



The Mukono Declaration

on the role of faith communities in promoting Faithful Farming

Issued on the UN's international World Food Day
16 October 2014

'Then God said,
'Let the land
produce
vegetation: seed-
bearing plants and
trees on the land
that bear fruit with
seed in it,
according to their
various kinds.'
And it was so...
And God saw that
it was good.'

– From Christian
scriptures (Genesis 1)

'The Earth is green
and beautiful
and Allah has
appointed you His
stewards over it.
The whole Earth
has been created a
place of worship,
pure and clean.'

– From Muslim teachings
(Hadith)

'I am the fragrance
of the Earth, the
heat in fire. I am
the life of all that
lives.'

– From Hindu scriptures
(Bhagavad Gita 7.9)

We people of faith – religious leaders, agriculturalists, development workers and environment and education specialists from eight countries in sub-Saharan Africa – have met in Mukono, Uganda, for a three-day (October 14-16) international workshop organised by the Uganda Faiths Network on Environment Action and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation to discuss the role of faith communities in sustainable agriculture and sustainable land management.

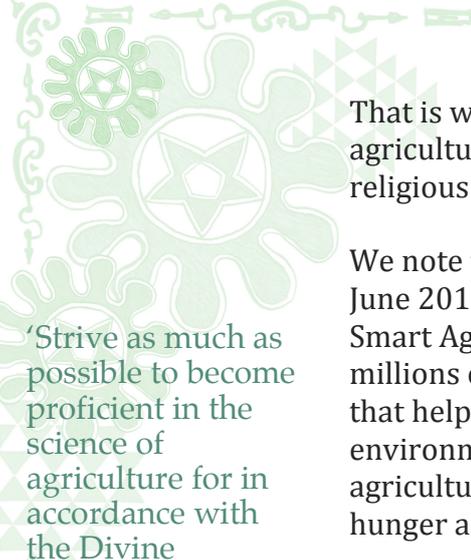
Today, on the last day of our meeting, which coincides with World Food Day, we declare that we are seriously committed to promoting this issue in our faith communities and our countries. Our religious teachings and Holy Scriptures require us to protect and take care of nature and human life as one of the main instructions of our Creator, with human beings guardians of this Earth.

We note the fact there is enough food for everyone to be well-fed, yet one person in eight still goes to bed hungry. The world's population is expected to increase to more than nine billion people by 2050 – with much of that increase coming in sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, food production needs to increase by 60-70%. We recognise that it is not enough simply to grow more food: much more also needs to be done to ensure that everyone has access to the food they need.

The need to grow more food and improve access to food comes at a time when Africa is already suffering high levels of environmental degradation, including deforestation, desertification and soil erosion. Our soils are losing their vitality and our crop yields are falling. Poverty and hunger are increasing. Some of this is through our own lack of care of our environment.

At the same time, Africa is also suffering the impact of climate change, through more floods, droughts and extreme weather conditions. These consequences will greatly increase hunger, poverty disease and conflict in Africa, posing challenges to peace and security in our countries and the region.

There is much that we cannot do in the fight against climate change. But there is much that we can do to protect our environment, improve our agriculture and create a healthier and more sustainable society.



That is why we believe that scaling up faith-based approaches to agriculture is one of the most important steps we can take to fulfill our religious duty to care for God's creation.

'Strive as much as possible to become proficient in the science of agriculture for in accordance with the Divine Teachings, the acquisition of sciences and the perfection of arts is considered as acts of worship.'

– From Baha'i teachings
(Abdul'l-Baha, *Baha'i World Faith*)

'Make love the farm, purify the water, truth and contentment the cows and bulls; humility the plough, consciousness the ploughman, remembrance the preparation of the soil, and union with the Divine the planting time.'

– From Sikh scriptures
(Sri Guru Granth Sahib, 955)

'Blessed art thou, O Lord my God, King of the universe who brings forth the bread from the Earth.'

– From Jewish teachings
(Blessing over bread)

We note the launch of the Africa Climate-Smart Agriculture Alliance in June 2014 as well as the launch of the Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture in September 2014, with their aims to reach out to millions of smallholder farmers within the next decade or so. We agree that helping people grow more food in ways that do not damage the environment, build resilience to climate change and reduce agriculture's contribution to carbon emissions are the key to reducing hunger and poverty.

We support the use of indigenous crops and knowledge, and agroecological farming practices. We declare our opposition to the use of genetically modified (biotech) seeds on the grounds of integrity of creation, environmental concerns and social justice. In the words of the Ecumenical Consultative Working Group on Genetic Engineering in Agriculture: 'It has yet to be demonstrated that agricultural genetic engineering, as it exists in the current system, safeguards the common good, human dignity, the sacredness of life and stewardship.' We also commit ourselves not to waste food and to support initiatives to increase trade.

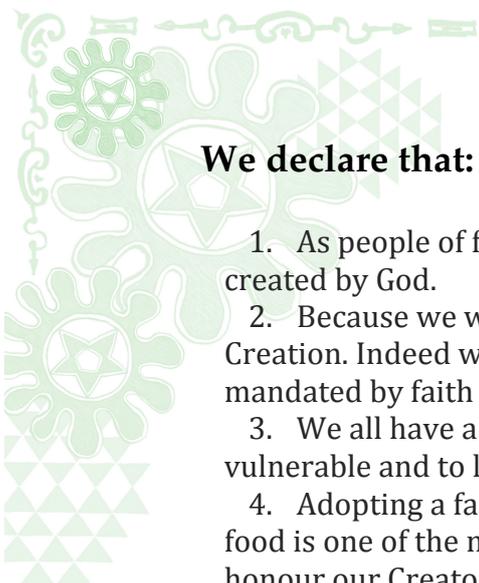
We are encouraged by the support expressed by the Uganda Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industries & Fisheries for engaging faith communities in agriculture and the action it has already undertaken to do so. We call upon agriculture ministries throughout Africa to adopt a similar position. We also call upon local governments to support their communities by increasing trade and investment in farming.

And we call upon the faiths to adopt and promote agriculture that is enlightened and guided by the faith that sustains them, thus fulfilling their duty of protecting God's creation – both in terms of the natural world and the people who inhabit it.

Vision

Our vision is of all faith communities across Africa practising agriculture that is enlightened and guided by the faith that sustains them. In this way, we will reduce hunger and poverty, protect the environment and build stronger societies.





We declare that:

1. As people of faith, we believe that this world and all that is in it was created by God.
2. Because we worship and honour the Creator, we seek to care for Creation. Indeed we believe it is our religious duty to do so. We are mandated by faith to take action, it is a religious responsibility.
3. We all have a responsibility to care for the poorest and most vulnerable and to lift people out of poverty.
4. Adopting a faith-based approach to how we eat, grow and buy our food is one of the most effective ways of achieving long-lasting change and honour our Creator, benefiting the environment and improving the lives of our people in this and future generations.
5. We will promote faith-based agriculture in our faith communities, from churches, temples and mosques to our schools and other institutions, through education, through advocacy, through motivation and through practical action.
6. We commit ourselves to acting strongly and wisely to this end.

Recommendations:

1. We recommend that all faiths take up this challenge of developing and implementing faith-based approaches to agriculture in all their communities, religious institutions and schools.
2. We recommend that the national faith networks on environmental action adopt this as a core principle.
3. We recommend that on this World Food Day 2014, an Alliance of Faithful Food and Farming be established as ARC's new programme in Africa to lead the way on implementing faith-based agriculture.
4. We recommend that all faiths carry out awareness-raising activities among their own leadership, clergy and people to ensure support for faith-based food and farming as a religious responsibility.
5. We call upon all agriculture and environment ministries throughout Africa to support faith communities in practising faith-based, climate-smart, sustainable agriculture.
6. We recommend that international bodies such as the United Nations recognise the leadership role and influence of the faiths in leading people into more sustainable approaches to food and farming, not only in Africa but across the world.

