



## NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FARMERS

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### STATEMENT

**UPR Pre-Session on the Republic of North Macedonia**

**Geneva, 14 February 2024**

**Delivered by: National Federation of Farmers (NFF)**

(Slide 1)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This statement is delivered on behalf of the National Federation of Farmers. The National Federation of Farmers (NFF) is the largest organization of farmers in the Republic of North Macedonia, reaching a number of more than 10.000 farmers, focusing on lobby and advocacy for the social and economic rights of the small-scale farmers and deprived population in rural areas. In addition, the organization promotes the HRB approach. The National Federation of Farmers prepares the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Report (MDA) on the national level. The National Federation of Farmers (NFF) holds relevant meetings with institutions where a focus is placed on the human rights of rural populations.

This statement addresses the main barriers and limitations for rural population covering:

- Rural poverty-economic and social poverty, limited access to rural services and effects of climate changes
- Discrimination of marginalized groups (women, youth and people with disabilities)

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#### ISSUE 1: RURAL POVERTY

The rural poverty in the country is still progressing. The survey implemented as part of MDP Report 2023<sup>1</sup>, showed that poverty in the country has increased in the last five years and that the situation will not improve in the near future. A significant part of the population considers that they are on the edge of existence. There is little trust in the institutions. Low purchase prices pose a significant challenge for farmers, especially during the time of intensive effects of climate change. This trend has been going on for the past fifteen years with decrease of the price in relation to the cost for more than 30% as stated in the reports of the various sub-sector groups of the Ministry of Agriculture, putting primary agricultural producers in a vulnerable position in terms of economic and business activities, as well as their quality of life.

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<https://nff.org.mk/2022/07/26/%d0%bc%d1%83%d0%bb%d1%82%d0%b8%d0%b4%d0%b8%d0%bc%d0%b5%d0%bd%d0%b7%d0%b8%d0%be%d0%bd%d0%b0%d0%bb%d0%bd%d0%b0-%d0%b0%d0%bd%d0%b0%d0%bb%d0%b8%d0%b7%d0%b0-%d0%b7%d0%b0-%d1%81%d0%b8%d1%80%d0%be%d0%bc/>

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Recommendations for the State:

1. To implement obligations from the adopted UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas, with a focus on Articles 3, 6, 11, 13, 14, 16, 18<sup>2</sup>
2. To ensure that state policies and programs address rightful access to fundamental services such as healthcare, education, social services, employability and infrastructure in rural areas. This should include improvements in transportation networks, communication systems, and irrigation systems in conformity with Sustainable Development Goals 1, 2.3, 3, 13.1, 13.2 and 13.3<sup>3</sup>.
3. To create financial support measure (subsidy) to stimulate contract farming and its consistent implementation (regulated by the Law on Agriculture and Rural Development), especially before the start of the season, through which the supply and demand for fresh products would be regulated.
4. To implement the new Law on Advisory Services in Agriculture, enabling effective knowledge transfer for adapting agriculture to the new climate changes.
5. To prepare mechanisms for improvement and availability of the employees – it is important to work on equal access for men and women in rural areas.

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**ISSUE 2: DISCRIMINATION OF MARGINALIZED GROUPS**

Rural women, youth and people with disability are facing a lot of challenges among which: social exclusion, unemployment, unequal distribution of income and resources, dominance of traditional norms, deprivation of agriculture land and property, limited access to education, information, healthcare and public and social services. These conditions force rural women and youth into greater poverty and migration. The last census in North Macedonia confirmed significant migration trends, additional 15% have migrated from rural areas in the last decade. In response to this situation, supportive measure for women farmers and young farmers as part of the “Program for financial support for rural development” has been taken by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, in collaboration with socio-economic partners. Additionally, there has been an improvement in dialogue between the non-governmental sector and the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, aimed at improving the economic and social conditions of women farmers. Program for Social Security Support for Women Farmers<sup>4</sup> enabling the utilization of benefits during periods of inability to perform agricultural work due to childbirth was established by the Ministry of Agriculture and has been implemented since 2023. The next step is to increase the awareness and information for existence of such measure among the potential beneficiaries and to work on systemic solution for improvement of social conditions for women farmers and other marginalized groups.

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Recommendations for the State:

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<sup>2</sup> <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1650694> (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas: resolution / adopted by the Human Rights Council on 28 September 2018)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ipardpa.gov.mk/mk/AboutUs/Documents/10 Program for Social Security Support for Women Farmers](https://www.ipardpa.gov.mk/mk/AboutUs/Documents/10%20Program%20for%20Social%20Security%20Support%20for%20Women%20Farmers)

1. To continue the collaboration between the non-governmental sector and institutions aimed at improving the economic and social situation of rural women and other marginalized groups in rural areas on national and local level, especially people with disability
2. To support and implement a Human Rights-Based Approach in all programs and measures, with direct inclusion of marginalized groups from rural areas in conformity with Sustainable Development Goals 2.2, 2.5, 5.2 and 5.4<sup>5</sup> as well as recommendation No.42 (2018) from the CEDAW Committee's sixth periodic report on the Republic of North Macedonia<sup>6</sup>.
3. To adopt measures to register and recognize the work of rural women and make provisions for recognizing their rights to social benefits, including retirement pensions and other social protection allowances in conformity with recommendation No.36 (2018)<sup>7</sup> from the CEDAW Committee's sixth periodic report of the Republic of North Macedonia.
4. To ensure that rural women, youth and people with disability have access to subsidies and rural development support measures to the greatest possible extent
5. To implement educational campaigns to increase the number of women and youth landowners and property owners in rural areas and provide support and education for women and youth to be equal partners in managing agricultural farms in conformity with Sustainable Development Goals 5.7, as well as recommendation No.42 (2018) from the CEDAW Committee's sixth periodic report of the Republic of North Macedonia<sup>8</sup>.

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Thank You for Your attention!

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1455810/1930\\_1546509736\\_n1837827.pdf](https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1455810/1930_1546509736_n1837827.pdf)/ CEDAW Committee's sixth periodic report on the Republic of North Macedonia

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1455810/1930\\_1546509736\\_n1837827.pdf](https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1455810/1930_1546509736_n1837827.pdf)/ CEDAW Committee's sixth periodic report on the Republic of North Macedonia

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1455810/1930\\_1546509736\\_n1837827.pdf](https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1455810/1930_1546509736_n1837827.pdf)/ CEDAW Committee's sixth periodic report on the Republic of North Macedonia