of second-generation farming technological practices, such as irrigation, permaculture, cultivation practices, and inorganic chemical use, to reduce risk levels to the environment;
- Advising farmers to adopt technologies, such as microdosing applications of inorganic fertilizers, dissemination of Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) for improved soil health and using Rainwater Harvesting (RWH), shown not only to minimize risk to the environment but also be significantly less costly;
- Suggesting a cautionary approach to the applications of third-generation farming technological practices which include biotechnology and Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and their derivatives, i.e., genetically modified seed;
- Supporting, for example, the use of GMOs only when these are in-country produced and are subject to local/national scientific-based health and safety trials and are suitable for use by smallholder farmers (including the right of farmers to use their own seeds).
● Reviewing this policy as additional new technologies emerge;
● Complying with applicable laws in all of THP’s program and partner countries.