



## Press statement: Call for Global Day of Action – 26 January 2008

### **“Small-scale Farmers Are Not For Sale”**

It is no accident that the predominant conventional national and international agricultural sector undermines the freedom of the rural poor and landless. Despite the new political dispensation in South Africa, access to and control over productive resources, *i.e.* land, water, remains unequal. The entire rural economy is still controlled by white commercial farmers, agribusiness and international corporations, which places profits and markets above people's needs. The rights of the rural poor to land and agrarian reform - to produce food - are systematically undermined by greed.

The current agricultural industry is able to generate huge profits by exploiting farm workers /dwellers and workers in the industry. The livelihood options of poor farm dwellers and small scale farmers have been declining as commercial farmers find it tougher to compete in the global market, but want to maintain their profit margins at the expense of workers. The export driven market system shapes new forms of dispossession. More importantly the casualisation and feminisation of the work force has seen the conditions of female farm workers worsening. In confronting this global economic system that generates poverty and vulnerability, small-scale farmers and NGOs are heeding the global call for a day of mobilisation and action on 26 of January 2008 by the World Social Forum.

In support of La Via Campesina - an umbrella body that represents the social movements of small-scale farmers and the landless in the global South - we articulate key demands for pro-poor agrarian reform that include water and agricultural reform on this the global day of action. Central to agrarian

transformation is the demand for food sovereignty that defends the right of people to produce their own food and to have access to healthy food. In South Africa the poor are already facing food inflation with rapid price increases for staple food such as bread. For the past year *food* prices have increased at more or less 16% which to some extent explains the trend of rural women demanding access to land for productive purposes as household food insecurity renders them more vulnerable. In addition the trend towards bio fuels exacerbates the dire food insecurity that hundreds of poor rural households are facing.

Small scale farmers of the Cederberg region and SPP are calling on all small scale farmers, farm workers and the rural poor to join us when we confront the national and international economic system that generates poverty and undermining rural transformation, agrarian reform and food sovereignty.

**Join us in Citrusdal, from 9am on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 2008, as we celebrate the resistance of small scale farmers and farm dwellers to the neo-liberal policies of the so-called new South Africa.**