Producing today’s food results in astonishing environmental impacts on our natural resources: 70% of water is consumed by the global agriculture sector; soil is eroding at an increased speed due to industrial farming practices; and this erosion and deterioration of soils on industrial farms releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere exacerbating climate change. Moreover, up to 2 billion tons of food are wasted every year - equivalent to 50% of all food produced - according to a report published by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IME). In order to feed our planet’s growing population, expected to be 9 billion by 2050, ICCR calls on food, meat and commodities producers to embrace a strategy to reduce environmental impacts and conserve natural resources.

Looking at the livestock industry alone, we can see how a massive amount of water, land, food and energy is required to raise the animals we consume. Nearly half of all the water used in the U.S. goes to raising billions of food animals (watering the crops they eat, drinking water and cleaning factory farms and slaughterhouses). 30 percent of the Earth’s land mass is used to raise animals, and 260 million acres of U.S. forest have been cleared to create cropland to grow grain to feed these animals. Furthermore, it takes 11 times the fossil fuel to produce one calorie of animal protein as it does to produce one calorie of plant protein; livestock production is responsible for 18% of greenhouse gases.

ICCR members are asking companies to commit to an “agro-ecological” or sustainable production that will preserve the planet’s resources for future generations as well as the loyalty of consumers who are increasingly demanding sustainably produced foods. We call on companies to:

- minimize, monitor, and measure water consumption, wastewater discharges and impacts on groundwater in all business operations and supply chains;
- conduct regular impact assessments of the food security implications of company land and water use along the value chain;
- formalize policies regarding land and water use in relation to marginalized rural communities and the potential impacts to their food security;
- implement animal welfare guidelines that support humane conditions and avoid close confinement and large-scale, geographically-intensive livestock operations; and;
- increase farmers’ preparedness and resilience in the face of more frequent and extreme weather events by assessing risk and vulnerability and developing and sharing strategies for more efficient use of natural resources.

Adopting these practices is critical for successful agro-ecological production systems and ensuring the availability of natural resources to meet our food production needs now and in the future.

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