

# Agriculture Development Plan of Burma

## Our Guiding Principles

- **Human Rights** - All policies will be made in accordance with internationally agreed upon human rights standards, respecting the inherent dignity of all people
- **Democracy** - All people must have the right to meaningful participation in decisions and all policies must be in keeping with the international principles of democracy
- **Equality** - All people are equal and should be treated as such regardless of ethnicity, gender, class, religion, or geographical location  
(All women must have the right to meaningful participation in decision making of every level of agriculture sector)
- **Good Governance** - The policies will be put in place with transparency and accountability and government will have a clear mechanism for the lodging of complaints and the reporting of mismanagement
- **Justice and National Reconciliation** - The policies will strive to reconcile all the ethnic groups of Burma while providing justice to those whose rights have been violated in the past
- **Special Rights for Ethnic Minorities** - Consideration must be given to the historical mistreatment, unique land practices, and diverse traditions of all the ethnic minority groups of Burma
- **Reduction of Poverty** - Policies must strive to raise the income of the impoverished of Burma in a holistic manner, providing opportunities for improvement
- **Empowerment** - The government will work to give people the skills, resources, and infrastructure they need in order to become self-reliant and provide for themselves and their families
- **Participatory Development** - Policies will be centered on the people, they will emerge from the grassroots and benefit local communities
- **Sustainable Development** - Policies should encourage the responsible use of biological resources and preserve the natural biodiversity of all the regions of Burma, including the diversity of crops, cultivation methods in order to adapt to changing climate conditions and natural disasters
- **Grassroots ownership** - Policies will promote individual rights to the ownership of land and local control of milling, marketing, and credit schemes and allow for community ownership of traditional lands and forests

## Our Vision for the Agricultural Sector:

We want to promote the development of the agricultural sector in order to support a peaceful and prosperous multi-ethnic society within the Union of Burma. We want sustainable management of natural resources and an agricultural system that will provide all the people of Burma with sufficient safe and healthy food. We want to develop agro-based industries to manufacture lucrative products for trade. We want the outcome of this new system to be the reduction poverty and inequality as well as an improvement in the living standard for all of our people.

### Objectives

- Produce a sufficient amount of safe and healthy food
- Establish a mechanism to provide justice for people who have lost their land because of displacement, confiscation, or conflict
- Construct an appropriate irrigation and water supply system to provide sufficient water for sustenance and growth
- Improve the productivity of agriculture and aquaculture in order to increase the income of local people and reduce poverty
- Increase livestock production and lower the rate of disease
- Develop a system of agriculture and aquaculture based on sustainable management
- Improve systems of protection for water and forest resources in order to promote sustainability and biodiversity
- Conserve and preserve local varieties of seeds and protect the rights of farmers to use these seeds in perpetuity and without the interference of outside interests
- Develop agricultural skills and knowledge by improving learning practicum fieldwork and the training of local people
- Build new agro-based industries through education, investment, and improved agricultural productivity
- Establish affordable financial assistance for farmers with low interest rates, microcredit options, and other community based credit schemes
- Establish farmers' cooperatives for local people to work together in marketing, credit schemes, and seed banks
- Examine and reform current land laws to put in place policies that prevent monopolies and ensure broader equity
- Improve systematic hillside cultivation and provide protections for people who rely on this form of agriculture
- Promote the development and deployment of alternative and renewable energy in agriculture and also to encourage the use of organic and diversified cultivation methods
- **Improve skills and knowledge of women farmers and empower them to participate every level of agricultural sector**

## Problems

- The government does not follow its own plans for agricultural development and fails to produce innovative policies in collaboration with the people
- Lack of transparency in government agricultural policy, export processes, tax system, statistics
- Widespread land confiscations followed by human rights violations especially in ethnic areas for development projects, the support of military occupation, or contract farming by foreign conglomerates
- Many farmers do not hold title to their land, others hold title but have no guarantee, and landlessness is common
- No recognition of customary land rights such as rotational farming
- Farmers are forced to grow crops that not suited to the local soils, climate, and conditions
- Lack of suitable seeds for local conditions and lack of communication about good-quality seeds
- Disappearance of local varieties of rice and drops in biodiversity
- Discrimination against women in wages and hiring. Lack of land ownership protections at the national level
- Poor healthcare for farmers, lack of medicine, lack of clinics in rural areas leads to difficulties with profits and productivity
- Failure of the government to provide opium substitution crops and alternative livelihoods for those dependent on this crop
- Government quotas force the sale of crops at low prices
- Difficult to procure loans for agricultural investment at a reasonable interest rate
- No rights to form farmers' unions or local credit associations
- No freedom to travel and transport agricultural goods, when farmers can travel they must pay bribes and unofficial taxes.
- Domestic and international trade is limited and products lack a secure market
- Industries for the processing of agricultural produce into more profitable goods do not exist
- Low quality infrastructure supplies insufficient water
- Rapid depletion of natural resources such as timber with no regard for future generations
- Poor communication and dissemination of information related to agricultural techniques, entrepreneurship, and development to farmers and the general public
- Lack of research before planting of crops and difficulties in learning modern techniques for agricultural development
- Improper use of chemical fertilizer and pesticide leads to exhausted soil, low productivity, and poor health and a lack of training in the use of natural methods to replace these techniques
- No plan for relief or support to the farmers who face natural disasters such as rat infestations, insects, cyclones, droughts and no early warning systems in place to help farmers prepare for themselves
- Agriculture is not appealing to the younger generation
- **Women participation in agricultural sector development was ignored**

## What can farmers and local people do?

- Compile their cases involving land, forced labor, and unfair fines for legal appeal
- Advocate for free and fair marketing on the micro and macro level to increase profit
- Improve and extend farms, orchards, gardens, and hillside cultivation to ensure food security
- Extend farmland into empty arable land and upland areas
- Construct handmade irrigation channels to supply sufficient water
- Increase number of buffalo and cow farms to provide more livestock for plowing
- Set up or build microcredit projects
- Establish cottage agro-based industries to produce agricultural products
- Establish cooperative markets
- Research the methods of farming and improve those methods that are not working or return to traditional practices and advocate for the appropriate, widespread use of these methods according to local conditions
- Produce natural fertilizer and natural pesticide for domestic use
- Improve skills to increase production of subsistence, mixed, and commercial crops
- Exchange knowledge to produce high-quality seedlings
- Organize to restore and protect local community forests

## What can civil society do?

- Raise awareness of farmers needs and disseminate this information widely
- Research agricultural development and share this information in an understandable way with farmers
- Participate to protect and preserve community forests
- Help subsistence farmers by providing knowledge, information, and materials
- Advocate for people to use domestic products
- Provide medicine for livestock
- Provide knowledge, information, and funding for microcredit projects controlled by local people
- Share techniques for making natural fertilizer and pesticide
- Provide training in soil maintenance
- Provide techniques and materials to set up a seed bank and an accompanying distribution system
- Help to collect data on local seeds and planting methods and share with farmers.

## What can the government do?

- Enforce and implement the people's agricultural development policies and plans
- Give legal title to farmers and guarantee fair land ownership practices through legislation
- Protect the rights of farmers through the intelligent application of open markets and tariffs to foster growth and profitability
- Help farmers locate secure international markets for export of products abroad in a manner consistent with our guiding principles
- Provide price support when the price of crops fall

- Support the organization of appropriate agro-based industries in all local areas and provide basic skills and industrial training for local people
- Prevent and punish the exploitation of farmers and local people at the hands of corporations and businesspeople
- Provide government subsidies for tractors, fertilizer, buffalo, as well as other necessities and support institutions lending money at low interest rates
- Provide funds for the establishment of an agricultural university in each state and division and support agricultural training centers in local areas
- Encourage and support farmers in the selection of crops
- Provide current farmers and laborers with agricultural skills through education and training sessions
- Encourage and support microcredit projects providing agricultural financing to local farmers
- Provide microcredit financing, a fair market system, and provide incentives to encourage farmers' cooperatives
- Encourage farmers and local people to form farmers' unions and local chemical watch organizations
- Lower taxes on farmers and those working in agriculture
- Increase farmers' and agricultural families' access to healthcare and education through subsidies, government sponsored programs, and special scholarships
- Support the construction of a quality irrigation and water supply system
- Support farmers who face natural disasters and allow people to collect information for documentation and distribution
- **Special providing, empowering and improve women skills and knowledge to participate in every level of agriculture sector.**

### How can opposition parties help?

- Mobilize people to participate in decision making processes involving agricultural development projects such as contract farming with foreign entities
- If the government does not implement its own policies and abide by these guiding principles then opposition parties should speak out in parliament and in the media
- Pressure the government to implement these agricultural development policies and if ignored voice opposition to the government and newly established parliament
- Lobby the international community to give more support for the development of the agricultural sector

### How can NGOs help?

- Share information about the agricultural situation with the international community to get technical assistance
- Find opportunities for the international community to support agricultural development
- Cooperate with the international community to organize appropriate training on agricultural techniques
- Lobby and pressure the Burmese government to change their top-down agricultural policies
- Ensure that assistance from the international community goes directly to the farmers and community members

- Provide techniques for research and the documentation of agricultural issues

### How can the international community help?

- Provide technical tools, grants, and materials for agricultural development directly to farmers in a manner consistent with our guiding principles
- Provide scholarships for local people and farmers in Burma to learn agricultural skills domestically and abroad
- Provide low-interest or no-interest loans in a manner consistent with our guiding principles and the best interests of farmers
- Follow the UN Millennium Development Goals by supporting community based organizations recommendations (eg: natural resource conservation / strategic action plan for Burma)

### How can International Financial Institutions (IFIs) help?

- IFIs can provide finance at low interest rates and provide technical assistance, tools, and material to agro-based industries in a manner consistent with the guiding principles of this plan
- IFIs can support finance through the International Development Association (IDA) for development of the agricultural sector