Alternatives for smallholder farmers

A view from the field

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Environmental degradation & climate change

- temperature increase
- extreme weather variability, intensity and unpredictability
- rising sea level, floods
- soil erosion
- physiological effects on crops, fields, forests, livestock
- Changes in land, soil and water conditions
- Loss of biodiversity
- increased weed and pest challenges;
- decline in yields and production; changes in geographical distribution of food production
- fluctuations in world market prices
- BUT SMALL FARMERS MORE VULNERABLE DUE TO MANY FACTORS

Inequitable ownership & control over productive resources

- Land ownership concentrated in the hands of wealthy landlords
- Farm inputs monopolized by agri-TNCs
- Seeds increasingly controlled by TNCs
- credit/ usury
- Post-harvest facilities
- Traders buy and hoard

Corporate-controlled technologies: e.g. Green Revolution

- Boost in productivity but high costs of production, value-added not captured by small farmers
- Chemical intensive agriculture, monocropping
- rise in inequality and impoverishment of resource-poor farming households
- Labor-displacing technology
- long-term land degradation, loss of biodiversity
- Less food for subsistence

Trade liberalization

- Unfair competition from subsidized produce from developed countries
- Resource-poor HHs don't necessarily benefit by plugging into trading system; increased polarization
- May encourage intensification of production and induce resource degradation
- Greater volatility

Land-use change

- Response to demands of global markets
- From agriculture to industrial uses (SEZs, commercial centers, etc.)
- From food crops for local consumption to cash crops for export including agrofuels

MASIPAG study in the Philippines

- Study covering 840 organic, partially organic and non-organic small-scale rice farmers from across the Philippines

Case study: small rice farming households in the Philippines [3]

Production expenses of conventional farmers (green rev)	in pesos
Inputs, seed, fertiliser, pesticides all crops or livestock	10,453
Irrigation fee	455
Land rental shared payments in kind	1,529
Land amortization	4
Hire labour or services	5,861
Repay long term loans	2,982
Other expenses	1,618

Source: Figure 3.6 in Bachman et al, p. 41

Case study: small rice farming households in the Philippines [3]

Household annual balance	in pesos
Mean	-4,992
5% trimmed mean	-4,503
Median	-1,755
Poorest quartile	-10,893
Richest quartile	3,868

Source: Figure 3.11 in Bachman et al, p. 49

Case study: small rice farming households in the Philippines [3]

Farm income since 2000 has:	as % of respondents
Decreased	31%
Remained the same	37%
Increased	31%
No answer	0.70%

Source: Figure 3.7 in Bachman et al, p. 42

MASIPAG's farmer-led sustainable agriculture

- use of seed varieties selected by local farmers from local trial farms assisted by farmer-trainors and scientists;
- no chemical fertilizers or pesticides;
- Farmers actively involved in the organisation and the community

Compared to “conventional farmers”, (MASIPAG) organic farmers :

1. Produced no significant difference in terms of rice yields;
2. Had significantly higher livelihood incomes compared to conventional farmers (if subsistence production is included);
3. Had more diverse diets;
4. Had more climate-resilient food production;
5. Reported better health conditions;
6. Reported greater food security;
7. Had more community participation

We need Food sovereignty

- Ensuring food security and climate resilience requires not just improving productivity, availability, etc.
- Crucial aspect is the matter of democratizing control over productive resources

- Thank You!