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La Via Campesina Policy Documents

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Credits

We want to heartily thank all the voluntary translators, designers and editors who have been working in the shadow since November 2007. Due to their enthusiastic work, this booklet now exists in 4 languages and is the result of a tremendous collective work. We hereby want to thank all of them for their great activism!



Contacts :

International Operational Secretariat (IOS) of La Via Campesina

General Coordinator: Henry Saragih

Address: Jl. Mampang Prapatan XIV No. 5 Jakarta Selatan 12790

Jakarta – Indonesia. Phone: +62 21 7991890, Fax: 62 21 7993426

E-mail: viacampesina@viacampesina.org

Website: www.viacampesina.org

Jakarta, May 2009

**LA VIA
CAMPESINA
POLICY
DOCUMENTS**

5th Conference

**Mozambique, 16th to 23rd October,
2008**

Introduction

I am happy to present this first broad compilation of background and policy documents which have been widely discussed within our movement and which were produced by members of Via Campesina and its leaders from around the world. The texts published in this book were either written collectively for a specific event over the past years or specifically drafted by some Via Campesina representatives. They were then published in two booklets. The first one, published in March 2008 was discussed during the regional meetings in the lead up to the 5th Conference of Via Campesina that took place in Maputo, Mozambique, from the 16th to the 23rd of October 2008. A second booklet was published just before the conference. All those documents were finally discussed at the Conference itself during various assemblies and workshops.

Through this process some texts were amended, others were replaced, new texts came up and some were simply adopted as they were. This edition presents the result of this broad position-making and consultation process. Some of the documents in this book have already been published and used for our mobilisations around the world. This is the case for example of the position paper on climate change (*“Small scale sustainable farmers are cooling down the earth”*) that was defended by the Via Campesina delegation at the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change meeting in Bali, in December 2007. But some others are new, such as the *“Position on Agricultural Prices and Speculation”* proposed by the Via Campesina Food Sovereignty Committee, and some are still on their early stage of development such as *“World Bank – International Monetary Fund out of agriculture!”* or *“Corporate agriculture creates water crisis”*.

Those texts are by no means perfect. They emerged from our organisations, with all the complexity implied by debating and forging a common vision within such a diverse cultural and

linguistic environment. However imperfect, this book represents a broad consensus within La Via Campesina member organisations at this stage and constitutes an important basis to go further and deeper into the building of a strong international peasant's voice. It is now published in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese, and most of the texts were also translated into Japanese and Korean.

We have realised that however diverse our bases are - from landless farmers in Bolivia to organic farmers in Canada, from plantation workers in Indonesia to milk producers in Spain or vegetable growers in Congo – we share a surprisingly common analysis of the causes of the long lasting crisis in agriculture: the ruthless policies and governance that put profit above all other considerations. Moreover by working on those joint documents, we felt that much more than just representing an economic sector we were defending certain values and a way of life in society based on justice, simplicity and sustainability.

Via Campesina holds an international conference every four years, gathering representatives from all its member organisations to analyse the advances made and to define the main directions for the years to come. In October 2008, more than six hundred women and men gathered in Maputo for the 5th Conference, spending days and nights exchanging and discussing their different realities and opinions, their successes and failures and their dreams and victories.

I hope that this publication will also help farmers and peasant's organisations around the world who were not with us in Maputo to strengthen their position. I sincerely wish as well that it will inspire other sectors of society, in the cities and in the countryside, to keep struggling with us towards food sovereignty.

Henry Saragih,
General Coordinator of La Via Campesina
Jakarta, February 2009

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Women belonging to a cooperative of the Mozambican Farmers Union (UNAC) in Aldea Comunal Samora Machel, Marracuene, at about 60 km from Maputo. The cooperative gathers small farmers' families to produce vegetables and sell them in the streets.

A. Analysis of the International Context

Current International Context And Possible Implications For The Strategies Of La Via Campesina

Several changes in the international context will have a significant effect on our strategies and possibilities for changes. Some may signify extra difficulties, other may create new opportunities to advance our agenda.

New issues coming up

The trade issues (World Trade Organisation, Free Trade Agreements, Economic Partnership Agreements) have appeared strongly in several countries (Costa Rica, Mexico, India, Peru, Colombia, South Korea…) and public resistance is growing.

The new issue that sharpens the conflict lines between industrialized and poor countries is climate change: even though developing countries also play a part, industrialized countries are the main cause of the climate crisis. However, the worst consequences are suffered in the poorer countries, especially South Asia where most of the world poor are living. And these are mainly people from the rural areas. The climate crisis was taken up by the Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and certain governments to impose their solutions: among other the agro-fuels. Because of the ongoing deregulation of the food market (import liberalisation, abolition state marketing boards, abolition of buffer stocks…) and upcoming effects of the climate crisis the world production has become instable and more countries became dependent on food imports.

The increased consumption of meat in Asia, the use of land for agro-fuels, the lack of investment in food production (all the state support goes to export crops, often raw materials for Transnational Corporations) and speculation of TNCs have led at the moment to higher prices for agricultural products. This leads to pressure on governments in countries that have imported food.

Interestingly several governments call upon their peasants and farmers to produce more food for the local market. During the last years investment in food production was going down, now food production is becoming again a priority for state investment.

Water privatization was also high on the agenda of the transnational corporations. This combined with expected scarcity makes it an “explosive” issue for the near future.

The geopolitical balance is shifting

After “September 11th” with the attack on the World Trade Center the issue of “terrorism” has been taken up especially by the US government in an attempt to regain leadership imposing their agenda on the rest of the world. At the same time the unilateralism of the US and their focus on the Iraq war has created increased resistance among many countries. It has also created more space especially for the Latin American countries for a more independent course. The increasing oil price has backed up the confidence of countries like Venezuela, Iran and Russia. At the same time China regained influence and India and Brazil play a more confident role at the international level. In other countries in Asia and Africa there is growing awareness that it is important to protect domestic markets also because of effective pressure by social movements on their governments.

In general we can conclude that the balance of power between governments/countries has shifted towards a situation where the US domination is increasing with more space for alliances around specific interests.

Neo-liberal institutions are weakened

Until recently the WTO decisions were mainly taken by the EU and the US and imposed upon the rest. This has radically changed. Other countries no longer accept the concessions that the EU and the US require (on market access) and they have increased their own demands (on protection of domestic production). In the US and also in the EU the resistance against neo-liberal policies is increasing as the effects are increasingly felt, especially for the lower skilled labor force that lose their jobs increasing migration. The World Trade Organisation is at the moment more or less blocked. The other instruments to impose neo-liberal trade policies (Free Trade Agreements, Economic Partnership Agreements) face increasing resistance and some have been stopped.

The World Bank played an active role in nearly all the policies at the international level, controlling the political decisions. In recent years we see that they have been under severe criticism and that their role is largely reduced and that they have reduced their visibility. Through the Global Donor platform they try to set up their control of all funds for development cooperation for rural development and agriculture through “the back door”, looking for new ways to impose their policies and regain control. At the moment as a reaction to the food crisis they are trying in collaboration with the Bill Gates and the Rockefeller Foundation to set up the second “green revolution,” developing new strategies together with the transnational corporations at the local level, “through local communities”.

The International Monetary Fund also has lost credibility and many countries no longer depend on the International Monetary Fund for their loans. This has reduced its role.

United Nations agencies

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) is in a situation of crisis, the US and the EU are not willing to finance the institution, blocking reforms and initiatives that respond to the FAO mandate (to reduce rural poverty).

At the same time the institution has built strong links with organizations from Civil Society and demand support in order to keep the institution “alive.”

Similar tendencies are evidently in the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) where there is a strong interest to support La Via Campesina- like policies on land reform and support, domestic food production and empowerment of peasant organizations. The IFAD also increasingly collaborates with the FAO, in order to avoid becoming a department of the World Bank (as was foreseen by the US and others).

The Human Rights Council has decreased its influence during recent years, which may also be a consequence of the increased polarization through the war on terror. It has become easier to criminalize social movements which makes defending against HR violations more difficult.

In some countries the control of the national-federal governments on the local elites has decreased which allows more repression against our members.

Governments are more open to our proposals

With several governments (Bolivia, Nepal, Mali, Indonesia…) the possibilities for cooperation or to build strategic alliances has increased. This, together with the shifting balance of power, may create opportunities in the near future to establish spaces where we can defend and work on the implementation of our proposals based of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty is now part of the mainstream debate on food and agriculture and its level of recognition is steadily increasing.

Transnational Companies (TNCs)

The concentration in the TNCs is increasing; they are getting bigger and fewer. On one hand this increases their power but it also increases their vulnerability. Individual companies will be seen as more and more responsible for the problems the system creates. At the moment companies feel that they may get in the middle of the

food crisis and are nervous about possible adverse effects. During the World Economic Forum the TNCs launched their hunger initiative for Africa, probably not much more than a feel-good strategy to cover up their aggressive entrance into Africa.

On the other hand they are extremely aggressive in imposing agro-fuels, a new step in the destruction of peasant based agriculture and its transformation into corporate controlled production.

On the GMO issue: resistance is still strong in Europe, Africa and Asia which means that only in a limited number of countries world wide were GMO crops massively introduced.

Role of social movements

After the 11th of September the resistance and mobilization against neo-liberal policies had a certain “dip” especially in the US and Europe, the centers of power. At the moment resistance is rebuilding also around issues such as climate change, agro-fuels, GMOs and the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) etc.

La Via Campesina is in many occasions in the forefront of the struggle and one of the concerns is the articulation of the movements of our allies. Several movements are not yet very strong at the international level and lack coordination. This is a key concern for the near future. In 2007 the Nyéléni Forum helped to frame our joint agenda around food sovereignty. This was a major step forward and will help us to focus strategies in the future.

The World Social Forum could not increase its impact due to a lack of political focus: it should be a space where we define our struggles against joint enemies instead of a platform to exchange ideas.

Some conclusions

In the geopolitical context we see an increasing influence of transnational corporations. After the debt trap and military interventions to condition countries it seems that food is gaining a more central role as a weapon to control populations and

countries. Increasing dependence on imports increases the political dependency of these countries: hunger is a mighty internal enemy for the government also because through the media and the increased organization of peasants the exposure at national levels has increased (most hunger exists in the rural areas). transnational corporations and certain governments will see in this the possibility of increasing their dominance and control.

It seems increasingly important to focus our attention on the strengthening of the local organizations as they receive increased repression and pressure from local elites and other actors that have linked up with corporate interests.

As a peasant movement we have clearly developed our political analysis and objectives which allows us to develop long term strategies. One aspect that was not sufficiently analyzed and countered by La Via Campesina is the neo-liberal ideology and brain washing that allows them to sell adverse policies as “progress for humanity”.

The political situation is changing quickly. 10 years from now reality will possibly have changed in ways we could not imagine before (as occurred with the collapse of the USSR, the rise of the issue of terrorism, the shift in the balance of power, ...). This means that opportunities for change can emerge quickly and it seems important to be prepared to make use of these, having a good analysis, proposals and a strong organization to react adequately. The upcoming climate crisis can create new instabilities and therefore new opportunities for change. Also the increasing corporate control of the food chain may at a certain moment “backlash” and provoke strong popular resistance. New institutional alliances may create spaces for new policies. It is up to La Via Campesina and its allies to closely analyze the situation and be prepared to step up to the plate once there is something to gain.

African Perspective

The Food Crisis is Not Just About Food

by Jacques Delpechin and Diamantino Nhamposa

Preamble: Looking for Some Principles

In order to live one needs to eat and in order to live one needs more than just food. In a world ruled by worshippers of the Market, it has come to be accepted that principles of justice, solidarity shall take second rank to everything else. Indeed that is why one hears more and more often of the distinction between justice and social justice as if calling for the former will not automatically cover those most affected by the growing disappearance of justice and equality.

Given the current mentality, dominated by greed, selfishness and selfish charity, it is worth remembering a few cautionary principles/axioms: Beware of the names given to a problem, to a disease to a person without the consent of the discovered person. Always remember the Arawaks and those who welcomed Christopher Columbus and his party on what CC called Hispaniola. Soon they died of hunger and diseases.

Always remember those who resisted the conquest of their land because they were defending much more than their land. To remember requires much more than mining memories and archives, it will take listening with loving attention to poets, and much much more.

1. Setting the Parameters

The current food crisis in the midst of a multiple crisis should provide a wake up call to all those who are trying to provide solutions by only focusing on food. On first sight, there are at least two competing narratives: on one side there are those who have run the world and their allies and on the other there are those who are expected to submit and accept the word of the self-appointed masters of the world. Formally speaking, the latter set their own agendas via the G8 and the yearly Davos meetings, among other places. Those who are expected to submit are reduced to using the United Nations and its specialized agencies, and the World Social Forum. Soon the Security Council and its permanent members will be changed, but it will not matter since the G8 and Davos meetings have taken care of ensuring that the decisions which do matter to them will no longer be taken within the UN system.

Put in other words, it is not only in justice, health or, more prosaically, air travel, that the class system has imposed itself: there is justice/health for the poor and justice/health for the rich. Indeed, if one looks more carefully, it is not difficult to detect that the super rich would like to separate themselves from the rest. However, no matter how hard they would like to distinguish themselves from the rest of humanity, there is only one humanity. Splitting it apart as was done for the atom will yield worse results than the process which led to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Still, more than 50 years later, how many are willing, like Dwight McDonald, to see in the dropping of those atomic bombs the modernization of Auschwitz, Dachau. Given what happened in WWII, but more importantly, the centuries leading to it, should one not ask if the current multiple crises are not the by-product of the same competition-to-death mentality which gave rise to a political leadership, in several countries of the most advanced economies, friendly to the idea that there was nothing wrong in getting rid, once and for all, of any racially defined group (be it Africans, Asians, Armenians, Pygmies, Jews, Tutsi, Hutu). Asking the question does not mean that one knows the answer. In a context in which one can see that the mind-set of those genocidal times are still vibrant, it would be irresponsible NOT to ask questions like who are the

slaves, who are the Jews, who are the colonized. Asking this kind of questions will help find out, along the way, how poverty and hunger are created.

The mind-set which has trampled humanity, under different names, (e. g. slavery, colonization, holocaust, apartheid) has not retreated, it has grown like a cancer destroying the living principle while, at the same time, passing itself under names which disguise its lethal, predatory nature such as biotechnology. Presenting itself as promoting life when it is engaged in the process of killing brutally, softly and all the ways in between. Biotechnology is a misnomer; given the antecedents, its proper name should be thanato-technology: to live on Planet Earth according to death principles. The chain toward self-destruction has no end: To rape, to enslave, to colonize, to seek the final solution, to bantustanize, to ethnically cleanse a country, etc. Humanity has yet to see the end of its genocidal tendencies and sequences. Under the previous submission processes, the responsibility could be traced back to some sort of state authority; but with submission to the Market rules, responsibility / authority seems to be nowhere and everywhere.

Peoples, nations have been enslaved, colonized by other nations, but at the core of the process, the rules of the Market reigned supreme. The capitalist Market has superseded all previous conquering, enslaving, colonizing mechanisms. Indeed, unlike the empires of old, the Market (as guided by capitalist principles) has modernized (automated) the mechanisms of domination in ways imperial powers could never have dreamed of achieving. Through the Market mechanisms, a few former slaves, a few former colonized could become part of the ruling cliques, and, move away from the miseries of hunger and poverty. In times when denunciations of corruption have become a perpetual mantra, the sweet murmurs of the Market and the promise of greater wealth to be made through its labyrinths, gag and/or muffle the few voices trying to change course. Before trying to restrict the food crisis to the last few decades and/or to the usual culprits, one should revisit the histories of those who (since the inauguration of capitalism, a

few centuries ago) died of hunger in times when the words food crisis were not even uttered.¹ At least not in the manner one hears them today.

Increasingly, food is only accessible through the Market as is work, education, health, justice, birth, right to exist, right to breath clean air, right to clean water, etc.. Everything which goes into making life worth living, into making a human being worth being a human being, everything can only be accessible through mechanisms controlled by a few individuals, but above all by a mind-set which is accountable to nobody.

The market fundamentalists might react and say that this is an exaggeration and that they are just as interested in all of the above objectives as anyone else. As fundamentalists who have benefited from the Market, understandably, their primary objective has been, is, will be, to maintain the prism of the Market as the determining one in assessing life's value. If the food crisis is not problematized from within the situation, the histories of those who were famished because of who they were (i.e. dispensable), then the exercise is more than likely to provide solutions beneficial to the so-called discoverers of hunger/famine. Historically, the discoverers have never seen themselves, at least initially, as the possible and probable source of problems of a socio-economic nature which are affecting more than 90% of the world population.

By discussing the current food crisis from the perspective of the last few decades, these very short term analysts, consciously or unconsciously, are saying that the problem is momentary and conjunctural. It is neither, and has been in the making for a very long time.² Sometimes, like now, the time span can even be shorter because of the emphasis on the concomitant financial, energy and ecological crises.

This essay would like to address the current food crisis from a perspective which goes back to at least 1491. As Ch. Mann has pointed out, 1492 as a starting point of a post 1492 narrative tends to give the impression that prior to 1492 there was nothing worth

remembering. The dominant mind-set which emerged out of the so-called discoveries emphasizes only the positive aspects, to the exclusion of any aspect which might blemish its record.³

The term consciousness of evil is one which has been used to describe what happened in WW II. Fifty years later, one has slowly, but irresistibly slid into a situation which is leading to the eradication of people who stand in the way of total and complete triumph of the will of the richest people of the earth. When Native Americans were driven out of their land, when they lost the material basis of their way of living, they died of hunger and diseases. Centuries later, but this time on a bigger scale, masses of people are being starved, while a few are stuffing themselves, to death.⁴ Some, because they are not eating the proper food, others because they just overeat, excited, driven by never ending advertising campaigns. The killing, anti-humanity mind-set has reached such a level of intensity that those who are its victims fail to grasp that they do not have to submit to it. All it would take is affirming humanity and the living principles.

2. The current food crisis seen from the starved

From way back, if one is willing to listen carefully to the historical echoes of those who screamed against inhumanity, one can hear something like the following:

When people were punished through starvation
They protested, but who were they?
Slaves.

They responded:
We are not slaves, we are Africans who were enslaved.
For having spoken they were killed

The generic human being protested
The screams were heard, but
She was a colonial subject
She was jailed, raped, sent to exile

Only for having spoken
when she was supposed to keep silent

The human being protested
Babies, children, old men and women
Protested
Followed by animals, birds, nature.
Life protested against death
To no avail
The market must prevailed,
Keeps prevailing,
Is kept prevailing
The most powerful dictated

The habit of not listening to human beings less powerful
The habit of raping with impunity
Led to humanitarianism, a discovery aimed
At covering up crimes against humanity
By those who had refused to listen to humanity
And lost their humanity

From Columbus to today, the discoverers have not changed
They changed tunes to reinforce their mind-set
Leading one to ask:
Was their discovery of humanitarianism
a diversion or a negation
of their own humanity?
Or are they saying there is a humanity
To be understood/represented/defended
--by them or their agents--
Through humanitarianism, charitably
and there is humanity, as humanity
Against which no crime must be committed

They discovered themselves as the best representatives of
humanity,
But they are disconnected from humanity,
They have never known starvation

The only thing they understand
Is how to make money
Out of their discoveries
Whatever their names:
Land, slaves, colonies, poverty, misery, hunger

The history has been known for a long time, but it keeps being pushed back even when, one should say, especially when, it manages to free itself from the shackles of the dominant mind-set. An enslaved person who frees herself without waiting for the master's abolition or a colonized people which decolonizes itself before it is considered appropriate by the colonizer shall be "taught a lesson". From Saint-Domingue/ Haiti to Indochina/Vietnam, to Cuba, to Kenya, to the Democratic Republic of Congo, to Mozambique, the lesson has been drilled with all the means at the disposal of the dominant mind-set: from extreme violence to extreme seduction. With the same objective: ensure that fear and/or shame will keep the descendants of those who did try the impossible (and succeeded) to never ever try again to free themselves. More on shame further below.

3. Identifying and sorting out some of the deepest roots of the food crisis

If the current food crisis is going to be resolved for the benefits of those who have been most affected by its unfolding, and in a way that those who have most suffered from hunger participate in the thinking of how to remove hunger, then the food crisis must be examined away and far beyond the rattling of statistical tables which reveal the obvious, i.e. that the poorest of the poor (PoP) have been getting poorer and poorer for the benefit of the Richest of the Rich (RoR). From as long as humanity has existed the former have risen against the latter, but one must resist the temptation of accepting the idea that emancipatory politics will always fail. Closer to us in historical time one must also resist the temptation of accepting the notion that thoughts expressed by highly educated intellectuals count more than the thoughts of uneducated or poorly educated peasants. Being uneducated does not mean that one is incapable of thinking. The Africans who did overthrow slavery in

Saint Domingue/Haiti thought better from within their situation than those who predicted that they could not possibly achieve such a feat. It is not difficult to imagine the slave owners (and the Enlightenment philosophers) saying to whoever would listen: what do the slaves know about freedom?

Yet, these are the very ones who, having dared against all odds and all the predictions of failure, did leave us with lessons on how to achieve freedom. But again, the lessons retold by the discoverers and/or their descendants and/or their allies shall always differ from the ones recounted, remembered by the so-called “discovered” and/or their descendants and/or their allies. More often than not one finds among the latter the most vociferous distorters of the histories/lessons which emerged from the battles against the defenders of submission to the dominant mind set. For example, listening to the history of Haiti as recounted by C.L.R. James or, more recently, Peter Hallward is not the same as hearing it from Alex Dupuy.⁵ The RoR have multiple ways of enforcing their views, but so do the PoP too, provided they are convinced that they can.

For any human being, suffering can reach unbearable points, but at the same time, over and over in history, people have shown a heroic capacity to resist and rise above the most extreme forms of torture, especially when motivated by a political understanding of their situation which has disconnected itself from the mind-set which never stops dictating the idea that the way out can only be through the dominant mind-set way thinking.

Again if one looks at the history of Haiti, it is easy to understand why the slave and plantation owners would seek, by any means necessary, to prove that the Africans who overthrew slavery on Saint Domingue should never have tried: financial, economic, political, religious, cultural and intellectual means were used to convey the message that the inhabitants of Saint Domingue would have been better off had they not risen against slavery. In a nutshell, everything has been done to ensure that other enslaved Africans (or living any subsequent Enslaving system) reconsider emancipatory politics as a viable option.

The history of Haiti is one of the most exemplary one for both sides of the ideological fence separating emancipatory and consensual / submissive / abolitionist politics.

4. The convergence between fear of one's history and fear of hunger

From the historical record, it is known that the turn over ratio of Africans in Saint Domingue was very high. Supply was cheap and less costly than seeking to improve maintenance. It was cheaper to get fresh bodies and use them to death. The demographic ratio was also favourable to the Africans, free and enslaved ones. From the beginning to the end of the 18th century, the number of Africans went from around 2,000 to about half a million. As in any such situation, a range of possibilities must have been discussed: improve the conditions of work/treatment, including better food, get rid of the system altogether.

However, before going further in our examination, it is important to connect the history of the Africans in Saint Domingue and the Africans from one of their geographical points of origin: the Kongo Kingdom. Only 85 years (about 3 generations) separate two events related to the overthrow of slavery. On July 2, 1706, Kimpa Vita (some times known as Dona Beatriz) was burned at the stake for having tried to convince the Kongo King to put an end to the activities of the Portuguese slave raiders/traders. It was not just a one person enterprise. Those who agreed with her denunciations rallied behind a movement known as The Antonin Movement. So called because Kimpa Vita said that she had received her message from St Anthony.

Little is known about the movement following the death of Kimpa Vita, but it is not unreasonable to surmise that memories of the movement survived and may have influenced those who, in 1791, in Saint Domingue, decided and vowed to end slavery. And, it would not be unfair to presume that, as a principle, humanity has genes which are allergic to any form of slavery. From within humanity there are always going to be those pushing for emancipatory politics.

The Africans who ended up in Saint Domingue lived in a most fearsome situation. In order to understand their determination to do away with slavery, one should try to understand what slavery was about.⁶ The latter is almost impossible, regardless of the descriptions available either through historical, fictional or cinematographic accounts.⁷

The use of an entire Continent as a hunting ground for enslaving people is the kind of trespassing of humanity which, because it has remained unacknowledged, opened the door to further trespassing, not just in terms of the number of people maimed, slaughtered, raped but also because it further reinforced the mind-set based on the notion that competition-to-death, by any means, is the most efficient way of organizing any economy. One shall never stress enough that unless the enormity of what happened is eventually understood, it will be *impossible* to do *anything* with regard to the current challenges faced by humanity.⁸

Out of this mind-set has grown a habit of minimizing/erasing what the industrial enslavement of an entire Continent has done. Such a process of slowly building a mind-set aimed at minimizing / muffling / eradicating the efforts of those who, long before it was so proclaimed by the “discoverers”, stood up against a crime against humanity (CAH), ends up distorting any attempt to rise up against some of its most damaging consequences. This minimizing of slavery and its consequences has been repeated at every subsequent transition (end of colonization, end of apartheid).

When the French government passed the legislation recognizing slavery as a crime against humanity (Loi Christiane Taubira, 2001), it was done in a way which was aimed at shielding those who collectively benefited from slavery. How else should one interpret the French government behaviour toward President Jean Bertrand Aristide (JBA) in 2004. The kidnapping was carried out by the American military in collaboration with the French and Canadian governments and their allies, including the Central African Republic.. The whole episode reminded one, more than 200 later, of the kidnapping of Toussaint-L'Ouverture.

It might be asked what is the meaning of this long detour into the history of Haiti for the purpose of confronting the current food crisis? It has to do with resisting the attempt to frame the food crisis from the perspective of those who want to benefit the most from it. In its most simplistic terms, the food crisis is being analyzed, explained within the parameters put in place by a dominant mind-set which has its deepest roots in how it organized the pauperization of those who had defeated the biggest scourge of those times. Indeed it was more than a scourge, it was the embryo of what was to become known under globalization two centuries later.

The Africans, then, understood their situation without political or charitable representatives. Their understanding and thinking of how to get out of their situation was arrived at through their own thinking and, definitely, without the help of the Enlightenment philosophers. 1789 had taken place and did help bring forward the idea, at least among some, that if the banner of *Liberty, Fraternity and Equality* was going to have any meaning, then it had to lead to the complete and total abolition of slavery.

Massive efforts took place, not just from France, but also from England and Spain to try and reverse what the Africans had done. The abolition of slavery in French controlled territories would not take place till 1848. A date which also coincides with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But as stated above, these rights apply differently whether one belongs to Humanity (first class) or to Humanity-existing-through-humanitarianism (second and third classes).

Will the food crisis be resolved according to the discriminatory perspective above or according to an understanding that there is only one humanity? In other words will the question of how to eradicate hunger and poverty be posed by those whose dominant mind-set has generated massive hunger and poverty or will the poor and the hungry frame the questions and provide the answers without the humanitarian/charitable advice of the “discoverers” of poverty and hunger?

It is not difficult to see that the food crisis is connected to other crises, economic and financial (the so-called credit crunch), climatic, etc. It is also clear that all institutions have been mobilized, from the ones which are specialized on the issue (e.g. Food and Agricultural Organization-FAO, government ministers) to personalities like the former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan who understand the seriousness and gravity of the crisis.

But when all of these specialists meet and discuss, the voices of peasants, the voices of those who do produce food, either for themselves and families or for corporations, are rarely, if ever heard. Moreover, how can people whose mind-sets are responsible for the food crisis be expected to provide satisfactory answers? How can people who see nothing wrong in their mind-set be expected to get rid of, or distance themselves from, the very way of thinking which has brought the inhabitants of the Planet face to face with a looming disaster?

The fear at work in the minds of the above group is not the same as the one to be found among those who belong to the most vulnerable inhabitants of the Planet. A mind which does not have to worry about eating three meals a day, as well as provide food for all members of its family can be at peace while the ones who go hungry on a daily basis often resort (Raj Patel) to suicide as the solution to their daily miseries. An Inconvenient question arises which is not unlike the one which rose with regard to the HIV-AIDS epidemic: could it be that the RoR would rather let the hungry die than discuss with them the best way to resolve the crisis?

5. Fear and Shame: Consciousness of Evil or Consciousness of Shame?

In addition to fear there is shame. While psychologists have studied how to detect people who are lying, there has been little interest on trying to understand why and how, individually and collectively, human beings are eager to hide anything which might be shameful. The fear of having a shameful act revealed to all provides a powerful incentive to hide.⁹

How a segment of humanity has treated others in the past can lead to a sense of shame and the desire to ask for forgiveness. Unfortunately, one is not operating under conditions which are levelled: those who know from their own historical records that they have perpetrated shameful acts are not eager to bring them to the surface. What was done to Africans, to Native Americans by other people in the name of a way of thinking, an ideology, a religion, etc. has been deeply felt unevenly all over the world.

In some cases, e.g. France toward Africans and slavery has acknowledged that slavery is a crime against humanity (CAH), but little has been done to reverse the direct and indirect consequences. Indeed, a belated apology has often been used as the most efficient way of preserving the gains acquired through the crime.

Once a taboo has been trespassed, it becomes extremely difficult if not impossible to overcome its direct and indirect consequences. With regard to food, in a world in which people should not go hungry, people do go hungry precisely because it has become acceptable, in a mind-set dominated by a dictatorial free market system, that some people are going to die of hunger. The accepted norm, under the present mind-set, is that hunger cannot be eradicated, regardless of the efforts. The fact that humanity has been able to eradicate certain diseases, including hunger, is not seen as the proof that hunger could be banned.

6. Why the histories of Saint Domingue/Haiti's are more emblematic than ever?

In their self-congratulatory march to where they have reached, the RoR have always feared what the PoP would or could do if they were to understand their own situations without outside interferences. Along the way, the former segment of humanity has resorted, directly or indirectly, to fearsome practices in order to submit and/or obliterate those they considered less than humans.¹⁰ The process of how Haiti has been impoverished following 1804 is pertinent to how to think about the current food crisis.

Haiti, for example, used to be self sufficient in rice, the DR Congo used to export cassava and many other food commodities. Both countries now have to import thanks to a process which involved the World Bank economists and the US government's common strategy of liberalization. The process of turning self-sufficient economies into dependent ones has been documented ad infinitum.¹¹ Aid and charity complement each other as the remedy to the predatory extremes unleashed by the dictatorial rule of competition.

Succeeding where success was not expected, as the Africans did in eradicating slavery, could have inflicted a serious blow to the system.¹² Those who had most benefited from slavery had to impose their own timing: it took another half-century for France to abolish slavery.

Timing was crucial in order to tame those who had thought, back then, that slavery was indeed a crime against humanity. Again, as with abolition, the timing for the recognition had to be imposed by those who had most benefited from the crime itself. It was only in 2001 that France finally passed a law recognizing slavery as a crime against humanity.

While working in Mozambique between 1979 and 1986, I once had a poster against apartheid: "Apartheid is a Crime against Humanity". Looking at it a visitor asked what it meant. I remained speechless, thinking it was self-explanatory. How long will it take for the South African government to acknowledge apartheid as a crime against humanity. Or, is it that, in the name of Truth and Reconciliation, the multiple roots of the crime shall be silenced?

From 1962 to 1974, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo) succeeded, against all odds, in putting an end to Portuguese colonial rule. Such a success, as in Haiti, had to be reversed. The context, in Mozambique, was dominated by the Cold War. Frelimo had been supported by the USSR, the People's Republic of China, Cuba, Vietnam, the German Democratic Republic, but also by people from western countries like Italy,

Holland and Sweden. As Henry Kissinger stated during a visit to Southern Africa in April 1976, communism had to be defeated in Southern Africa.¹³ Not long after that began to unfold one of the most vicious civil wars aimed at “teaching Frelimo a lesson”.

The consequences of the war have been so devastating that, in the name of the peace achieved in 1992, it has become preferable not to speak about the war. So much so that the silence around the Civil War is now being extended to the war against the colonizers, as if that was the war which should never have taken place. Again, it is difficult not to think of Haiti and what the Africans did to slavery. Today’s elite in Haiti acts as if it wishes slavery had not been abolished, at least not in the manner it was done between 1791 to 1804. Today’s elite in Mozambique prefers to focus on how to become as rich as possible and as quickly as possible, inaudibly murmuring to themselves that had it not been for Frelimo, they would be much better off today.¹⁴

Both Haiti and Mozambique are most talked about as very poor countries. Thanks to outside donors, anti-poverty programs do help the PoP overcome hunger and other problems. It is understandable that those who suffered the consequences of war (especially the civil war, 1980-1992) would rather not face that situation again. A question rises, though: should the fear of what happened during colonial rule, or after, lead to the fear of politics, i.e. thinking for oneself on how best to get out of a given situation. Moreover, should the fact that the Soviet Union and all its allies “lost” the Cold War lead Mozambicans to the conclusion that anything which resembles socialism and/or communism must be banished. For ever?

The process of enforcing only one way of thinking with regard to colonial rule and its demise has followed the same pattern as the one which has been observed in Haiti: everything must be done so that a different way of organizing society, production and distribution does not emerge. Differences will be acceptable if they are not antagonistic to the dominant way of thinking.

7. Césaire, poetry, politics and history

When Aimé Césaire passed away recently it dawned on many people, including this one, that someone very special had lived among us and had not been heard or understood as he should have. This has happened before and will happen again. Later on, some shall describe him as a prophetic voice. He always insisted, without saying it in this manner, that he was not a politician and that his politics were in his poetry.¹⁵ To a specific question by Françoise Vergès on the relationship between his poetry and politics he points out the following: “La poésie révèle l’homme à lui-même. Ce qui est au plus profond de moi-même se trouve certainement dans ma poésie. Parce que ce ‘moi-même’, je ne le connais pas. C’est le poème qui me le révèle et même l’image poétique.” (Aimé Césaire. *Entretiens*...2005:47) [---It is poetry which reveals the human being to itself. What comes from deepest within myself can be found in my poetry. Because even this self of mine, I do not know. It is the poem which reveals it to me, even the poetic imagery --jd translation---]

Using statistical data to demonstrate the insanity, the injustices behind the current food crisis will not make a dent in the consciousness of those who are responsible for it. For someone like Césaire, and Françoise Vergès is right to emphasize this point (A Césaire. *Entretiens*...2005:111-136), the immensity of the wound inflicted by one segment of humanity onto another, through slavery and later compounded by colonization, has never been assessed. Such an assessment is deliberately avoided because of the fear/shame of what would happen to all those who only know one truth, one history: the history, the truth of humanity seen through the eyes and the mind-set of those who have enslaved, who have colonized. The resulting shock of discovering what had been hidden could be overwhelming, to those who are unprepared.

From within this kind of historical narrative, the dominant mind-set is bound to present access to food, health, education, justice as something which is easily available to anyone provided it is so desired. To paraphrase Françoise Vergès, the dominant mind-set (in France) is convinced that the 1848 abolition of slavery was

France's gift to the Africans. This paternalistic mind-set is as deeply encroached today as it was in 1848. Enslavement to the dominant system is being carried out with different means, but the results are just as devastating on humanity as a whole. The direct and indirect consequences of slavery and colonization have never been dealt with. As a result, one hears calls to the poor to change their attitude. It is very easy to promote the idea that the poor are poor because they want to be poor. Just as it is easy to accuse the peasants of laziness. No one among the RoR ever accuses the land stealer, the bankers, the speculators of being lazy.¹⁶

From Aimé Césaire's poetry one has heard, but not yet learned that living is an art. The food speculators, the financiers, the colonizers, the enslavers and all those who have never seen anything wrong in their mind-set or in living as an accounting exercise may praise our Beloved Césaire and even quote from his poetry, but they will do so from within the accounting mind-set, willing to accept him patronisingly, just as they accepted the abolition of slavery in 1848. As stated in the preamble, the food crisis is one of the multiple manifestations of humanity approaching a dead end.

More and more of its members are beginning to sense that when living principles determined by human beings are being superseded by principles anonymously determined by a deity called Market, then something, somewhere, did go wrong. When food, e.g. corn or maize, is being produced for reasons other than feeding people, then, surely, it is a sign that the segment of humanity which promotes such a diversion has modernized, exponentially, what happened during WWII. For the sake of defending/promoting a mind-set, masses of people are being reduced to a non existing status.

8. Freedom without equality and fraternity is freedom to annihilate

The Market, unfettered of any rules based on equality and fraternity between all segments of humanity, can only lead to annihilation of humanity. This is not a prediction. It is happening as surely as the melting of the ice caps at both Poles, as surely as global warming is

progressing. How does one reverse a mind-set which has taken hold not just of the speculators, bankers, political and religious leaders? How does one defeat the deeply rooted tendency of thinking that the task at hand is impossible?

For one, the voices which have been saying the same things for centuries must be heard. It is not enough to say that humanity is one if, at the same time, one refuses to listen to some of the voices, regardless of the reasons. When the crisis is as serious as the current one, regardless of the angle from which it is tackled, is it not wise to acknowledge that every single member of humanity has a say. Should one not call and encourage the tiniest voices to rise? Isn't the wisest course to accept, in the face of Inconvenient Truths, the inconvenient truths uttered for the past centuries by the PoP?

When confronted with the systematic denial of one's humanity, there is only one possible course: stand up against such a denial. It is crucial that the resistance against the dominant mind-set be conducted from within the principles aimed at a different mind-set. It must be firmly grounded on solidarity. The only force to be used shall be the force of art, poetry and science at the service of humanity.

Artists, poets, scientists must eat too. Freedom by itself does not feed, but freedom with equality and fraternity can. Artists, poets and scientists do not have to congregate in places designated by the Market promoters. In such places, all voices shall be heard, provided respect for basic principles to be agreed upon by those who insist on the necessity to change the mind-set. Among the principles, the following ones could be considered:

The PoP must be heard in their own voices
The multiplicity of the voices must be accepted
No representation shall be accepted

9. Healing from fear and shame

The transition from apartheid, even with the help of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), has not lived up to its heralded promises. The recent (May 2008) pogroms against the PoP by

other PoP has revealed the shortcomings of the TRC as a panacea, on the one hand; on the other hand, it brought out very sharply the shortcomings of the ANC as the governing party as well as the government with regard to educating and informing the population about the international support without which apartheid would not have been defeated. In that process of informing and educating, the role of ordinary Africans who risked their lives and generously gave all they could, should have been highlighted. This failure, however, must be shared by most African governments because of their common tendencies to disregard the role of ordinary people in the making of their histories.

As with all previous major transitions (from slavery to post-slavery, from colonialism to post-colonialism), the defeated side quickly reorganized itself with the objective of minimizing their losses. In that process they were helped by their previous enemies (now referred to as adversaries). As in Nkrumah's famous motto, they were convinced that once the political kingdom had been seized, the rest would follow. Yet, in social and economic terms, they found themselves suddenly far from the very ones who made it possible to seize the kingdom, and, much closer to their previous enemies whose main thinking was focused on how to keep the economy going as well as before.

The fear of the new government was to show that things, in South Africa, would be different from the way they had happened in the rest of the continent. That fear led the ANC leadership to move away from the Freedom Charter, but even from creative principles to provide the Pop with some rewards and, more importantly, a say in transforming politics.

To have a say in transforming politics meant, among other things, as pointed out by the members of Abahlalibase Mjondolo, to speak for themselves and not be represented by politicians. The Pop who live in shacks in Durban, Jo'burg, Cape Town see themselves as the ones who are really defending the principles contained in the Freedom Charter. Democracy means that everyone thinks, that everyone deserves respect and dignity. Freedom must mean that

when decent housing, and decent living conditions are not provided for the Pop, they are the best qualified to make sure that their voices are heard, clearly without translators and/or intermediaries, be they lawyers, municipality leaders, and/or politicians.¹⁷

The similarities between what the Pop, the peasants are suffering across the world call for a reinforcement of the already existing links, for greater sharing of the stories and histories of resistance against what Amit Bhaduri has referred to as the TINA syndrome (i.e. there is no alternative to Globalization)¹⁸. The syndrome is not new. The imposition of colonial rule was presented as an altruistic exercise bringing civilisation to Africa. Forced Labour was presented as an educational exercise.

Emancipatory politics must go hand in hand with emancipatory historical narratives and move away from historical narratives framed by the so-called success stories of globalization told from the perspective of multinational mega corporations and/or financial institutions at their service.

¹ At one time during its triumphant emergence, the Roman Empire tried to resolve its food crisis by conquering Egypt.

² Fernand Braudel and many others since have, rightly, insisted on approaching history from the long term perspective. Unfortunately, such an approach has tended to favour the questions emerging out of the dominant narrative. In the issue of Pambazukanews 383 focused on the Food Crisis, the time depth was even shorter: 1970s. If one is going to make sense of the Food Crisis today, but also try to understand other food crises in the past (e.g. the potato famine in Ireland in the 19th century), how should one frame the issue if one is not going to just skim it?

³ For example, Howard Zinn in his People History of the US can only go as far as providing an inventory of the slaughter of the Native Americans and the Africans. For him 1776 is still the Event. And as the subtitle indicates, the starting point of his narrative is 1492.

⁴ See Raj Patel, Stuffed and Starved. The Hidden Battle for the World Food System. Melville House Printing. www.mhpbooks.com 2008.

5

C.L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins*; Peter Hallward, *Damming the Flood: Haiti, Aristide and the Politics of Containment*, Verso. 2007; see also Peter Hallward's review of Alex Dupuy's *The Prophet and Power: Jean Bertrand Aristide, the International Community and Haiti* Rowan and Littlefield. 2007. in *Haiti Liberté* <http://www.haitianalysis.com/2007/8/18/hallward-reviews-dupuy-s-the-prophet-and-power-jean-bertrand-aristide-the-international-community-and-haiti>

6

The importance of this cannot be overstressed in view of the tendency within the dominant mind-set to down play the horrors of slavery. See J. Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*. Cambridge University Press. 1998.

7

In *His Black Jacobins*, C.L.R. James did try. Fiction writers have tried, from Ayi Kwei Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* to Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Haile Gerima in his movie, *Sankofa*, offered a harrowing view of what it was like. Still, when all is said and done, I would argue that no one, to this day and with my greatest respect for the above writers, has come any way near to measuring what slavery meant both individually and collectively. I have to assume that such measurement, not just in physical terms, shall one day be possible. This hope rests, in part, on the realization that someone somewhere did achieve that impossible act, but that it has not been recorded in the form and/or in the place where it would get noticed. There are exceptions, most notably Aimé Césaire (2005)

8

A point cogently made by Françoise Vergès in Césaire (2005).

9

In recent times, it has been possible to see how difficult it is to accept that people in very powerful positions can lie. In earlier times, Hitler and his acolytes found out that a lie repeated a thousand times became a truth

10

A few weeks ago (in May 2008), in South Africa, the PoP (so-called indigenous South Africans) went on a rampage against the PoP foreigners. It has been the most recent and exemplary illustration of how entrenched the competitive mind-set is. It also reveals the structural shortcomings of the transition from apartheid to post-apartheid founded on the erroneous notion that colouring the RoR in black would radically transform the economic/financial tenets of apartheid days.

11

One of the most interesting accounts has been given by John Perkins in his *Confessions of An Economic Hit Man*. 2004 (ISBN0-452-28708-1) See also Raj Patel, *Stuffed and Starved*

12

What was feared was the effect it could have on other Africans wanting to get rid of slavery in other parts.

13

Glijeses, Piero. *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976*. 2002. The University of North Carolina Press.

14

Such inaudible murmuring may even come from las organizaciones de los pueblos originarios y trabajadores agrícolas in the mouths of bona fide veterans of the armed struggle.

15

Aimé Césaire, "Calendrier laminaire", in *Moi, Lamineaire*, in *Anthologie Poétique*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1996, pp. 233-234; tel que cite dans Aimé Césaire, *Nègre je suis, nègre je resterai*. Entretiens avec Françoise Vergès. Paris, Albin Michel, 2005, pp. 47-50.

16

There are exceptions. K. Marx being the most prominent one with his reference to “coupon clipping capitalists”

17

In its most recent intervention, S’bu Zikode has made these politics very clear. See S’bu Zikode’s speech at the Diakonia Economic Justice Forum. August 28, 2008. Posted on their website: www.abahlalibasemjondolo.com.

18

http://www.india-seminar.com/2008/582/582_amit_bhaduri.htm



Opening ceremony of the Via Campesina 5th Conference

B. Evaluation Of The Work Done By La Via Campesina

Historical Overview of La Via Campesina

La Vía Campesina emerged in a particular economic, political and social context that was undermining the ability of peasants around the world to maintain control over land and seeds. It emerged during a time when a particular model of rural development was altering rural landscapes, threatening to make local knowledge irrelevant and denigrating rural cultures. Key elements in this phenomenon were the encroaching globalization of a modern industrial model of agriculture, on the one hand, and the search for an alternative approach among those most harmed by the epidemic of dislocation left in its wake.

In May 1993 at a conference held in Mons, Belgium, forty-six representatives (men and women) of organizations of peasants, small farmers, indigenous peoples and farm workers from various regions formally created La Via Campesina. But, the roots of La Via Campesina stretch way back. Throughout the 1980s the founding members of La Via Campesina participated in dialogue and exchanges with counterparts within their regions and internationally. This eventually led to the creation of regional movements like the CPE (European Farmers Coordination) in Europe as well as ASOCODE and the CLOC in Latin America. The dialogue and exchanges also led to the signing of the Managua Declaration signed by representatives of eight farm organizations from Central America, the Caribbean, Europe, Canada and the United States who had gathered to participate in the Second Congress of the Unión Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos held in Managua, Nicaragua in 1992.

La Vía Campesina formed in the North and south around common objectives: an explicit rejection of the neo-liberal model of rural development, an outright refusal to be excluded from agricultural policy development and a fierce determination not to be “disappeared” and a commitment to work together to empower a peasant voice. Through its strategy of “building unity within diversity” and its concept of food sovereignty, peasant and farmers’ organizations around the world are working together to ensure the well-being of rural communities.

The goal of La Vía Campesina is to bring about change in the countryside – change that improves livelihoods, enhances local food production for local consumption, and opens up democratic spaces change that empowers the people of the land with a great role, position, and stake in decision-making on issues that have an impact on their lives. The movement believes that this kind of change can occur only when local communities gain greater access to and control over local productive resources, and gain more social and political power.

Since the signing of the Uruguay Round of the GATT in 1994 representatives of rural organizations from the North, South, East and West organized in La Vía Campesina have walked together in the streets of Geneva, Paris, Seattle, Washington, Québec, Rome, Bangalore, Porto Alegre, Cancún and Hong Kong, among other cities. Whenever and wherever international institutions like the World Trade Organization (WTO), World Bank, and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) meet to discuss agricultural and food issues, the Vía Campesina is now there. La Vía Campesina is also there in local communities when peasants and farming families in locales as diverse as Honduras, Mexico, Brazil, Guatemala, Indonesia, Europe or Canada are resisting the spread of genetically-modified seeds or are being evicted from their land to facilitate urban sprawl, the development of golf courses, intensive shrimp farms, large pig barns or plantations of eucalyptus.

For many this is all very surprising. For over a hundred years those who thought they knew what was happening in the countryside

around the world have predicted the disappearance of the peasantry. Surely, by now they should all be gone! Instead, integrated into La Vía Campesina peasants are turning up everywhere, a troublesome and discordant voice in the chorus extolling the praises of globalization.

La Vía Campesina presence has not gone unnoticed. Wearing dark green caps, pañuelos, white t-shirts and waving green flags embossed with its brightly coloured logo while energetically chanting slogans, the Vía Campesina has become an increasingly visible and vocal voice of radical opposition to the globalization of a neoliberal and corporate model of agriculture.

This resistance took an extreme turn on September 10, 2003 – the first day of the Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the WTO held in Cancún, Mexico – with the tragic death of the Korean farm leader, Lee Kyung Hae. Lee, along with another 120 Koreans had joined the Vía Campesina delegation in Cancún in efforts to get the WTO out of agriculture. Wearing a sign -- “WTO kills farmers” -- Lee walked up to the high wire fence that had been build to “protect” trade negotiators from protesters and stabbed himself to death.

This ultimate and tragic act of resistance symbolized what La Via Campesina had been saying all along: liberalization of agriculture is a war on peasants, it decimates rural communities and destroys farming families. Lee’s desperate cry for change subsequently helped strengthen the Vía Campesina as it has since declared September 10th an International Day of Protest Against the WTO. On that day, organizations in many countries mobilize for food sovereignty. Clearly, Lee’s death has not been in vain.

The growing visibility of La Via Campesina as a key social actor, strongly rooted in local communities while at the same time being increasingly engaged and more skillful in the international stage, has attracted the attention of many rural organizations in search of alternatives. Between 2000 and 2004 the movement grew by over forty-one percent. During the movement’s Fourth International Conference held in Itaiçi, Brazil in June 2004, forty-two

organizations joined La Via Campesina. The 5th Conference also integrated thirty-eight new organisations joined the movement. La Via Campesina now includes about 150 organizations from 70 countries.

Much of La Via Campesina's success is due to the fact that it is balancing – with great care and effort – the diverse interests of its membership as it openly deals with issues such as gender, race, class, culture and North/South relations, which could potentially cause divisions. According to La Via Campesina the conflict is not between farmers of the North and peasants in the South. Rather, the struggle is over two competing – and in many ways diametrically opposed – models of social and economic development. On the one hand, a globalized, neoliberal, corporate-driven model where agriculture is seen exclusively as a profit-making venture and productive resources are increasingly concentrated into the hands of agro-industry. La Via Campesina, on the other hand, envisions a very different, more human, rural world, a world based on food sovereignty. Here, agriculture is peasant-driven, based on peasant production, uses local resources and is geared to domestic markets. In this model agriculture plays an important social function while at the same time being economically viable and ecologically sustainable.

The formation and consolidation of La Via Campesina is living proof that peasant and farm families have not been compliant accomplices during this process of economic restructuring, nor have they been passive victims in the face of increasing poverty and marginalization. Instead, they are actively resisting the globalization of a corporate model of agriculture. Indeed, peasants and farmers are using three traditional weapons of the weak – organization, co-operation and community – to redefine 'development' and build an alternative model of agriculture based on the principles of social justice, ecological sustainability and respect for peasant cultures and peasant economies. This involves building viable alternatives ranging from small agricultural cooperatives, local seed banks, fair trade ventures to reclaiming traditional farming practices. It also means linking these efforts

beyond the local by working at the national, regional and international levels. In forming La Via Campesina, peasant organizations effectively internationalized and succeeded in carving out a space in the international arena. La Via Campesina is filling that space with peasant voices, articulating peasant demands and peasant alternatives in efforts to resist the imposition of a corporate model of agriculture. The solidarity and unity experienced with La Via Campesina yield perhaps the most precious gift of all, hope. Hope that ‘another’ agriculture is possible. Indeed, La Via Campesina enables us to imagine that change is possible and that an alternative project is being created. This is clearly captured in La Via Campesina’s slogan “Globalize the Struggle – Globalize Hope.”

A Look at La Via Campesina

by François Houtart

For a worldwide network such as La Via Campesina, it is fundamental to ask about the international political context because this constitutes an important aspect of its work. La Via Campesina is a political actor, not a party, an organization which counts in the field of collective decisions at the international level. We see this, for example, during the meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The political dynamic on a worldwide level

One of the aspects of contemporary international politics is the gradual weakening of ‘unipolarity.’ The Triad (the United States, Europe, and Japan) is losing its dominance because of internal economic crises. The gradual emergence of other countries, such as those in Latin America, and their introduction of other economic systems besides those of the capitalist system, is another factor in the weakening of the Triad.

Obviously, this is not the end of Western hegemony, because the Triad is still the seat of nearly 90% of multinational enterprise, it dominates financial organizations and world markets, it remains the center of decision in the fields of price, finance, the external debt of the third world, and international law and the United States continues to be the loaded gun of the system with more than 700 military bases in the world.

However, the system is in crisis: financial bubbles, the low dollar, catastrophic deficit in the balance of payments and the U.S. budget,

successive crises in the accumulation of capital, which since the 1970's has undertaken a double offensive against labor and against the State (as privatizations), with the goal of rebuilding the capacity to accumulate.

It is a result of what has been called the Washington Consensus, or the neo-liberal era of the world economy, an overexploitation of human and natural resources. In fact the entire universe, the whole of the collective relationships of humanity up to all of nature itself today must become merchandise, the only criteria being that it can contribute to the accumulation of capital.

In this context, several countries which are called emerging nations, situated in the continents in the South are experiencing rapid growth, but the growth is limited to a minority of their populations, of which peasants/small-scale farmers are generally excluded. Certain countries among them, especially in Latin America and in Asia, favor agri-business as a source of foreign currency in large part dedicated to the consumption of the 20% of the privileged classes. In the rest of the world poverty and misery continue to rise, and the urban middle class is economically more and more vulnerable. This is all occurring in the context of an ecological crisis proving itself everyday to be more serious because of the combination of global warming and the effects of greenhouse gases and the infinitesimal particles destroying the ozone.

The overarching international policies, from global strategies for the control of natural resources up to the financial interventions of the States produces a system of inequalities designed to assure a high level of consumption for a minority.

Agriculture in the context of international policies

Today agriculture has become one of the new frontiers for the accumulation of capital. On the basis of a calculation of economic profitability, the argument states that in order to feed 10 billion people within a quarter of a century, it is necessary to increase the productivity of the land and thus its profitability. Only capital is in the position to achieve this task. In fact, it is a method of

agricultural production imposed in order to permit the holders of capital to seize the immense resource involved in agricultural activity. At present agriculture contributes only marginally to capital gains in so far as it remains a peasant, family-farm agriculture. It is thus necessary to transform it to a productivist, capitalist agriculture. That is the vision of the World Bank.

The concentration of financial capital, policies signifying veritable agrarian counter-reforms, the increase in power for agri-business, the domination of the large transnational companies and the elaboration of national and international policies on the part of the States, these all leads to monoculture, the destruction of biodiversity and to the extensive internal and external migration of impoverished peasants who end up in shantytowns or who must flee to richer countries. This affects about 50 million people each year, with all of its corresponding personal and social problems.

This scenario is not without impact on the international political scene. In the short term, agrarian policies become more and more uncertain. This is the case in particular in the United States and the European Union. But this is also the case in the countries in the South, which focus a part of their growth on exportation and the abandonment of their own rural population. They define their role within the relevant international organizations which reinforces the agricultural export model.

This is where agrofuels come in. Given the growing awareness of climate change---even George W. Bush now recognizes that it is a problem---the need to diminish greenhouse gases becomes a global policy objective, as has been shown by the accords between George W. Bush and Lula on the subject of ethanol. We won't go into detail here. Suffice it to say that the conditions for the increase in agrofuels have negative consequences such as the destruction of forests and of biodiversity in order to extend the monoculture of sugarcane, soy, corn, sunflower, African oil palm, but also the violent expulsion of small farmers and rural communities (often indigenous). The concentration of economic power in the hands of local agrarian capitalists and especially by multinational

agribusiness of fuels and automobile production is one of the most visible. Added to this is a recent increase in the price of agricultural products linked at least partially to current and future production of agrofuels. All these factors limit, if not cancel out, the beneficial effects so long hoped for on global climate.

These national and international policies are well within the logic of accumulation in the short and mid term, much more than that of a long term solution which demands a radical transformation of the logic itself behind this model of development.

The function of La Via Campesina

The policy options of La Via Campesina have been clear in these areas and they merit further explanation on certain points. The first is the necessity to analyze the agrarian question in the global context, that is in its link to the larger policies which have a tendency to reproduce or accede to the dominant development model: that of an increased consumption, destructive to human beings and the environment.

All peasant movements must be conscious of what is at stake so they may analyze their particular situation and their actions in this perspective. Contemporary global policies including the threats of or outbreaks of war, the organization and reorganization of international bodies including the United Nations, agrarian policies: all must be a part of peasant movements' perspectives because they are at the same time victims and actors, sometimes unknowingly.

Now more than ever, a visible presence and concrete actions within the bodies of international policy are imperative. Our opposition to certain policies must be made known. The alternative model of production of peasant agriculture for the respect and rehabilitation of nature, for food production, and the wellbeing of the peasant world are part of this presence.

Certain concrete objectives must be chosen for their importance and their visibility, because they concern the well being of

humanity itself. These are: the protection of water, credit for small farmers, opposition to privatization and the destruction of forests, the integrity of seeds, food sovereignty, and limits to the production of agrofuels. It is not a question of prioritizing among these, because they are all priorities. What is important is to choose objectives that will allow the greatest number and greatest strengths of the grassroots to be unleashed, going beyond even the interests of rural peoples alone.

Participation in new policies for advances towards a postcapitalist world is also extremely important in order to show that alternatives do exist. All forms of social agriculture--- cooperative and organic-- need to be renewed. New political organizations, such as the Bolivarian Alliance for Latin America or the Bank of the South, which anticipate the integrated participation of social movements, can contribute so much to La Via Campesina. La Via Campesina has much to contribute, given the experience and commitment of the family farmers and rural workers bring to the network.

In the case of agrofuels in particular, these elements can be the objects of concrete propositions and experimentation: under conditions respectful of biodiversity, based on peasant agriculture and directed primarily toward local energy needs, freedom from the imposition of the economic logic of multinationals, and attention to food security.

In conclusion, we can say that international politics directly concern the objectives of the La Via Campesina network. Aside from the world of the peasant, there is an ensemble of contemporary problems to be discussed. Political tensions, conflicts, and global strategies are always connected to agrarian concerns.

Evaluation Of The Work Done By La Via Campesina Since 2004

Time has passed so fast it seems as if the IV international conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil just took place yesterday. We feel that way because, La Via Campesina, the peasant movement with members in 56 countries is working so actively. On a given morning a peasant's struggle may be taking place in a certain village in Asia, in the afternoon other actions are taking place in Europe, Africa, and when it is night in Asia, another struggle is taking place in Latin America.

From village to village, city to city Via Campesina struggles are taking place, including actions at the international level. The movement is so alive everywhere and is working wherever neo-liberalism is being imposed on the peasants.

So, during more than three years since the IV International Conference, where we agreed on our priorities, strategies and guidelines for struggle Via Campesina has made much progress and is winning many battles. Even though we realize that actually the challenges are never ending.

The struggle of Via Campesina also inspired, stimulated and generated resistance of the social movements and also some governments against neo-liberal policies. In several Latin American countries more progressive governments came to power as a result of many years of mobilization and the increased awareness of the disastrous effects of these policies. Also governments in Africa and Asia have increased their resistance as a result of popular mobilization.

Via Campesina has been very active in the struggle against the World Trade Organization (WTO) and Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). We had a very successful mobilization in Hong Kong in December 2005, and we also mobilized several times in Geneva. The current deadlock of the WTO negotiations is the fruit of what we have been struggling for during the last years.

In our struggle against Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) we won some battles, like against the FTA in the Americas. We are now building up our struggle against the FTAs. During our strategy seminar in France in January 2008 we have defined our international strategy. Our struggle against FTAs will be the continuation of struggle against WTO! Together we will also stop the FTAs!

The struggle for land is back on the agenda

In March 2006 the FAO International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) was held and Via Campesina influenced the process and the declaration. It is significant that the World Bank did not play any role in this debate. It has not been able to bring this issue under its political control as it used to do before. It is the first time that the FAO could recognize the principle of Food Sovereignty in its declaration.

Our struggle against the World Bank program of market-assisted land reform has increased and made more social movements and governments aware about the negative impacts of that program. Meanwhile, direct actions of member organizations of Via Campesina to occupy land continue to take place in Latin America and Asia. The land issue is again fully back on the agenda!

Some victories on the seeds front!

Another struggle is against GMOs and the terminator technology. Here we have won a battle in Curitiba (march 2007) where the moratorium on terminator technology has been maintained despite enormous pressure from the industry. In Europe, Asia and Africa the resistance against GMOs is very much alive and limits severely the possibilities for this technology to expand. Recently

our members in India have taken important actions to destroy GMO fields. In France the introduction of the Monsanto maize was stopped and if we manage to get the same maize out of Spain, Europe will be free from GMO crops!

In Africa also the resistance of governments is growing. These are concrete results of our struggles.

In Brazil an area of Syngenta was occupied. As a reaction transnational corporations (TNCs) try to increase the repression: a militant of MST was killed by gunmen hired by Syngenta-Brazil.

Building food sovereignty

We have been pushing the food sovereignty agenda. The principle of food sovereignty is now part of the mainstream discussion on agricultural and food policies. With the Nyeleni Forum in Mali we have increased our commitment with other social movements and strengthen our struggle for food sovereignty. In certain countries constitutional processes have started to integrate food sovereignty into the constitution. We continue our work with the peasant's rights charter and we hope that eventually our rights as peasants, men and women, will be recognized as a basic human right.

Migration is an important concern in La Via Campesina

La Via Campesina has actively collaborated with migrant organizations during the mobilizations in Hong Kong. In North America important initiatives are taken by the farm border workers. Last year the migrant working committee of La Via Campesina met and developed several concrete initiatives.

Strengthening of the women's process

The Women of Via Campesina organized an important Conference on women rights in Galicia-Spain and took the lead in some important actions such as the action against the eucalyptus plantation of Aracruz, Brazil. Via Campesina women in several

regions have also consolidated their regional processes. Those are important steps towards full participation of women in our organizations.

Youth increases activities

In many regions (Central America, Europe, Africa, South East Asia,...) meetings took place. And now the youth in La Via Campesina is actively preparing its second International Assembly before the 5th Conference.

Solidarity in natural disasters

When the tragedy of the tsunami in the Indian Ocean destroyed large coastal areas in Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand, at the end of 2004, Via Campesina could bring relief to the victims in a real solidarity effort. During the hurricanes in the Caribbean, Central America and the US we gave our solidarity support.

Global warming and agrofuels

In 2007, we have started fighting on new fronts: global warming and agrofuels. Peasants and small farmers will be key to solving this climate crisis as their way of production based on local resources will help to cool down the planet. The solidarity village we organized in Bali was the moment to launch our position and our will to be part of a just solution of this dramatic problem. We will have to fight against agrofuels and other solutions imposed by the transnational corporations who see this as yet another opportunity to destroy peasants and increase their profits and control.

Regarding the strengthening of the internal functioning, important progress has been made since the IV Conference. We have actively worked to strengthen the regions. In all regions we now have more regular meetings and staff support to facilitate the regional work and participation in the international activities.

Several international working committees have increased their level of activity. However we think that their functioning still needs to be improved.

The International Coordinating Committee and the International Operational Secretariat have increased their capacity with the increasing level of international activity.

In general there is a great need for more shoulders to carry the responsibilities; we need more leaders to take up responsibilities in our movement. We have started the work on staff and leadership training and we are developing a methodology on training.

In the positive process of transformation of Via Campesina into a broader and more active and more decentralized movement we have to assure that we also strengthen the consultation processes among the national organizations and regions and that we strengthen the participation of the leadership in the regional and international processes.

Challenges for the next years

We have to continue to push and introduce the principle of food sovereignty in new spaces; we have to clarify and strengthen it. The results of the Nyéléni Forum are key in this and they allow us to move ahead with an agenda that is broadly supported by the important movements. It will allow us to continue alliance building. As a movement we need to take much more time and effort to understand the strategies and objectives of movements of other sectors and see how we can strengthen each other in our struggles.

We have to increase our capacity to analyze the international political context and define opportunities for positive change. What is the importance of FAO and the UN Human Rights Council for us? How can we better relate to progressive governments that are sympathetic to our agenda?

We still have to continue and intensify our mobilizations and actions against the FTAs and Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA's) and if necessary against the WTO. The FTA-EPA fight is more complex because many different agreements are being negotiated. On the other hand the negative effects are much clearer and more direct for the people concerned.

GMOs, terminator technology, privatization and liberalization are

still seen as a key by transnational corporations to control the agricultural sector and to eliminate peasant based agriculture. We have to continue this struggle and develop a more coherent and long term strategy on multinational corporations. Do we want to dismantle them? What is our alternative proposal for these industries? Here we also need a discussion with trade unions.

Via Campesina has to continue to push the issue of Agrarian reform and find more effective ways to support and strengthen local struggles for land, territory and access to natural resources.

The Peasant Rights Charter can become an important legal reference at the international level and give us extra support for our proposals. We need to intensify and socialize the debate about this charter in our organizations and make it our joint tool to defend peasant rights.

Challenges regarding the internal functioning of La Via Campesina

Via Campesina is in a process of transformation and growth. It is crucial that we keep our flexibility as a movement and that we create more horizontal mechanisms to integrate people in order to increase our capacity to organize actions and to mobilize.

We need to build more leadership and improve our ways to train paid staff and volunteers and improve our ways of integrating them in the movement avoiding that “NGO style mechanisms” will start to define our way of functioning.

We need to deepen and broaden our capacity of analysis: this will be a pre-condition for effective action.

And we have to reinforce the integration of women and youth in our movement. They will be crucial in this transformation process of Via Campesina to a stronger and more effective movement.

What does this mean in practise?

- We have to see training, education and learning as the key tools to develop and strengthen our movements. This starts at

the local and national level and is complemented by efforts at the regional and international level

- We have to continue to strengthen the regional capacity (staff and leadership) in order to make them autonomous. We want to decentralize the organization of actions and improve at the regional and international level the necessary coordination and complementary support.
- We have to see the International Working Committees as key spaces to train new leaders on key issues, to accumulate knowledge and to develop initiatives. We have to find ways to improve communication and the exchange of information among the members of each committee.
- We have to define more clearly what role, what kind of initiatives we expect from our international campaigns? What is the best way to support our activities at the local level.
- We have to socialize our guidelines for actions in order to deepen our joint understanding of effective action and mobilization.

Vision and Values of La Via Campesina

The time for food sovereignty has come, peasants and small scale farmers will play an active role in the transformation towards a world society based on justice.

Peasants, small and medium size farmers, landless people, indigenous people and agricultural workers, men and women are united in La Via Campesina to realize food sovereignty and to stop the destructive neo-liberal process. Food sovereignty is the right of peoples and governments to chose the way food is produced and consumed in order to respect our livelihoods, as well as the policies that support this choice .

We represent almost half of the world population and are capable of producing food for our families and all the people living on this planet! We are organized in vibrant communities that have a long-standing experience in managing natural resources and producing food, food that is healthy, nutritious, culturally appropriate and produced in a sustainable way based on local resources. Together with the fisher folk, indigenous people, pastoralists and others who live in the rural areas we have the right to exist, to be respected and to live a dignified life! We want to build close links with people living in the urban centers in order to provide them with healthy food from people to people, without the destructive interference of transnational corporations.

Agriculture and food production is dominated by transnational corporations

Transnational companies have as a declared goal to destroy peasant based agriculture in order to industrialize agricultural production, turning peasants and farmers into agricultural workers on their plantations and controlled properties, and into consumers of their products and slum dwellers. They deliberately seek the complete vertical integration and full domination and control over food and agriculture from the seed to the plate in order to take in huge profits. This exploits workers, concentrates economic and political power, and destroys rural communities.

The World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are the key institutions that implement these neo-liberal policies through trade liberalization (such as Free Trade Agreements), the dumping of surpluses that destroy local markets, the patenting of life, the corporate led privatization of land, water and seeds, and the introduction of Genetically Modified Crops and agro-fuels. These bodies have been conceived and used solely as instruments of domination by large firms and transnational corporations and by governments of the industrialized countries, especially the US, the EU and Japan.

Genuine agrarian reforms should bring fundamental changes

The organizations of La Via Campesina believe that a fundamental change is urgently needed. We need genuine agrarian reforms in our countries in order to support and rebuild peasant-based production. We have built a strong international movement and we have been able to shift the international debate on agriculture towards food sovereignty and agrarian reform. We see that the interest in food sovereignty in public opinion, and in some international institutions and national governments, is increasing. More and more people and organizations are joining us in the conviction that changes are needed and possible!

We must respect nature and its resources

La Via Campesina promotes a deep respect for our planet's biodiversity, including all of nature's assets, ecosystems, cultures and traditional people's knowledge. Biodiversity encompasses all the different forms of plant and animal life, human and economic relations, and people's habits, cultures and forms of governance. Diversity is life. It is our way of life and we must defend it. We must respect, conserve, restore, and protect for future generations all the natural resources of our planet such as land, water, flora, fauna and minerals and use farming techniques which produce healthy food and which respect our environment. We will therefore not put into practice technologies such as genetic manipulation which endangers natural resources.

Land should be used to serve society

Land is a finite natural resource that must first of all serve life and benefit society. La Via Campesina defends the democratization of its ownership and use. We are against the use of land to exploit other people or other nations, and we oppose the concentration of land ownership. We defend a genuine agrarian reform that guarantees everyone the right to work on the land, and that democratizes its ownership, giving priority to family, collective and cooperative forms of agriculture. We defend the rights of peasants to organize themselves in diverse ways within their communities and in the places where they live. We defend the necessity of governments and states to protect and stimulate family, peasant and cooperative farming with adequate agricultural pricing policies, technical assistance and market guarantees, as a means of producing foodstuffs and preserving our culture.

Seeds are life

Humanity has developed until now thanks to free reproduction and democratic access to seeds. La Via Campesina defends the principle that farmers and their communities have the right and the duty to produce, preserve and exchange their own seeds as the best means to preserve biodiversity. We are against the development and use of transgenic seeds, trade monopolies, and the patenting of

seeds and knowledge. We demand state funding and research support for the preservation and cultivation of native and traditional seeds which must belong to the people. Seeds are the patrimony of the people, they should be at the service of humanity.

Women play a key role in food production and decision making

La Via Campesina wants women's rights to be fully recognized and respected. Women should therefore have equal access to productive resources. We also want to achieve full and equal women's participation at all levels and in all spaces of our organizations. We commit ourselves to fight against any kind of violence and discrimination against women.

Youth are the present and the future of our countryside

It is key to fully include young people in our movement and create a positive perspective for them in our communities. They are not only the future, they are also the present because they are actively participating in the building up and strengthening of our organisations. Therefore, the youth are actors of social change in the rural areas. They should get access to the resources necessary to produce : land, seeds, water...

We should also attribute some value to the work of children who also contribute to our process of social change.

Migrants are also our joint responsibility

Desperate living conditions and the search for a decent future are forcing millions of people around the world to migrate. Most of them come from the rural areas. We have to defend their rights and respect their effort to find a decent life. We have to support the improvement of living conditions everywhere to prevent forced migrations and we should defend migrant's rights in the countries that receive them.

Human Rights for all peasants and family farmers, men and women

People who live in rural areas still suffer many kinds of violence; exclusion prevents them from having access to fundamental rights such as food, water, employment, decent housing, education, health care, rest and culture. There is also physical and psychological violence such as forced labor, slavery, torture, prison, migration, exile and even assassination. Many are the victims of armed conflicts and wars. We struggle so that human, social, political, economic, cultural and individual and collective rights are respected in all communities, in all social groups, and by all political regimes and governments. The right to land is a basic human right. We support new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, races, classes and generations and we will struggle for a better world, without wars and nuclear weapons.

We need markets with justice, controlled production and distribution

Vía Campesina advocates for a decentralized model based on food sovereignty which promotes farmer owned and controlled production, processing and distribution through farmer owned and controlled cooperatives and associations that benefit farmers and their communities. Agricultural trade must be based on relationships of equality, cooperation and fair exchange. Food cannot be marketed as a mere commodity in order to obtain economic and political advantages. Agricultural trade must be subject to justice between all the economic actors.

Peasants and small farmers are cooling down the planet

One of the key causes of the increase of greenhouse gases emissions in agriculture and climate change is the development of high input industrial production. The use of fertilizers, pesticides, long transport lines and high levels of mechanization go along with high use of fossil and other non renewable energies. Low input

agriculture based on local resources primarily for domestic consumption is one of the solutions to global warming. Peasant and small farmers are a crucial part of the solution of this global problem.

Institutions have to be democratized

We need institutions that support the implementation of food sovereignty, and protect our rights and interests against the destructive behavior of transnational corporations, big land owners and others that misuse their power to accumulate wealth by exploiting people and plundering resources. We need International Institutions that create the space and set a framework that allows national and local governments to respond to the need of their people.

We need international institutions that can control national governments if they are repressive, corrupt, if they do not respect the rights of their people or if they sell their country out to transnational corporations.

On the other end, we should get rid of international institutions that are violating people's rights such as the WTO, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. We need a redefinition of the roles and the functioning of all international bodies, based on equality, justice, people's participation and human rights.

Shared values help us to become stronger and contribute to the necessary transformation of our societies

The way we act as persons in our societies and in our movement is key for the changes we want to bring along as well as for the strengthening of our movement. Relationships in our societies must be based on the cultivation of values that benefit humanity, such as solidarity, social, political and economic justice, equality, and democracy. These values do not just constitute declarations of principles, but they must set the course of our day-to-day behavior, of our movements, organizations, political regimes and States.

We want to strengthen solidarity and unity among the members of our movement as well as to respect diversity through alliances with other organizations.

In our organization we seek to build the broadest possible consensus based on collective mechanisms of decision-making. We respect minority positions. The active participation of all is a key goal. We appreciate the diversity in cultures, philosophies and religions. We will combat all forms of cultural and sexist prejudice and discrimination. We defend the right to equality to all, regardless of gender, age, color, caste, ethnicity or religion.

We commit ourselves to continuous auto-critical learning, to deepen our analysis and understanding and to remain open to criticism and ready to change.

In our actions we want to be strong and radical. Strong actions are necessary to gain the attention of our leaders and the broader public, to stop destructive actors such as the Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and to provoke the necessary shift in the balance of power in order to allow solutions that serve people's needs. However our actions are always non-violent and the integrity of the persons is always respected.

As a movement we also try to organize our meetings and gatherings in a way that is consistent with our principles: using local resources, staying in simple places and enjoying the food produced by the peasants that receive us. We also try to remain as independent as possible from external resources, choosing low cost options and building on our own resources as much as possible.

Building a new society is not possible without allies and broad support within our societies

La Via Campesina is convinced that building alliances is crucial to achieve deep social changes. During the International Forum on Food sovereignty, Nyeleni 2007, key social movements came together and agreed on a joint strategy and action program towards food sovereignty.

Nyeleni 2007 was a very inspiring moment that showed us that there is broad support for food sovereignty and that we will be able to develop our struggle over the coming years.

La Via Campesina wants to understand the analysis and priorities of its allies in order to continue to build up a joint agenda of peoples sovereignty and to be able to continue our joint struggle in real solidarity. For the time being, the balance of power is not yet favorable to us. This means that we have to continue to accumulate strength. We have to continue to build our movements and our agenda through mobilizing actions, good analysis and massive training and education. We need to develop a more in-depth analysis of the neo-liberal ideology and develop our own ideas and concepts, in order to undermine its credibility and propose real alternatives.

La Via Campesina: dynamic and confident in the future!

Since its creation in 1993, La Via Campesina member organizations have been in the forefront of the struggle against neoliberal globalization. Uniting their forces in La Via Campesina peasant organizations have managed to bring the peasant's voice to the international arena and make itself heard. We are confident that together with other social movements, befriended NGOs, researchers, friends in governments and international institutions we will be able to build a broad alliance for change!



Closing session of the 5th Conference.

C. Position Documents On Specific Issues

Climate Change: Small Scale Sustainable Farmers Are Cooling Down The Earth

Current global modes of production, consumption and trade have caused massive environmental destruction including global warming that is putting at risk our planet's ecosystems and pushing human communities into disasters. Global warming shows the effects of a development model based on capital concentration, high fossil energy consumption, overproduction, consumerism and trade liberalization. Global warming has been taking place for decades, but most governments have refused to deal with its roots and causes. It has been only recently, once transnational corporations have been able to set up huge money-making schemes, that we hear about possible solutions designed and controlled by big companies, and backed up by governments.

Farmers - men and women - around the world are joining hands with other social movements, organizations, people and communities to ask for and to develop radical social, economic and political transformations to reverse the current trend.

Industrialized countries and the industrialization of agriculture are the biggest sources of global warming gases, but it is farmers and rural communities - and especially small farmers and rural communities in developing countries - that are among the first to suffer from climate change. Changing weather patterns bring unknown pest along with unusual droughts, floods and storms, destroying crops, farmlands, farmstock and farmers houses. Moreover, plants, animal species and marine life are threatened or disappearing at an unprecedented pace due to the combined

effects of warming and industrial exploitation. Life at large is endangered by the decreasing availability of fresh water resources.

Destruction caused by global warming goes beyond the physical. Changing, unpredictable weather means that local knowledge, which has been the basis for good agricultural management and adjusting to climate condition, is becoming less relevant, making farmers more vulnerable and dependent on external inputs and techniques.

Farmers have to adjust to these changes by adapting their seeds and usual production systems to an unpredictable situation. Droughts and floods are leading to crop failures, increasing the number of people going hungry in the world. Studies predict a decline in global farm output of 3 to 16% by 2080. In tropical regions, global warming is likely to lead to a serious decline in agriculture (up to 50% in Senegal and 40% in India) and to the acceleration of farmland turning into desert. On the other hand, huge areas in Russia and Canada will turn into crop land for the first time in human history, yet it is still unknown how these regions will be able to grow crops. What is expected is that millions of farmers will be displaced from the land. Such shifting is regarded by industry as a business opportunity through increasing food exports and imports, but it will only increase hunger and dependency around the world.

Corporate food production and consumption are significantly contributing to global warming and to the destruction of rural communities. Intercontinental food transport, intensive monoculture production, land and forest destruction and the use of chemical inputs in agriculture are transforming agriculture into an energy consumer and are contributing to climate change. Under neo-liberal policies imposed by the World Trade Organisation, the regional and bilateral Free Trade Agreements, as well as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, food is produced with oil-based pesticides and fertilizers and transported all around the world for transformation and consumption.

Via Campesina, a movement bringing together millions of small

farmers and producers around the world, asserts that it is time to radically change the industrial way to produce, transform, trade and consume food and agricultural products. We believe that sustainable small-scale farming and local food consumption will reverse the actual devastation and support millions of farming families. Agriculture can also contribute to cool down the earth by using farm practises that store CO² and reduce considerably the use of energy on farms.

Industrial agriculture is a major contributor to global warming and climate change

1/ By transporting food all around the world

Fresh and packaged food is unnecessarily travelling around the world, while simultaneously local farmers are denied appropriate access to local and national markets. In Europe and the USA, for example, it is now common to find fruits, vegetables, meat or wine from Africa, South America or Oceania; and we find Asian rice in the Americas or in Africa. Fossil fuel used for food transport is releasing tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere. The Swiss peasants' organisation UNITERRE calculated that one kilo of asparagus imported from Mexico needs 5 liters of oil to travel by plane (11,800km) to Switzerland, while a kilo of asparagus produced in Switzerland only needs 0.3 liters of oil to reach the consumer.

2/ By imposing industrial forms of production (mechanization, intensification, use of agrochemicals, monoculture...)

The so called "modernized" agriculture, especially industrial monoculture, is destroying the natural soil processes which lead to the storing of carbon in soil organic matter, and replaces them by chemical processes based on fertilizers and pesticides. Due notably to the use of chemical fertilizers, intensive agriculture and animal production monocultures produce important quantities of nitrous oxide (NO₂), the third most significant greenhouse gas responsible for global warming. In Europe 40% of the energy consumed on the farm is due to the production of nitrogen fertilizers. Moreover, industrial agriculture production consumes much more energy (and releases much more CO₂) to run its giant tractors to harrow and plow the land and to process the food.

3/ By destroying biodiversity and its capacity to capture carbon

Carbon is naturally captured from the air by plants and it is stocked in wood and organic matter in the soils. Some ecosystems such as native forests, peat lands and meadows stock more carbon than others.

This carbon cycle has been part of the climate balance for thousands of years. Corporate agribusiness has now shattered this balance by imposing widespread chemical agriculture (with massive use of oil-based pesticides and fertilizers), by burning forests for monoculture plantations and by destroying peat lands and biodiversity.

4/ By converting land and forests into non-agricultural areas

Forests, pastures and cultivated lands are rapidly converted into industrial agricultural production areas or into shopping malls, industrial complexes, big houses, large infrastructure projects or tourist resorts. This in turn causes massive carbon releases and reduces the capacity of the environment to absorb the carbon released into the atmosphere.

5/ By transforming agriculture from an energy producer into an energy consumer

On the energy level, the first role of plants and agriculture is to transform solar energy into energy in the form of sugars and cellulose that can be directly absorbed in food or transformed by animals into animal products. This is a natural process which brings energy into the food chain. However, the industrialization process of agriculture over the last two centuries has led to an agriculture which consumes energy (fertilizers, use of tractors, oil based agrochemicals...).

The false solutions

Agrofuels

Fuels produced from plants, agriculture and forestry are often presented as one of the solutions to the current energy crisis. Under the Kyoto protocol, 20% of the global energy consumption should come from renewable sources by 2020; this includes agrofuels.

However, leaving aside the insanity of producing food to feed cars while so many people are starving, industrial agrofuel production will actually increase global warming instead of reducing it. Agrofuel production will revive colonial plantation systems, bring back slave work and seriously increase the use of agrochemicals, as well as contribute to deforestation and biodiversity destruction. Intensive agrofuel production is not a solution to global warming; neither will it solve the global crisis in the agricultural sector. The impacts will again be felt most seriously in developing countries, as industrialized countries will not be able to cover their agrofuel demand and will need to import huge amounts from the South.

Carbon trading

Under the Kyoto Protocol and other international schemes “carbon trading” is presented as a solution for global warming. It is a privatization of carbon after the privatization of land, air, seeds, water and other resources. It allows governments to allocate permits to big industrial polluters so they can trade "rights to pollute" amongst themselves. Some other programs encourage industrialized countries to finance cheap carbon dumps such as large-scale plantations in the South as a way to avoid reducing their own emissions. This allows companies to make a double profit while claiming falsely that they contribute to carbon sequestration. On the other hand, natural areas in Asia, Africa and Latin America are being treated as mere carbon sinks and privatized through the so called sale of environmental services, thus kicking communities out of their land and reducing their right to access their own forests, fields and rivers.

Genetically modified crops and trees

Genetically modified trees and crops are now being developed for agrofuel production. Genetically modified organisms will not solve any environmental crisis as they themselves pose a risk to the environment as well as to health and safety. Moreover, they increase corporate control over seeds, depriving farmers of their right to grow, develop, select, diversify and exchange their own seeds.

These GM trees and crops are part of the “second generation” of agrofuels based on cellulose while the first generation is based on the different forms of sugar from crops. Even when it doesn't use genetically modified varieties, this “second generation” raises similar concerns.

The true solutions: food sovereignty as the key to provide livelihoods to millions and protect life on earth

Via Campesina believes that solutions to the current crisis have to emerge from organized social actors that are developing modes of production, trade and consumption based on justice, solidarity and healthy communities. No technological fix will solve the current global environmental and social disaster. A set of true solutions should include:

Sustainable small-scale farming, which is labor-intensive and requires little energy use, can actually contribute to stop and reverse the effects of climate change:

- by storing more CO² in soil organic matter through sustainable production
- by replacing nitrogen fertilizers by organic agriculture or/and cultivating nitrogen-fixing plants which capture nitrogen directly from the air
- by making possible the decentralized production, collection and use of energy

A true agrarian reform, that strengthens small-scale farming, promotes the production of food as the primary use of land, and regards food as a basic human right that should not be treated as a commodity. Local food production will stop the unnecessary transportation of food and ensure that what reaches our tables is safe, fresh and nutritious.

Changing consumption and production patterns which promote waste and unnecessary consumption by a minority of humankind, while hundreds of millions still suffer hunger and deprivation. Fair and just distribution of food and necessary goods, as well as reducing unnecessary consumption should be core aspects of new

development patterns. Also, industry should not be allowed to impose unnecessary consumption and waste by means of increasing disposable products or by artificially shortening their lives.

Research and implementation of diverse and decentralized energy systems, based upon local resources and technologies that do not harm the environment or take land away from food production.

We urgently demand of local, national and international decision makers:

All around the world, we practice and defend small-scale sustainable family farming and we demand food sovereignty. Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally-appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. Food sovereignty prioritizes local and national economies and markets, empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisan-style fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and protects food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability.

Therefore, we demand:

1. The complete dismantling of agribusiness companies: they are stealing the land of small producers, producing junk food and creating environmental disasters.
2. The replacement of industrialized agriculture and animal production by small-scale sustainable agriculture supported by genuine agrarian reform programs.
3. The banning of all forms of genetic use restriction technologies
4. The promotion of sane and sustainable energy policies. That includes consuming less energy and decentralized

energy instead of promoting large-scale agrofuel production as is currently the case.

5. The implementation of agricultural and trade policies at local, national and international levels supporting sustainable agriculture and local food consumption. This includes the ban on the kinds of subsidies that lead to the dumping of cheap food on markets.

For the livelihoods of billions of small producers around the world, For people's health and the planet's survival, We demand food sovereignty and we are committed to struggle to achieve it collectively.

Agrofuels: Industrial Agrofuels Fuel Hunger And Poverty

In the last few months, we have been seeing a real offensive on the part of international corporations, international finance and capital and a lot of propaganda in the press. They are making huge investments in the production of what they are calling “bio-fuels”. Why is this happening now and what are the consequences for peasant agriculture?

In March, 2007, during the World Forum on Food Sovereignty in Mali, in Africa, the representatives of hundreds of social movements from rural areas, environmentalists, scientists, fishermen, shepherds and members of the women’s movements agreed that we should not use the term “biodiesel” or “biofuels” because the prefix “bio” is being used in a manipulative way. The fuels from plants cannot be called “bio”. Otherwise all living beings would have to also use the prefix “bio”. For this reason, we agreed that all the movements of International Via Campesina and environmentalists should begin using the term “agrofuels” as the most correct expression for fuels that are produced from agriculture.

Agrofuels can be divided into three basic groups. The first group comprises fuels originating from sucrose or sugar-based plants, of which various types of alcohol can be made and especially ethanol, which is the specific type for creating combustion in an engine. Ethanol can be produced from sugar cane, cassava, corn, sweet potato, etc. The degree of conversion of this type of agrofuel is 30/100. That is to say, to produce 100 liters of ethanol, we are going to spend 30 liters of another form of energy, either of petroleum or of ethanol itself.

The second group comprises the fuels that come from oily plants. Such is the case of oily plants such as soybeans, peanuts, sunflowers, or seeds of plants such as African palm. The degree of conversion of this type of fuel is from 3 to 15 per 100 liters.

And there is a third group which is methanol, a type of alcohol fuel that can be taken from wood, from wood byproducts and from cellulose. The degree of conversion of this type of fuel is at least 50 for 100.

The techniques to produce fuels from plants for use in engines has been known since the 19th century. Rudolph Diesel himself, the inventor of the combustion engine, experimented in 1893 with plant-based oils. Only afterwards was petroleum used to power his invention. And that's where the diesel motor, powered by petroleum, got its name.

So why then the current interest in the production of agrofuels?

For two basic reasons. Oil reserves are nearing an end and the price of oil is steadily rising, surpassing \$80 a barrel, making individual transportation less viable and reducing the profits of the oil and auto companies

The second reason is that all of humanity has heard scientists say that the planet is dangerously heating up and that an increase of 2 to 4 degrees warming is going to alter the whole climate system, affecting rain and farm production and people's health and endangering various species, including human survival.

Faced with this situation and with the clear goal of maintaining their profits, a diabolic alliance has formed between three sectors of international capital: auto companies, oil companies, and the transnational agricultural corporations. And from this alliance arose the proposal to rapidly expand the production of agrofuels as a substitute for oil, without affecting the system of individual transportation or impacting their profits.

However, alcohol (ethanol) and the plant-based oils are nothing other than the result of solar energy condensed by photosynthesis that undergoes a chemical transformation which gives it sufficient energy to move engines. Therefore the basic inputs needed in order to produce agrofuels on a grand scale is the existence of three factors in abundance: land, water, and sun.

So these capitalists immediately turned to the southern hemisphere, especially to those countries near the tropics and those that have abundant land, to persuade them to produce ethanol and oils to export to the developed countries of the North. And they went to the countries of the South, with the proposal to produce these agrofuels rapidly, either of sugar cane, African palm oil, soybean oil, or sunflower oil, based on a capitalist style of production, that is to say, on enormous plantations that can use monocultures on a large scale, with mechanization and intensive use of agro-toxins. The consequences for the workers or the environment didn't matter.

In these last few months, the Bush government and the Lula government went about the world, especially to the countries of the South, with propaganda about the need to produce agrofuels to export to the U.S. and Europe, as if this were the solution to the poverty of the peasants and of the countries of the South.

And meanwhile, various imperialist corporate groups tied to that alliance such as Cargill, Monsanto, Bungee, and other groups of speculative investors, among them George Soros, migrated to various countries of the South, buying up land and factories and beginning to build pipelines for alcohol to control this production market and export agrofuels to the North.

What are the immediate consequences this type of production will bring and is already bringing for agriculture in the South?

The first consequence is that with the possibility of earning a lot of money offered by the corporations from the North, the capitalist farmers have begun to buy land and expand the monoculture of sugarcane, soybeans, sunflowers, African palm, etc. This is bringing a huge concentration of property under the control of the large farms and businesses and in some cases, such as Brazil, includes

the de-nationalization of the ownership of land, with the purchase of land by foreign corporations.

A second consequence is that in many countries this expansion of area cultivated by agrofuels has taken over areas dedicated to food and also to dairy cattle.

A third consequence is that on raising the rate of profit of the production of ethanol, the rate of profit rose for all farm products. With this, the prices of food products went up, products that everyone needs to buy. The price of land also went up, making investments less viable for small farmers and motivating them to sell their land for “good prices” to the neighboring farmers.

A fourth consequence is that in relation to the environment, the monoculture form of production based on agro-toxins is going to seriously affect the environment, destroy the existing biodiversity, affect rainfall, and also add to climate warming. All monocultures, by destroying existing biodiversity, contribute to the imbalance and to global warming.

And even in the case of the intensive use of non-degradable agro-toxins, these poisons are going to contaminate the groundwater table and ultimately become indebted in the products to be produced. In the specific case of Brazil, the manufacturers of agro-toxins celebrate the expansion of agro-toxins and foresee a large increase in the consumption of poisons in the next three years, which by the year 2010 will make the country the major consumer of agro-toxins in the world.

So the production of agrofuels on large capitalist farms practicing monoculture will bring even greater environmental problems for the producing countries.

But are there alternatives to confront the problem of substituting petroleum and global warming? There are definitely many different ways to deal with this problem.

First of all, since the simple functioning of engines already causes warming and alters the situation of cities regardless of what fuel is being used, we have to rethink the urban transit system and substitute mass transit for individual transportation.

There are also ways of lessening by more than 30% the consumption of energy, simply with educational measures.

And finally we have other sources for renewable energy from nature, with wind, wave, and solar energy. Or even in the improved use of gas coming from the fermentation of animal manure, which is otherwise totally wasted. Also in the production of butanol, which is another more efficient system produced with sugars. And a better use of plant-based oils. But these alternatives are not discussed because they would not guarantee profits for the big corporations.

Among our bases and with our movements, in relation to the production of agrofuels by small farmers and peasants, we should discuss a political orientation of production based on the principles of food sovereignty and of energy sovereignty. This means we should be saying that all agricultural production of a country, of a people, should in the first place ensure the production and the consumption of healthy food for all. And that the production of agrofuels should always be in second place, in a secondary form. It should be based on the energy needs of each community and people. And agrofuels should never be produced for export.

Respecting these principles we can think of new methods for the production of agrofuels that in fact do not worsen the environment, that do not substitute for food, but at the same time can represent an increase in income for the peasants and sovereignty in the energy that they use.

So we can stipulate that agrofuels can only be produced using polycultures, from various complementary sources (sugarcane, sunflower, and castor oil, etc.) respecting biodiversity and taking advantage of the least fertile lands. That only 20% of each

production unit can be used for agrofuels. That agro-toxins should never be used. And that fuels should be produced in small and medium-sized cooperatively-owned manufacturing units. And they should be installed in rural communities, small settlements, and small cities in such a way that each town, settlement, and city cooperatively produces the energy they need.

And at the same time on the national level, the governments should have firm regulations to control and administer this production and distribution in accordance with the people's interests, without harm to the environment, and never for the external market.

An Answer to the Global Food Crisis: Peasants And Small Farmers Can Feed The World!

Prices on the world market for cereals are rising. Wheat prices increased by 130% in the period between March 2007- March 2008. Rice prices increased by almost 80% and Maize prices increased by 35% in the same period(1). In countries that depend heavily on food imports some prices have gone up dramatically. Poor families see their food bills go up and can no longer afford to buy the minimum needed. In many countries cereal prices have doubled or tripled over the last year. Governments in these countries are under high pressure to make food available at reasonable prices. In Haiti the government already fell because of this issue and strong protests have taken place in other countries such as Cameroun, Egypt, and the Philippines.

The Current Crisis: A Result Of Agricultural Liberalization

Some analyst have been exclusively blaming agrofuels, the increasing world demand and global warming for the current food crisis. But actually, this crisis is also the result of many years of destructive policies that have undermined domestic food production. Trade liberalization has waged a virtual war against small producers. Farmers have been forced to produce cash crops for transnational corporations (TNCs) and buy their food on the world market.

Over the last 20-30 years the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and more recently the WTO have forced countries to decrease investment in food production and to reduce

support for peasant and small farmers. However, small farmers are the key food producers in the world.

Major international donors have also shown a lack of interest in food production. Development cooperation from industrialized countries to developing countries went up from 20 billion USD in 1980 to 100 billion USD in 2007. However, support for agriculture went down from 17 billion dollar to 3 billion USD during the same time. And most of these funds probably did not go to peasant-based food production.

Under neo-liberal policies, state managed food reserves have been considered too expensive and governments have been forced to reduce and privatize them under structural adjustment regimes. For example, Bulog, the Indonesian state company founded to regulate buffer stocks was privatized in 1998 under the policy package of the International Monetary Fund. Under pressure from the WTO, state marketing boards have been dismantled because they go against the principle of “free” trade. Under WTO agreements, countries have also been forced to “liberalize” their agricultural markets: reduce import duties (which is an important income loss for the importing governments!) and accept imports for at least 5% of their internal consumption even if they did not need it. At the same time transnational corporations have kept on dumping surpluses into their markets, using all forms of direct and indirect export subsidies.. At the same time, national governments have failed to stabilize their markets and protect farmers and consumers against sudden price fluctuations.

Neo-Liberal Policies Have Destroyed The Capacities Of Countries To Feed Themselves

After 14 years of NAFTA (North America Free Trade Agreements) Mexico went through a major crisis often dubbed as the “tortilla crisis”. From an exporting country Mexico has become dependent on US maize imports and current imports 30 percent of its maize. Nowadays, while increased amounts of US maize have suddenly been diverted to agro-fuels production, quantities available for the Mexican markets have dropped, provoking price surges.

In 1992, Indonesian farmers produced enough soya to supply the domestic market. Soya-based tofu and 'tempeh' are an important part of the daily diet throughout the archipelago. Following the neo-liberal doctrine, the country opened its borders to food imports, allowing cheap US soy to flood the market. This destroyed national production. Today, 60% of the soy consumed in Indonesia is imported. Record prices for US soy last January led to a national crisis when the price of 'tempeh' and tofu (the « meat of the poor ») doubled in a few weeks.

According to the FAO the food deficit in West Africa increased by 81% between 1995 and 2004. During the same period cereal imports increased by 102%, sugar imports by 83%, dairy products by 152% and poultry by 500%. However, according to IFAD (2007) the region has the potential to produce sufficient amounts of food.

All around the world, even though it is increasing nation's vulnerability, liberalization goes on: the European Union is forcing the ACP countries into so-called Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) to liberalize the agricultural sector with foreseeable adverse effects on food production.

The agrofuel boom: a sudden shock on the world markets

The emergence of agrofuels is another cause of food price rises. Over the past few years, transnational corporations and world economic powers such as the US and the EU have rapidly developed agrofuel production. Massive subsidies and investments are flowing into this “booming” sector. As a result, land is rapidly being converted from food into fuel production and an important part of the US maize suddenly “disappeared” as it was bought up for ethanol production. This uncontrolled explosion of the agrofuel sector created a shock in the already unstable international agricultural markets. Egypt, one of the largest cereal importers, has called upon the US and the EU to stop encouraging the growth of maize and other crops for agrofuels. In Egypt food prices, including subsidized bread, went up by nearly 30% last year ⁽²⁾. In the Philippines, the government is now looking at some 1.2 million

hectares for jatropha production in the southern island of Mindanao operated by the Philippine National Oil Co.-Alternative Fuels Corporation, It is also identifying more than 400,000 hectares of land for private sector investments. (*Jatropha curcas* is a drought-tolerant non-edible shrub. It produces fruits the size of golf balls which contain oil that can be converted into agrofuels. Impacts on local food security are expected.

Speculators: Betting on Expected Scarcity

Often eclipsed in the public debate, speculation is one of the main causes of the current food crisis. Production remains high, but speculators are betting on expected scarcity and artificially increasing prices. World grain production in 2007/2008 is estimated at 2108 million tones (an increase by 4,7% compared to 2006/2007). This is well over the average growth in the last decade of 2%. Average consumption of cereals for food increased around 1% per year and will reach 1009 million tones in 2007/2008. The use for feed purposes increased by 2% to 756 million tones. And the use for other purposes will be around 364 million tones. An important part of it is maize (95 million tones), much of which is going into agrofuels. The USA is expected to use 81 million tons of maize for ethanol, 37% more than in 2006/2007.

The world cereal stocks are estimated to decrease by 21 million (5%) tons to 405 million tons at the end of the season in 2008. Stocks have been going down for several years, they are now at the lowest levels in 25 years.

Although it is true that over the last years demand has increased slightly more compared to production, a balanced international and national policy regarding domestic food production could easily address the situation and would secure stable prices for farmers and consumers.

transnational corporations and mainstream analysts expect that land will be increasingly used for agrofuels (maize but also palm oil, rape seed, sugarcane...). They predict that the growing Asian middle class will start buying meat which will increase cereal

demand and they expect negative climate effects on food production such as severe droughts and floods. Meanwhile, transnational corporations aggressively obtain large areas of agricultural land around cities for speculative purposes, expelling small food producers. In India more than 700 so called “New Economic Zones” are being established, kicking farmers out of their land.

Based on those predictions, transnational corporations have been manipulating the markets. Traders have kept stocks away from the market in order to stimulate price increases and generate huge profits afterwards. In Indonesia, in the midst of the soya price hike in January 2008, the company PT Cargill Indonesia was still keeping 13,000 tons of soybeans in its warehouse in Surabaya, waiting for prices to reach record highs.

In many countries large supermarkets have gained a near monopoly power and they are increasing prices far more than is justified by the price increase of the agricultural product. For example in France the price of certain yoghurts increased by 40% although the cost of the milk accounts for only a third of the total price. A substantial increase of the milk price for farmers could never cause such a price increase ⁽³⁾. In Germany, farmers have seen the farm-gate price of milk dropping by 20-30%, pushing them into bankruptcy because supermarkets use cheap dairy products as a marketing tool to attract consumers.

International financial speculation is playing a major role in food price increases since the summer of 2007. Due to the financial crisis in the USA, speculators started to move from financial products to raw materials, including agricultural products. This directly affects prices in the domestic markets as many countries are increasingly dependent on food imports.

This is happening while there is still enough food in the world to feed the global population. According to the FAO the world could even feed up to 12 billion people in the future.

Lessons Learned From The Crisis: The Market Will Not Solve The Problem

Instability on the international food markets is one of the characteristics of agricultural markets: as production is seasonal and variable, and an increase of production cannot be realized very quickly as crops need time to grow. At the same time consumption does not increase very much if more food is available. So small differences in supply and demand, uncertainties regarding future harvests and speculation on international markets can create huge price effects. The volatility in the food markets is mainly due to deregulation, the lack of control on the big players and the lack of necessary state intervention at the international and the national level to stabilize markets. De-regulated markets are key part of the problem!

Peasants and small farmers do not benefit from higher prices while speculators and large traders do benefit from the current crises, most peasants and farmers do not benefit from the higher prices. They grow food, but the benefits of the harvest often get out of their hands : it is already sold out to the money lender, to the agricultural inputs company, or directly to the trader or the processing unit. Although prices for farmers have gone up for some cereals, this is modest compared with increases on the world market and increases imposed upon consumers. If food on the market comes from domestic producers, usually benefits of higher prices are reaped by companies and other intermediaries that buy the products from the farmers and sell them at a high price. If the products come from the international market, this is even clearer: transnational companies control that market. They define at what prices products are bought in the original country and at what prices they are sold in the importing country. Although in certain cases prices did go up for producers, the biggest part of the increase is cashed in by others. In the dairy and meat sector, because of the increased production costs, farmers even see their prices going down while consumers prices are shooting up.

Despite some moderate price increases at the farm level, stock breeders are in a crisis due to the rise in feed prices and cereal

producers are facing sharp rises in oil based fertilizer prices. Farmers sell their produce at an extremely low price compared to what consumers pay. In Europe the Spanish Coordination of Farmer Unions (COAG) calculated that consumers in Spain pay up to 600% more than what the food producer gets for his/her production. Similar figures also exist for other countries where the consumer price is mainly defined by costs for processing, transport and retailing.

Among The Victims: Agricultural Workers, Landless Farmers And Cash Crop Producers

Agricultural workers as well as many people in the rural areas also have to buy food as they do not have access to land to produce. Therefore, they are severely hit by the current crisis. Some peasants and small farmers may have land but they are forced to produce cash crops instead of food. The increase of the price of edible oil in Indonesia since 2007 has not benefited the Indonesian palm oil farmers at all. They received only a minor price increase from the large buyers and they do not understand why ordinary people and consumers have to suffer such high prices for edible oil. Many of them are working under contract farming with big agribusiness companies which process, refine and sell the product. A small number of big agribusiness companies increased domestic prices, following the international price hike. The contract farming model creates a situation in which farmers cannot produce food for their families as they have to produce cash crops as monocultures such as sugar cane, palm oil, coffee, tea and cacao. This means that even if the farmer receives a minor increase for his cash crop, she has to buy much more expensive food on the market. Therefore increasing food prices also cause more poverty in their families.

Urban Consumers Hit Hard

The international policies of the last decades have expelled hundreds of millions of people to the urban areas where most of them landed in slums, having a very precarious life, forced to work for very low wages and buy food and other goods at a high price. They are the first victims of the current crisis as they have no way to

produce their own food. Their number has increased dramatically and they spend a big part of their income on food. According to the FAO, food represents up to 60-80 percent of consumer's spending in developing countries (including landless farmers and agricultural workers). Companies ruthlessly exploit the current situation, accepting that increasing numbers of people go hungry as they do not have the money to buy the available food. Governments are forced to import expensive food to meet consumer demand and do not have the means to support the poorest consumers.

More Free Trade Will Not Solve The Crisis

Institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as well as some governments are now advocating more investment in agriculture, increased food aid for the low income food importing countries and further liberalization of markets so that countries can improve their income through export. Many argue that we need more intensive production patterns, which means for them more industrial high input agriculture. This includes the introduction of GMOs and the use of more fossil energy!

At the same time they promote a second TNC-led “green” revolution in Africa, they keep on pushing for more market access for their transnational corporations in the Doha round and tie up the extra financial support to political criteria to increase the dependency of these countries. Nothing is said about the need for increased market regulation and stabilization or whether the support that is called for will go to peasant-based food production. Such investments will go to the importing countries by offering their financial “help”, bring more investment in corporate-led food production and continue to impose the same recipe of deregulation and privatization.

In the WTO negotiations high prices are used to make governments accept further tariff cuts and more de-regulation of the agricultural markets. This will create the next crisis when price fluctuations go in the other direction.

A Way Out Of The Crisis: Rebuilding National Food Economies

To address the current crisis, La Via Campesina believes that countries should give priority in their budget to support the poorest consumers so that they have access to sufficient food. Meanwhile, they should give priority to their domestic food production in order to become less dependent on the world market. This means increased investment in peasant and farmer-based food production for the domestic market.

We do need more intensive food production, but intensive in the use of labor and in the sustainable use of natural resources. Diverse production systems have to be developed, systems that are not exclusively focusing on the main crops such as corn, soya, rice and wheat but that integrate local foods that have been neglected since the onset of the “green” revolution.. Small-scale family farms can produce a large diversity of food that guarantees a balanced diet and some surpluses for the markets. Small-scale family farming is a protection against hunger!

Internal market prices have to be stabilized at a reasonable level for farmers and consumers: for farmers so that they can receive prices that cover the cost of production and secure a decent income and for consumers so that they are protected against high food prices. Direct sales from peasants and small farmers to consumers has to be encouraged. Mr. Jacques Diouf, secretary General of FAO has stated that developing countries should be enabled to achieve food self sufficiency⁽⁶⁾.

In every country an intervention system has to be put in place that can stabilize market prices. In order to achieve this, import controls with taxes and quotas are needed to regulate imports and avoid dumping or low price imports that undermine domestic production. National buffer stocks managed by the state have to be built up in order to stabilize domestic markets: in times of surplus, cereals can be taken from the market to build up the stock and in case of shortage, cereals can be released.

Therefore land should be distributed equally to the landless and peasant family through genuine agrarian reform and land reform. This should include the control over and access to water, seed, credits and appropriate technology. People should be enabled again to produce their own food and feed their own communities. Any land grabbing, land evictions and expansion of land allocation for the expansion of agribusiness-led agriculture has to be stopped. Immediate measures are needed to support small farmers and peasants to increase agro-ecological food production.

National governments should not repeat the mistake of promoting agribusiness corporations to invest in large food production units. According to the FAO, ex-Soviet countries plan to open their land to agribusiness companies to produce food on land that is currently not cultivated. This could turn out to be another mistake if this is presented as a solution for the food crisis.

Regulating International Markets And Implementing Basic Rights

At the international level stabilization measures have to be implemented. International buffer stocks have to be built up as well as an intervention mechanism to stabilize prices on the international markets at a reasonable level. Exporting countries have to accept international rules that control the quantities they can bring to the market.

Countries should have the freedom to control imports in order to protect domestic food production. Production of cereals for agrofuels is unacceptable and has to be stopped as this competes with food production. As a first step we ask for an immediate moratorium on agrofuels as proposed by Jean Ziegler former UN rapporteur on the Right to Food. The influence of transnational corporations has to be limited and the international trade in staple foods has to be brought to a necessary minimum level. As much as possible domestic production should fulfill internal demand. This is the only way to protect farmers and consumers against sudden price fluctuations from the international market.

A possible agreement in the Doha Round will mean another blow for peasant-based food production; therefore any agreement has to be rejected.

Peasants And Small Farmers Are The Main Food Producers

La Via Campesina is convinced that peasants and small farmers can feed the world. They therefore have to be considered as the key part of the solution. With sufficient political will and the implementation of adequate policies more peasants and small farmers will easily produce sufficient food to feed everyone at a reasonable price. The current situation shows that changes are needed!

The time for food sovereignty has come!

- (1) Crop Prospects and Food situation by FAO, 2008
- (2) OECD (In Süddeutsche Zeitung 15-4-2008)
- (3) LEMONDE.FR with AFP 24-02-2008
- (4) Biofuel News 20-3-2008
- (5) http://www.checkbiotech.org/green_News_Biofuels.aspx?infoId=17206
- (6) Le Monde 17-4-2008

Social Movements And Political Change

I. – Introduction

For over a decade of struggle La Vía Campesina has become a fundamental force within the world-wide social movement, with the capacity to resist, protest and offer proposals on the processes of economic and social change.

Since its creation, it plays a very important and decisive role within the global mobilization of resistance to the neoliberal model and against the market liberalization of agriculture, which has continuously generated an increase in poverty and misery for thousands of family farmers and indigenous peoples.

At present, the peasant movement faces a severe crisis due to climate change, the food crisis, the priority in the cultivation of agro-fuels and the absence of public policies to improve food production in each country.

With these premises, La Vía Campesina, has developed a broad strategy of struggle in order to fortify solidarity and cooperation on all of its levels of action.

Since its beginning La Vía Campesina motivates and promotes within the social movement, and, including progressive governments, to struggle for a more equitable, socially just and ecologically sustainable world.

Finally, with this document we want to establish the basis for discussion in order to produce a work strategy with the State

(governments, congress, political parties, local authorities), by means of a general position of “Social Movements and political changes”.

We start off in principle that by its nature La Vía Campesina is a social movement of struggle that articulates itself from its bases to the international sphere. It is the voice of all peasants, women and men, in the world calling for the construction of a world of peace, social justice, economic development and in harmony with the environment.

II. – La Vía Campesina within a New Historical Period

The end of the last decade and the beginning of the present one was dominated by the consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union, the decline of National Liberation Movements and the resultant unipolar world manipulated between a territorial and anti-terrorist strategy.

The awakening of social movements and the arrival of progressive governments appear in the middle of an acute food crisis and a progressing environmental imbalance.

In the middle of this stage, characterized by risk and uncertainty, the genuine voice of peasants, women and men, emerges. It is a dynamic movement of class struggle, with clear proposals around specific issues within the peasant sector, indigenous people and other inhabitants struggling for the improvement of conditions of life in the field, with dignity.

La Vía Campesina participates resolutely in those structural changes directed towards a new model of economic and social development in every region from a proactive perspective. This is done in order to improve the integration of people based on cooperation, solidarity and the common will to advance towards higher levels of development and to satisfy the needs and yearnings of our five continents.

III. – La Vía Campesina, States and National Governments

A classic assessment of the function of the State indicates that the advance of neoliberalism and globalization reduced the role of the State and promoted the liberalization and supremacy of the market. It also decreased intervention by the public sector within social policies, while increasing participation by corporate people and brought about an incongruous balance between national capital and transnational corporations.

At present there are some progressive countries where there exists a process of recovery of the role of the State as generator of policies for human development and social justice, as a facilitator and promoter of equity and solidarity, and of an efficient and effective administration of the common goods to the benefit of the great majorities that extend beyond the limited time that each government is in office.

La Vía Campesina is clear on its involvement with social movements within the spaces of participation, its relation with the political parties, the state and our role of advocacy in the face of the international institutions. Our alliances are for constructing changes in society to the benefit of excluded men and women. These alliances begin first by defining who are our allies and what is the role that some organizations play within the social movement. We refer to: young people, women, environmentalists, small traditional fishermen, consumers, agricultural workers and indigenous people, including critical researchers and academics in order to fortify our proposals and our analyses. The relation between La Vía Campesina and the State is emphasized because the State has a more national scope. In this sense the political parties and governments assume the administration of the so called “common good.” Some states and parties defend a neoliberal economy where the market reigns, a principle that is in opposition to the interests of La Vía Campesina.

In the majority of our countries we have experienced processes that range from authoritarian regimes to “representative” democracies

where governments and parties have lost legitimacy and credibility as a product of their political actions.

Against this background, the true solution to the problems within agriculture will not always be resolved by governments and political forces. This statement does not mean that our social movement must construct its own model, parallel to the one of the State, or must construct basic participating alternatives, not related to the political institutionalism or to the market. We must stress that these policies must reach the agricultural sector and rural areas without inequality nor exclusion.

IV. – New alternatives of organization

At this new political juncture some governments have dedicated efforts towards food production for national consumption and will begin to request measures to protect their domestic markets and to invest more in the food production. In this way for some States it is a task of first order. Thus, we have countries that have asked for consultation on their national legislation on the matter of food sovereignty. We can mention the cases of Bolivia, Venezuela, countries of Central America, Nepal, Mali, and Indonesia. Many possibilities of cooperation and of forging strategic alliances are becoming noticeable.

The Organizations of La Vía Campesina are preparing a strategy of action within the framework of the Bolivarian Alternative for America, on the matter of cooperation, not only with governments, but with peasant and indigenous peoples' organizations. The same is happening with the Petro-Caribe initiative, which unites the governments of Central America, the Caribbean and Venezuela, including programs of productive investment and complementarities in the short, medium and long term.

The recent creation of ALBA - FOOD, is a productive strategy destined to bring about deep changes and active participation in the spaces of power, especially in the development of Food Sovereignty.

A new development is the participation that organizations can have at local level with municipal governments. Similarly there are new forms of participation and of impact within the spaces of power that can create genetically modified production free zones, promote responsible consumption and the defense for a peasant, sustainable and ecological agriculture.

V. – La Vía Campesina and Social Movements

The Seattle (USA) protests against the WTO, and the development of the World Social Forums, elevated the level of social mobilization. Despite this, there was a set back in the United States and in Europe due to the outbreak of anti-terrorist actions after the attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York. The debate on the terrorism dominates the agenda, limiting the space for action and democratic protest.

At the moment there is an ascent of the social movement , especially of the peasant and indigenous people's sector ,around such issues as: climate change, agro-fuels, GMOs and the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). In each country, social movements are at the center of the actions and are working in coordination with the organizations of the Vía Campesina. One of these concrete actions was Nyéléni, since it allowed the construction of an agenda on the development of Food Sovereignty.

The strong negative effects of liberalization and privatization policies, combined with the food and climatic crises, have increased the legitimacy of our proposals. The increasing popular resistance has helped to push governments to consider other policies and to stop or slow down WTO and Free Trade Agreements negotiations.

In La Vía Campesina we have a very well defined position when facing international institutions, the WTO, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Our position is to oppose and delegitimize these institutions, and to struggle for progressive and positive changes in other spaces like the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations

Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Labor Organization (ILO) and United Nations Human Rights Council.

We are developing a strategy and a long term campaign along with other movements, to limit the presence and the influence of transnational corporations within the agricultural sector, agricultural business and agro-fuels.

VI. – Some Actions to Carry Out

- To stop the WTO negotiations, especially the commercialization of agriculture, particularly to put an end to Doha Development Agenda (DDA)
- To explore new forms of participation alongside with governments, within the framework of food sovereignty and regional agreements (ALBA-Petrocaribe)
- To stop Free Trade Agreements (FTA's) and Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA's) in foods and agriculture
- To promote a transition from monoculture to sustainable agriculture based on agro-ecological family production
- To oppose the land and rural developments plans of the World Bank
- To promote the Agrarian Reform Agreements, approved at The International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD)
- To reject the claims of the G-8 countries

The Offensive Of The Transnational Corporations Against Agriculture

The goal of this paper is to succinctly present, for reflection and discussion, the main ways that international capital impacts agriculture through the transnational corporations.

There is a natural logic in the way that capitalism – now in its phase dominated by finance capital – impacts agriculture. And there are specific characteristics determined by the recent crisis of finance capital. This has consequences for agriculture and for peasants and small farmers. And it also brings consequences that we need to understand in order to deal with them.

1. The movement of capital in agriculture

The development of the capitalist mode of production went through various phases. It began in the 15th century as mercantile capitalism and afterwards evolved into industrial capitalism in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the 20th century it developed into monopoly capitalism and imperialism. In the past two decades we are experiencing a new phase of capitalism, now dominated by global finance capital. This phase means that the accumulation of capital, of wealth, is carried out basically by finance capital, in its forms of money. But this finance capital needs to control production of the markets (in industry, in mines, and in agriculture) and to control world trade.

International finance capital began to control agriculture through various mechanisms:

- a) The first of these is using the surplus of finance capital, the banks began to buy shares of hundreds of medium-sized and

large companies that are active in different sectors related to agriculture, and by controlling the majority of shares, thereby promoted a process of concentration of the companies that are active in the agricultural sector. In a few years, these corporations that had capital injected by finance capital began to control all the different sectors related to agriculture such as trade, the production of inputs, farm machinery, agribusiness, etc. And it's important to understand that it was capital accumulated outside of agriculture, but applied to it, that speeded up the process of control. The normal ways in which wealth is accumulated by the sale of agricultural goods would have taken years.

- b) The second control mechanism was through the process of dollarizing the world economy. This allowed the corporations to take advantage of favorable exchange rates and enter into national economies and be able to easily buy businesses and dominate the producing markets and the trade in farm products.
- c) The third mechanism was obtained through rules imposed by the international organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and multilateral agreements that standardized the trade of farm products in accord with the interests of the large corporations and required the servile governments to liberalize the trade in these products. This way the transnational corporations could enter into countries and control the national markets for the products and for agricultural inputs, effectively worldwide.
- d) The fourth mechanism was bank credit. In nearly all countries, the process of development of agricultural production, ever more dependent on industrial inputs, remained at the mercy of the use of bank credit to finance production. And this credit allowed the financing of this mode of "industrial agricultural" production. That is, the banks financed the implementing and the domination of industrial agricultural all over the world.
- e) And finally in the majority of countries, the governments abandoned the public policies of protection for the

agricultural market and the peasant economy. They liberalized the markets and applied policies of subsidies precisely for large capitalist farm production. These government subsidies were implemented mainly through tax exemptions on exports or imports and by the application of favorable interest rates for capitalist agriculture.

From this two-decade domination of finance capital over agricultural production, today approximately 30 major transnational corporations control practically all production and agricultural trade in the world.

2. The recent crisis of finance capital

During the years from 1990 to 2008, we had the offensive of finance capital over agriculture and this worsened in the last few years with the crisis situation of finance capital in the United States and Europe.

This crisis of finance capital is aggravating even further the effects of the control of international capital over the economies that are on the periphery, over agriculture and peasant economy. This has been happening for various reasons:

- a) The large economic groups from the North, in the face of the crisis -- of low interest rates in effect there (around 2% per year), the instability of the dollar and its currency -- fled from the North and ran to the periphery, seeking to protect their volatile capital, so they applied it to fixed capital such as land, water, productive investments and agricultural production.
- b) The crisis of the price of oil and its consequences over global warming and the environment, led to the auto-oil complex beginning to invest great sums of capital in the production of agrofuels. Especially in the production of sugarcane and corn for ethanol and soy and palm oil for vegetable oil. This produced a real offensive of finance capital and of the transnational corporations over the tropical agriculture of the South.
- c) The third movement resulting from the crisis is that this finance capital was directed to the commodity exchanges for

agriculture and minerals, to apply their assets and thus speculate in the futures market or simply transform the money into commodities of the future. This movement created an exaggerated rise in the prices of agricultural products negotiated by the corporations in the world's commodity exchanges. The average prices of agricultural products on the international level now does not have any relation to the average cost of production. But they are the result of the speculative movements and of the oligopoly's control of the agricultural markets for these big corporations.

3. The current situation of control of the transnational corporations and of finance capital over agriculture

There are many aspects of the situation and the result of corporate control of agriculture that can be analyzed. Here we are going to analyze just the economic aspects.

- a) There was a concentration of the control of production and of world trade in agricultural products by a few corporations that dominated these products all over the world, especially the standardized agricultural products such as grains and milk products. And they dominate the whole chain of production of inputs and agricultural machinery.
- b) There was an accelerated process of the centralization of capital. That is, the same corporation began to control the production and trade of a set of products and sectors of the economy. This includes the manufacture of agricultural inputs (chemical fertilizers, insecticides, agro toxins), farm machinery, genetically modified seeds and an immense quantity of products derived from agribusiness, including food products, cosmetics, and luxury goods.
- c) There is an ever-increasing symbiosis within the same corporation between industrial, commercial capital and finance capital.
- d) There is an almost absolute control over the prices of agricultural products and agricultural inputs on the world

level. The prices are based on value but they reach high levels determined by competition, by the oligopoly and by the speculation of finance capital.

- e) There is hegemony of the corporations over scientific knowledge and over the technologies applied to agriculture that imposes on the whole world a technological model of the so-called “industrial agriculture”, dependent on inputs produced outside of agriculture. This model is presented as if it were the only, the best, and the cheapest form of agricultural production, ignoring the thousand-year old techniques of popular knowledge and of agro-ecology.
- f) There was an imposition of private ownership of the corporations over the goods of nature, of the genetically modified seeds, of water and of biodiversity.
- g) There is a danger underway of standardizing human and animal food all over the world. Humanity is being induced to feed ourselves increasingly with “rations” standardized by the corporations. Food is transformed into a mere commodity that needs to be consumed rapidly and in large quantity. This brings incalculable consequences with the destruction of local food customs and of culture, and risks the health of humans and animals.
- h) There is a general process all over the world of the loss of peoples’ and of countries’ sovereignty over food and food production. This is occurring because of the denationalization of the ownership of lands, of businesses, of agribusinesses and of trade and it places national sovereignty as a whole at risk. There are already more than 70 countries that no longer succeed in producing what their peoples need to feed themselves.
- i) Huge expanses of homogeneous trees are being planted in industrial plantations of eucalyptus, pines, and African-palms, destined for the production of cellulose, wood, or agrofuels. This total destruction of biodiversity and of the water table is seriously affecting the environment.
- j) A Machiavellian alliance is being built in the countries of the

South between the interests of the big landowners, the ones who own the large estates and the native capitalist farmers with the transnational corporations. This alliance is rapidly imposing the industrial form of agriculture throughout the South and concentrating the ownership of land in a frightening way. It is destroying peasant agriculture and making it not viable and emptying out the interior of our countries. This form of agriculture uses intensive mechanization and agro toxins, which drive out manual labor, causing large contingents of the rural population to migrate.

- k) A new international re-division of production and of labor is under way, which condemns the majority of the countries of the South to be mere exporters of agricultural and mineral raw material.
- l) The majority of governments, although elected in processes that are held to be democratic, are in truth driven by the strength of money and by every kind of media manipulation that results in governments that are servile to these interests. Their agricultural policies have been totally subordinated to the interests of transnational corporations. They abandoned state control over agriculture and food. They abandoned public policies of support for peasants and small farmers. They abandoned public policies of food sovereignty and preservation of the local environment.

4. The Contradictions of the control of international capital over agriculture

The description of economic power over agriculture, nature, and agricultural products surprises everyone! And it can lead to pessimism over the possibility of reversing the situation, such is the strength that international finance capital exercises over them.

However all these economic and social processes bring contradictions with them. And it is these contradictions that create revolts, indignation, contrary effects that can lead to overcoming them.

Some of these contradictions of the rule of capital over agriculture and nature are highlighted here so that we can understand them and act on them to bring about the necessary changes.

- a) The model of production used by industrial agriculture is totally dependent on inputs such as chemical fertilizers and petroleum derivatives which have natural physical limitations based on scarcity of world reserves of petroleum, potassium, limestone, and phosphorus. So they have limited expansion in the near future.
- b) The control by some corporations over food has caused prices to rise above the value of the food and this will cause hunger and revolt by the population prevented from accessing food for lack of income. In other words, to simply condition food on rates of profit will bring serious social problems in the short term. This is because the poorest and hungriest populations will not have sufficient income to become consumers of the foods that have been transformed into mere commodities.
- c) Capital is controlling natural resources, represented by land, water, forests, and biodiversity. And this affects a country's national sovereignty and is going to cause a reaction by broad social sectors, not only the peasants and small farmers.
- d) Industrial agriculture is based on the need to use increasing amounts of agro toxins as a way to save manual labor and to produce large-scale monoculture. This produces foods that are ever more contaminated, which affects the health of the population. And the populations in the cities who have more access to information will certainly react. (The rich are already protecting themselves – in the big supermarket chains, there is increasing consumption of organic foods.)
- e) The mode of producing on a large scale causes manual labor to be forced out of the rural areas and increases the population on the outskirts of the big cities. These populations have no alternative for jobs and income. And this creates a contradiction with an increase in social inequality.

- f) The corporations are increasing agriculture based on genetically modified seeds. But at the same time the denunciations are increasing and the results of GMO seeds become more visible—the destruction of biodiversity, the affect on the climate and the health risks for humans and animals.
- g) Industrial agriculture, monoculture, necessarily destroys biodiversity. And the destruction of biodiversity has a systematic effect on rain, the climate, and it increases global warming. This contradiction is unsustainable for the population in the cities that will begin to take notice and demand changes.
- h) The privatization of the ownership of water, whether of the rivers and lakes or of the water table will restrict the consumption by the lower-income populations and will bring serious social consequences .
- i) The increasing use of industrial agriculture for the production of agrofuels increases monoculture even more, as well as the use of fertilizers based on petroleum, and will not resolve the problem of global warming and carbon emissions. The main cause of this problem is the growing use of individual transportation in the big cities, encouraged by the greed of the auto companies. The promotion of agriculture of agrofuels will not resolve the problem, only aggravate it by the perverse effects of the destruction of biodiversity.
- j) The project of the international re-division of labor and of production, transforms many countries in the South into mere exporters of raw material and will make projects of national development impossible – projects that could ensure jobs and income distribution for their populations. This is going to create a concentration of income, unemployment and migration to the countries of the North.
- k) The agribusinesses, allied with finance capital are also advancing the concentration and the centralization of the supermarkets' distribution networks with the world oligopoly of chains like Wal-Mart, Carrefour, etc. This process is going to destroy millions of small stores and local tradesmen, creating incalculable social consequences.

- 1) Industrial agriculture needs to use increasing amounts of hormones and industrial medicines for the mass production in a short amount of time of animals such as poultry, cattle and pigs. And this is bringing consequences for the health of the population that consumes these animals.

La Via Campesina And Alliance Building Within Social Movements

Alliances, what for?

La Vía Campesina is an international peasant movement that primarily works for change within the agrarian sector. Such change deeply affects all of society. We believe that we need to build alliances with other movements to gather enough strength to create these changes. We are working for changes in agricultural production, but also in consumption habits, the role of women, education, health, environment etc. We cannot achieve these changes without the collaboration of other movements.

An alliance is a long-term collaboration that provides support but also requires responsibility. This means that allies do not exist just to support the agenda of La Via Campesina. La Via Campesina should also make an effort to understand the agendas of other movements and support them in their struggles. In an alliance one seeks to devise a long-term vision that creates a converging agenda of strategies and common actions.

We want to express our long-term strategic agenda alongside other movements in order to organize and mobilize together with more power to influence politics and transform society.

The construction of an alliance requires a long-term commitment from La Via Campesina, a healthy process of dialog between La Via Campesina and the ally in which all of La Via Campesina participates (through CCI, regional organizations, etc.) and not only those responsible for facilitating the process.

Assessments since 2004

There have been advances in the following areas:

- By using the Nyéléni process we have established a common political process and agenda among movements working around Food Sovereignty. It seems that Food Sovereignty can serve to unite us around a positive agenda focusing on the theme of agricultural production and consumption.
- A large number of movements and NGOs exist that can mobilize around central themes, such as WTO, the World Bank, climate change, G8 etc. This network has already been formed and we have the means to organize this type of resistance. This also includes working with youth and students etc.
- There have been positive collaborations on specific topics (biodiversity, agrarian reform, human rights, Aracruz...)

There have been difficulties in the following areas:

- We have had difficulty creating a network for the Assembly of Social Movements, due in part to the change of the social context, but even more so because La Via Campesina does not have a clear strategy on how to operate and provide leadership with other movements in this group.
- We have struggled to adhere to the Nyéléni process and the definition of the role of the IPC in Rome.
- There has been difficulty in having direct dialogues with other movements in order to build and strengthen our alliances.
- A long-term common political agenda does not exist among the major movements.
- The peasant movement in Europe and North America is small. This makes it more difficult to build alliances in these two regions.

What are our challenges?

In general we have many connections with other movements and we are involved in a number of networks (World Social Forum, Assembly of Social Movements, OWINFS, Nyéléni Process, IPC Rome, national and regional activities and forums, etc.) As of now, however, we lack a common strategy among these key movements as to how to strengthen our alliances in the near future.

Within La Via Campesina we should prioritize the movements with which we want to work and build long-term alliances. We should better express our internal process to be able to have a good dialog at different levels (local, regional, national, international) where there are opportunities. Afterwards we should document this information in the collective process of La Via Campesina.

We should contact the particular key movements we hope to work with and begin dialog and establish common initiatives with each one. We can also discuss with them how to manage/coordinate the existing networks at a regional and international level.

What are our key networks and how can we improve them?

We should always consider the network we are working with and how it can be used (to build resistance, gather support, or exchange information).

- *The Assembly of Social Movements*, This network was created during the World Social Forum to facilitate the creation of a resistance agenda among social movements. There is a good analysis in common within this network. Even so, there are still difficulties communicating, mobilizing and defining our priorities for action. A lack of commitment and integrated work among those in this network also impedes the success of the Assembly. If La Via Campesina believes that it is an important network it should put more resources and people to support it.
- *The Nyéléni Process*, The Nyéléni Forum was innovative and inspired many of its participants. It has increased movements'

interest in Food Sovereignty and the Forum establishes a clear and legitimate agenda. The direction committee is discussing how to continue with the next step of this process.

- *The International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty-IPC in Rome*, This was created before the Food Summit in 1996. It is a facilitation space (for initiatives of its participating organizations) and not of representation. Currently it is focused on the processes surrounding FAO and IFAD. It has played an important supporting role in facilitating the Nyéléni Forum. La Via Campesina should discuss the importance of the FAO in its strategy and the importance of this space.
- *OWINFS (Our World Is Not for Sale)*, This is a web that works around international trade and has strived to strengthen the fight against WTO and free trade agreements. It is an extensive network that includes organizations and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that do not agree with La Via Campesina's strategies and look for a way to work more closely around WTO. It is a difficult space for movements due to its organization. It is useful in diffusing information about strategies, but does not succeed in mobilizing movements.
- *Collaboration with FIAN in the Global Campaign*, This campaign has been around for a number of years, providing positive and reliable instruments such as investigative missions, emergency letters and meeting places. There is no doubt that this campaign has difficulties in developing wider reaching resistance around land use and establishing itself outside of Latin America.
- *The World Social Forum*, This Forum does not have a clear political orientation and is more a space of protection and an exchange of experiences and information.
- *Alliances on a Local Level*, Throughout many regions of the world there are local alliances that strengthen their struggles and goals. These alliances are very important for our members. How can we make them part of our global strategy? Could we recognize them on April 17?

La Via Campesina and its relationships with the other movements

We believe that La Via Campesina should focus on the following themes and make more direct connections with these movements: women, fishermen, union members, indigenous peoples, youth, marginalized urban people, immigrants, and environmentalists.

With regards to women, we mostly work with the Global March (Marcha Mundial), an international network of women activist groups. They were very active in Nyéléni and they seem positive to continue to strengthen these contacts.

Fishermen have two platforms (WFF and WFFP), in addition to other organizations that are not affiliated with either. WFF and WFFP have been very involved with internal debates and conflicts, and are not very visible on the international level. They are still looking for acknowledgment of their work on the international scene. La Via Campesina's international organizations have done good work with fishermen organizations (Chile, Honduras...) and on the international level there was a protest with a float of fishing boats in Geneva lead by KM of the Philippines. It is important to enhance this exchange on the national level and work more closely with WFF and WFFP on the international level.

With regards to union members, La Via Campesina does not have much involvement. Currently we mostly meet with them through OWINFS (Our World is Not for Sale) while discussing services. A few union members are in the Assembly of Social Movements. In general, there is much work to do within this sector.

The sector of indigenous peoples is scattered. They have international representation through the IPC in Rome. There are many contacts and collaborations on the national level and there is important communication on the regional-continental axis of Latin America. But as La Via Campesina we have yet not established a strong connection with native peoples.

We work with a lot of youth during protests (Cancun, G8...) but we do not have an organized collaboration outside of these events.

Among immigrant organizations, La Via Campesina has key contacts (for example in Spain) but there a more distinguished collaboration does not exist. The same is true with the marginalized urban movements, urban agriculture movements and consumers...

Within the environmental movement we have a good connection with Friends of the Earth International (Amigos de la Tierra Internacional). We have worked alongside them in the Nyeleni Process and in many other spaces. They do a lot of work around transnational corporations, which could be an important field for collaboration.

We have lots of connections with NGOs, many of which are close relationships and they offer us a lot of support for our activities.

Defining our limiting factors in order to strengthen and develop our alliances

There currently are a number of factors that limit our capacity to establish alliances:

- Lack of methodology and process to work around the theme of La Via Campesina. The theme of alliances is still not sufficiently developed in La Via Campesina. We do not have clear, established or understood agendas/priorities between La Via Campesina and other movements. We lack common political priorities for our strategy of action and resistance.
- Often we become too focused on “How to receive support for our movement.” We should develop more of an interest in other movements and their struggles. By better understanding their agendas we can look for way to create mutual support.
- We lack leadership capacity and technical support: There are enough people who know this information to lead an internal debate and work with our allies. Such processes are complex and require good understanding and diffusion of information.

- Until now we have not prioritized alliances in our search for more resources.
- With our work with NGOs we should be more explicit about how we want to work with them and how we see each one's role. This will help to maintain good relations and improve our collaboration.

La Via Campesina And Indigenous Peoples

Throughout history native populations have been the object of discrimination and racism which has been expressed through repression, extermination, slavery and other forms of injustice.

In modern times the Indigenous problem has been taken up again, and even though problems are approached from different perspectives, through Via Campesina we have been able to develop synergies in the agendas of our struggles in order to construct joint positions against the neoliberal model.

A continuous struggle has been in the constant mobilization to obtain recognition of indigenous culture, for example in intercultural education and the right to land.

Since the 5th Conference in Sao Paulo in Brazil the Via Campesina has generated much debate around the role that indigenous peoples play in different parts of the world, when in some countries they are excluded majorities and in others excluded minorities.

We concluded that one cannot speak of the rural environment, of the development of agriculture, of the preservation of native seeds, biodiversity and the preservation of the environment without taking into account the struggle in which native populations have been engaged throughout their history.

The central themes of La Via Campesina have been enriched through the cosmic vision of indigenous peoples, which envisages the construction of a world based on the Culture of Life, identity, philosophy, the ancient spiritual vision of the people, applying

ancestral knowledge and wisdom, consolidating processes of exchange and brotherhood between nations and respecting the right to self-determination.

Indigenous culture suggests a sustainable world which preserves the mother earth against natural disasters, global warming and the ecological crisis provoked by unabated unrestrained capitalism.

Indigenous Peoples devote a great deal of importance to Food Sovereignty as a base element of National Sovereignty, in which the community guarantees a right to respect for its own culture as much as the right to spaces for its own methods of production, distribution and consumption in harmony with nature, of clean and healthy foodstuffs for the entire population, eliminating hunger, because the right to food is a basic human right.

The indigenous woman plays a definitive role in this process; it is she who preserves native seeds and passes on ancestral knowledge. Indigenous peoples dedicate a lot of effort to the struggle of nations to develop under the concept of solidarity, equality and fairness in power relations between men and women.

The challenges for La Via Campesina regarding these issues are:

1. To continue with the analysis of the methods of participation of Indigenous populations in La Via Campesina
2. Re-adopt the indigenous cosmovision to improve strategies in the peasant struggle
3. Share experiences between different continents regarding indigenous issues
4. Reconstitute a process of recuperating the identity and the historical memory of native populations
5. Promote spaces for reflection between the main indigenous organizations of each continent
6. Ensure the implementation of the United Nations
7. Convention on indigenous peoples rights.

8. Promote a real and truthful Agricultural Reform which re-adopts indigenous cosmovision, to defend and protect the rights intrinsic to food sovereignty
9. Develop economic and social activities to confront the uprooting of the countryside caused by emigration

Globalize the Struggle...Globalize Hope.

World Bank/ IMF Out of Agriculture

Member organisations of La Via Campesina around the world have been opposing the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in many parts of the world because of the disastrous impact of their policies on the lives of small farmers and on human communities in general. Created in 1944, those institutions' proclaimed goal is to reduce poverty. However, they have mainly served the interests of their main contributors and they have imposed market fundamentalism around the world. The loans they provide are given under strict conditions to open the markets and dismantle all kinds of national policies. Doing so, they have acted as global economic colonizers. Instead of alleviating poverty, as they promised in their programmes, they marginalize and evict farmers from their farm land. More over, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are utterly discredited and undemocratic institutions where one dollar-one vote decision-making marginalizes Southern countries.

1. Mega-projects prompting land evictions

Over three billion people live in rural areas, many of whom are being increasingly and violently expelled from their lands and alienated from their sources of livelihood. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have funded mega development projects such as large dams, infrastructure projects, extractive industry and tourism that have displaced local populations and destroyed their social fabric and the very resource bases on which their lives depend.

For example, the construction of the Pak Mun Dam and other mega projects supported by the World Bank in Thailand has tremendously impacted the people and their environment.

Farmers were displaced and evicted from their fertile farmland and houses. Meanwhile the environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity was permanent.

2. Privatisations and free trade policies destroy family farms

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have also supported waves of privatisation and deregulation around the world, dismantling existing systems designed to protect the common goods, the people and their environment. The privatisation of land, water, seeds, education, health and all public services as well as the drastic cuts in farmers subsidies have wrecked local economies and have created hunger and poverty. Meanwhile, the promotion of agro-export and free trade policies have led to the re-concentration of land and wealth in the hands of elites and the destruction of peasant economies. For example in Indonesia, the World Bank approved a loan to change the law on water to a new law protecting foreign investors in controlling water resources.

Many countries such as Thailand, Argentina or Russia that were following the International Monetary Fund policies fell into deep financial crises pushing millions of people into poverty. On the other hand, when the International Monetary Fund enters a country with its promise for economic recovery from economic crisis, a deeper crisis actually occurs and farmers actually become the victims of those policies. It is usually assumed that the governments are proposing the development programmes and that the World Bank finances those loans. But in reality, the World Bank only supports and develops programmes where they can make large profits. Moreover, the World Bank programmes require laws and regulation amendments that guarantee transnational corporations' interests. This means that farmers never benefit from the loans – even marginally- but on the contrary, they have to pay back those loans with the taxes they pay to the government. Those policies have generated a huge debt that strangle the capacity of countries to develop and support their populations.

3. Market assisted land reform creates exclusion

In May 2003, the World Bank published its Land Policy Research Report- Land Policies for Growth and Poverty Reduction. This document laid the foundations of a worldwide policy supporting land privatisation under the guise of « land reform ». This policy presents a concept of land tenure security limited to the security of individual property rights. It assumes that whatever might be convenient for investors is also convenient for poor peasants. However, policies of land administration (land registry, demarcation, entitlement, etc) that have been applied in recent years under Bank sponsorship have not resulted in greater security in land tenure for women and poor rural communities. On the contrary, these policies have increased their vulnerability to losing land (in countries such as Colombia, Brasil, Guatemala...).

What is observed then is that the processes of entitling land tenure—in most cases individually— as well as liberalizing agricultural trade and dismantling public services of support for small and medium-sized agricultural producers began with the promise that that they would regulate, formalize and secure land tenure. The bankruptcy of many peasants who were holding land title deeds, which were now transferable and could be seized, allowed banks to take possession of these lands. In other cases, conditions that were so adverse for peasant family economies, the impossibility of producing, and concomitantly, the dramatic deterioration of living conditions, pushed many peasants towards selling their land to large agro-export businessmen in order to have, for the moment, some money in their pockets.

In general, the privatization of collective and communal forms of land tenure and of rural extension services has negatively affected peasants and indigenous people, especially in those countries where a considerable number of them had benefited from past agrarian reforms.

In contrast, la Via Campesina is struggling for a genuine agrarian reform, based on food sovereignty, territory and dignity of the peoples and which guaranties peasants, family farmers, indigenous

people, landless people... the effective access and control over the natural and productive resources needed to truly realize human rights.

4. Climate change

The World Bank is presenting itself as one of the institutions fighting against Climate change. It launched its “climate investment funds” backed by Japan, the US and the UK during the G8 meeting in Hokkaido, Japan, 7-9 July 2008. These funds – which have been criticised by developing country governments – will be used to finance so-called clean technology including coal and agrofuels, loans for adapting to climate change and to set up carbon trading schemes that allow industrialised countries to buy their way out of emission reductions. The solutions proposed by the bank will not help cool down the climate, they will further benefit large corporations.

Meanwhile, the The World Bank remains a major climate polluter and remains unaccountable for its own greenhouse gas emissions. Between 2007 and 2008, the World Bank Group increased fossil fuel financing by 60%. During this time, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private sector lending arm of the World Bank Group, increased its fossil fuel financing by 165%. The Bank is also a major deforester because it keeps promoting industrial logging and agrofuels.

5. The food crisis will not solve the crisis of legitimacy of the WB/IMF!

Currently, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are trying to regain legitimacy by playing a prominent role in the solutions to the food crisis. Since April 2008, the reaction of the international community to the food crisis has been coordinated by the *High Level Task Force on the Global Food Crisis* (HLTF), which was initiated by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and which is composed of all UN organisations dealing with food and agriculture issues, as well as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

While the root causes of the food crisis are to be found in the free market policies promoted by governments and international financial institutions (such as privatisation and deregulation), the same policies are currently called by the Task Force to solve the crisis. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have contributed to set the global economy in fire, they can not be called to extinguish the fire.

World Bank and International Monetary Fund: Human rights violators!

Given the overwhelming influence of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund on the formulation of key social and economic policies, their human rights responsibilities and records need to be directly addressed within the multilateral human rights system. Indeed, these actors are often more powerful than national governments and exercise undue control over governments' decisions on national policies. Since the World Bank-International Monetary Fund are adversely interfering in the realisation of the fundamental rights of peoples, La Via Campesina and other social movements are of the view that undemocratic but powerful institutions like these should be dismantled and that pro-people policies should be developed around the world.

Corporate Agriculture Creates Water Crisis, Sustainable Peasant Agriculture is the Solution

Background

While the main global focus is now going to the climate change issue, the world is also experiencing the water crisis. About 1.1 billion people live without clean drinking water, 3,900 children die every day from water borne diseases (WHO 2004), 2.6 billion people -- 40% of the world's population -- don't have basic sanitation services, and experts predict that by 2015, 2.1 billion people will still lack basic sanitation. At the present rate, sub-Saharan Africa will not reach the target until 2076.

Another natural calamity related to water is big floods that destroy people's housing, bridges, transportation facilities, agriculture facilities, plants and animals. It also causes landslides that cost lives and destroy farmland.

Peasant families have experienced big problems due to the water crisis, because it has happened mostly in rural areas.

The main factors that create the water crisis are related to agricultural production, to be precise, the industrial or corporate model of agriculture, fisheries and forestry.

- The massive de-forestation or tree-slashing in forests conducted by corporations is one of the main factors that create the water crisis. Trees and biodiversity in forests have a very important role in stopping water runoff on the land surface when it rains. They also keep the water underground

and avoid massive evaporation from the sun because of their shade. But when there are no more trees, or numerous degraded trees, then this function of the forest disappears.

- Development of monoculture agriculture and forestry. Monoculture agriculture is reducing the role of trees in conserving water. But some monoculture models even help create the water crisis, because the trees cultivated consume more water than they can keep underground, like eucalyptus plantation. In monoculture plantations, the runoff water also takes fertile land on the surface to rivers and lakes, creating sedimentation. As land loses its humus, it needs more chemical fertilizer.
- Intensive pesticide application in farmland has contaminated the rivers and lakes, and destroyed biodiversity. Rivers are polluted and people get serious diseases because of the water.
- Intensive industrial fishing in rivers, lakes and coastal areas has also contributed to the degradation of water quality. It pollutes the water and destroys the ecosystems of rivers, lakes and coastal areas. Mangrove deforestation occurs mainly because of industrial fishing, which causes the intrusion of salt water into terrestrial areas.
- Privatization of drinking water from the government to private companies has led to a situation where people cannot afford water services. Companies' main concern is to make more profit, therefore they always want to increase the price and ordinary people have to shoulder the cost.
- Industrial beverage corporations drill deep wells to exploit underground water. This has created a scarcity of water among certain communities. Communities' spring water and family wells are experiencing shortages, and only few people can afford bottled water.

Agribusiness and the industrial agriculture model are responsible for many kinds of water crises. Therefore, the world urgently needs to stop this model, and support the peasant agriculture model that has existed for thousands of years, without disturbing the hydro cycles.

False Solution for the Water Crisis

While the water crisis is taking place, there are several proposals raised to deal with the problem. Unfortunately, the proposals do not mean solutions, because they do not halt the main problem of the water crisis. Furthermore, the solutions proposed create other more complex problems.

1. Building huge dams is not a good solution to solve the water crisis in terms of stopping floods and avoiding severe droughts. It always requires a lot of land and in many cases the construction takes place on fertile lands that belong to peasant families. It also requires a lot of funds. In the Global South, international financial institutions such as World Bank distribute their loans through such big dam projects. Big dams also destroy the local biodiversity (river banks change and the water collected in the dam sinks the biodiversity under the water).

The ideal solution for stopping floods and water shortages is to stop rainwater from just running off on the surface and keep it underground in its aquifer. Later on, the water will naturally come out from its spring. Conserved forest and agro-ecological farming has been proven as the solution for keeping water underground.

2. With the privatization of water resources, governments' role in controlling and distributing the use of water is substituted by private corporations. This means people lose control, through their government, over water supply. People also lose their rights over water inasmuch as only those who have money can afford the price of water.

Peasant Proposal on Water

- Water is a right of the people and the peasantry. Therefore, people have the right to control and use it for their livelihoods without harming its sustainability. Governments have the obligation of guaranteeing people's right to access drinking water, water for irrigation and other

livelihood purposes. Governments should never leave it in the hands of private corporations.

- It is the right of the peasantry and of indigenous and local people to have their knowledge and culture in the use and control of water acknowledged. Over the course of the history of peasant agriculture, peasants have been using water wisely. They have always understood that problems would arise if they exploited the water beyond their capacity to conserve it. New technology and policies for water management should be formulated with consultation of the people and peasantry.
- Stop green desert projects. Monoculture agriculture will create green deserts, as it grows mono-crops that consume more water than the quantity that is available underground and can't stop water running off on the surface during the rains. Big monoculture projects like eucalyptus plantation in the long-run will lead to the conversion of fertile land into desert.
- Sustainable peasant agricultural practices like organic farming, agro-ecology farming, sustainable stock-rearing and people-based sustainable forestry have been proven as the best practices to conserve water. It prevents water from running off on the surface, avoids floods and landslides and protects water from easily evaporating under the sun. And it distributes itself in natural and sustainable fashion through spring water. Sustainable peasant agriculture also does not contaminate water with chemical toxins and other hazardous substances.
- The implementation of genuine agrarian reform guarantees justice to the people controlling the land, including the water below the land and also the river banks within their areas. River banks should not be privatized, because it is people's communal property.
- Water is not a commodity and is part of people's culture and civilization. Peasants have never wanted to sell the water for drinking and irrigation because it is people's

right. For hundreds of years rivers have shaped unique local cultures and sustained people's lives. There should not be any commodification of water that removes people's control over it.

Sim à soberania alimentar, nao à violência contra as mulheres



Yes to Food sovereignty - No to violence against women!

Si a la soberanía alimentaria - No más violencia hacia las mujeres!

Oui à la Souveraineté Alimentaire: Non à la violence faite aux femmes!



D. Key Political Documents From Working Committees

Agrarian Reform

For a Genuine, Comprehensive and Participatory Agrarian Reform

La Via Campesina advocates a genuine and comprehensive reform of agriculture which means:

- Genuine and comprehensive Agrarian Reform which incorporates space, land, water and biodiversity within its world view.
- Agrarian Reform which begins with a broad process of land redistribution.
- The possession and use of land should be subordinate to the principal that the right to land may only be held by those who work it, who depend on it and who live upon it with their family.
- An agrarian reform which helps peasants and small farmers return to the land and which regulates migration to urban areas and to other countries.
- Agrarian Reform does not only mean the redistribution of land; its application implies human development, the generation of employment and peasant production of foodstuffs for local markets.
- La Via Campesina defends the principle that land has social properties; property speculation should not be allowed, and capitalist businesses (industrial, commercial or financial) should not be allowed to appropriate great areas of land.
- An agrarian reform which democratizes agricultural structures, involving changing the relationships of economic and political power which cause (la reproducción de la

concentración agraria.)

- An agrarian reform which prohibits the commercialisation of the right to produce.
- An agrarian reform which ends the agro-export model of agriculture and which guarantees the food sovereignty of all peoples.
- The policy of redistribution implies firstly the obligatory expropriation of private lands which do not comply with their social function, redistribution of land and power, altering power relations in society in favour of peasants and the coalitions which support them and which have nothing to do with the private patrimonial transactions financed by the state (nada tiene que ver con las transacciones patrimoniales privadas financiadas por el Estado)
- The attempts by the World Bank to promote Market based Agrarian Reform are failing – human problems cannot be solved by the “invisible hand of the market”. This is a *change of image* designed to preserve large estates, obtain the best lands and socially exclude and displace peasants and indigenous peoples. The World Bank promotes Agrarian Reform based on the liberalisation of agricultural markets, measures which are little more than an extension of structural adjustment policies which have already widened the gap between rich and poor. Their reform means the commercialisation of basic services and of land, water and biodiversity, reducing the role of the state and leaving control in the hands of a financial oligarchy, promoting relief focused on “alleviation” of poverty.
- Agrarian Reform should be a process which does not exclude fisher-folk, indigenous peoples, the landless, livestock farmers and small and medium producers; an agrarian reform which guarantees total access to the land and its resources.
- An agrarian reform which gives legal guarantees to peasants who have turned to the taking of lands in order to survive; an agrarian reform which guarantees real ownership of the land

and distances the ghost of Counter-reform of agriculture

- An agrarian reform which guarantees gender equality in the access, possession control and management of land, water and other natural resources
- Access to land for peasants should be understood as a guarantee of appreciation of their culture, of the autonomy of small communities and of a vision which aims to preserve natural resources, for all humanity and future generations. The land is a natural good that should be used to improve the wellbeing of everyone. Land is not and cannot be just commercial merchandise.
- Agrarian reform means beginning with land redistribution and applying other public policies that guarantee the democratization of the means of production and control of commercialisation. Governments should adopt policies which promote family and cooperative farming through pricing, credit and insurance. (medio de precios, créditos y seguros.)
- In the world of today, in the face of the oligopolization of agrobusinesses and rapid technological progress, the democratization of agroindustrial businesses is fundamental and that land workers are guaranteed control of these processes which today are those which transform agricultural products into foodstuffs.
- Agrarian Reform should be united with policies for food sovereignty, this being understood as the right of all peoples to plan their agricultural policies so they prioritise their own population and provide abundant, cheap foodstuffs of good quality and value throughout the entire year.
- It is necessary to adopt certain technological models which are apt for increasing production without being detrimental to the health of peasants or the population in general, such as those for the preservation of natural resources.
- The ideals of agrarian reform should not be seen as exclusively a necessity for peasant farmers, but instead as a social solution to the problems of society itself. From this

perspective it will only be possible if it is introduced as a demand from a platform made up from broad social sectors from each country. The peasants alone will not be able to achieve Agrarian Reform and real changes in the countryside.

- New, autonomous forms of economic organisation must be created for production, finance and the management of rural development, in agreement with the traditions of organisation of each people.
- La Via Campesina, through the different organized movements and through the processes provided by the Global Campaign, opposes the proposals of the World Bank, which pushes for the sale of lands by estate owners workers with a little or no land; this is a negative policy, far from what is needed to alleviate rural poverty, and which excludes peasants and encourages corruption and clientelism. Businesses sell their worst lands at unattainable prices for peasant farmers – the market in this context is a trap, the purpose of which is to put the control of the entire process in the hands of local rural elites.
- La Via Campesina promotes an Agrarian Reform and Food Sovereignty which struggles against the effects of the Green Revolution, promoting agro-ecology; harmony between production, nature and the environment.

Biodiversity and Genetic Resources : Protocol on Biosecurity and the Convention on Biodiversity: No to the privatisation of biodiversity!

In May 2008 in Bonn, Germany the 4th Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Biosecurity (MOP4) also called the «Cartagena Protocol » and the 9th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, COP9) will take place.

For millenia small-scale farmers of the world have conserved and renewed plant and animal biodiversity. Faced with the grave threats that today weigh upon biodiversity, whether of wild or agricultural species, we call on signatory governments to the Convention on Biodiversity to recognize the ancient role of peasant/community based farmers. Their struggle has always been to control the erosion of biodiversity and to limit the effects of climate change. Therefore, we demand that governments radically reassess the national and international policies that are wiping out rural communities across the planet. We also warn them against the false solutions –GMOs, agrofuels and forest monocultures, so called “carbon sinks”, which, far from resolving these problems, only make the situation worse by marginalizing small producers even more.

The MOP: A Market Of Fakes

The central theme in the discussion following the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) on the Biosecurity Protocol from May 12-16 will be

the question of compensation for the damage caused by genetic contamination. We, the peasant farmers of Africa, Europe, the Americas and Asia, categorically refuse to discuss compensation. We do not want GMOs at all. We will not exchange our autonomous agriculture, our health and the quality of our environment for a few dollars of compensation.

Those responsible for genetic contaminations are perfectly identifiable. Monsanto, Dupont, Syngenta, Limagrain, Bayer and Pioneer are attempting through the use of genetically modified and other patented seeds to create a worldwide seed monopoly. To do so, they destroy and actively fight against the diversity of small scale farmers' seeds that are in the hands of rural communities and put seeds protected by intellectual property rights on the market that contaminate the rest of the plants. Rather than debating the amount of compensation to give to the victims of contamination, member States of the Biosecurity Protocol ought to prevent contamination by dismantling these transnationals and by affirming the prohibition of the patenting of living things.

The COP: False Solutions For Real Problems

GMOs Aggravate Climate Change And The Disappearance Of Biodiversity

Contrary to the general discourse of seed companies, industry GMOs and hybrid seeds are not a miracle solution, which can tomorrow guarantee seeds which will have the capacity to respond to profoundly disrupted climactic conditions, assuring the feeding of future generations. In effect, these "stable and uniform" seeds of the industry – the only seeds authorized in most industrialized nations – are incapable of adapting themselves, since they can only be reproduced as identical specimens.

In contrast, peasant seeds, thanks to their variability and their inter-variety diversity, can evolve and adapt to drastic climatic changes and to different types of terrain by being replanted each year in the fields and being continuously improved through participatory selection by the rural communities themselves.

Nevertheless, the multinational seed giants do all they can to destroy small farmers' seeds and impose their monopoly upon what they call « phyto-genetic resources». In most industrialized countries they have pushed governments to adopt laws that prohibit the re-sowing of their harvests, the exchange of farmers seeds and the sale of crops produced by family farmers. Elsewhere, the subsidy programs of the «green revolution» push family farmers to abandon their traditional seeds for hybrid seeds or GMO seeds which are strongly dependent on chemical products. Parallel to this, the seed companies have developed legal instruments and techniques to ensure respect for the « intellectual property » in their seeds. The 'terminator trait' is one of these instruments.

Since the last meeting of the COP in 2006 in Brazil, following pressure from social movements and notably from women family farmers, the signatory States have adopted a moratorium on Terminator seeds (the technologies of genetic restriction or GURT). The goal of Terminator technology is to prevent small-scale family farmers from replanting their harvested seed by rendering the seeds sterile and thus obliging them to re-purchase their seeds each year from these same industries.

The seed industries seek today to overcome the moratorium by developing technological solutions with similar effects as *Terminator*, but which will not be submitted to this moratorium. Since March 2006, the EU has financed a three-year research project called « Transcontainer » that seeks to develop a new generation of suicide seeds, in this case genetically modified plants whose fertility can be activated or deactivated by chemical agents. These seeds are presented as the miracle solution to permit the coexistence of GMO crops and non-GMO crops. In reality, their principal « raisin d'être » is to impose GMO crops, most notably in regions where public opinion is in firm opposition, and to oblige farmers to pay each year to restore the fertility of their seeds. *Transcontainer* would permit seed industries to achieve the same result they tried to obtain with *Terminator*.

Whether through patents, certificates of plant acquisition or GMOs,

the objective of multinational seed companies is to impose their property rights on all existing seeds, by eliminating the inherent biodiversity of cultivated crops which could compete with them. Is it because they seek the total destruction of all the biodiversity of cultivated crops in the fields that these same seed companies are today financing the storage of seeds stolen from small scale farmers and indigenous peoples in the gene banks of Svalbard in Norway?

We, the small-scale farmers of the world, do not need Monsanto or Limagrain to provide seeds to us. For millennia, we have conserved, exchanged, replanted and adapted our seeds. Rural communities have the collective right to the usage of their seeds, and their privatization by fraudulent means is pure and simple robbery.

In addition, the wiping out of farmers' seeds puts humanity's capacity to adapt to the challenge of climate change in peril because the seeds sold by industry are tied to industrial forms of production and energy use (notably with inputs) and are destructive of the fertility of soils. The soil, and more specifically the organic material in the soil, stores important quantities of carbon. Industrial forms of agriculture, by impoverishing the soils and replacing the organic matter with synthetic inputs, liberate the carbon stored in the soils, thus increasing the level of CO₂ in the air. In contrast to this, small-scale farming contributes to the enriching of the soil and the preservation of organic material, without which production would not be sustainable. Small-scale farming contributes, therefore, to conserving carbon in the soil and thus to limiting climate change.

Agrofuels Will Not Resolve The Energy Crisis And Will Exacerbate Climate Change

Agrofuels are the second miraculous solution promoted by governments to respond to the energy crisis and climate change. They are also on the agenda of discussion for the COP. Nevertheless, agrofuels do not provide an effective response either to the energy crisis or to climate change.

Industrial agrofuels are based on monocultures of corn, sugar cane, palm trees, rapeseed and so on, the cultivation of which requires

enormous quantities of water, land and fertilizer. These agrofuels must then be processed in another location, after being transported halfway around the planet. In addition, more energy is required to produce industrial agrofuels than they provide in energy: the net output of agrofuels is negative. Agrofuels are not currently economically viable without the massive government subsidies and the capital investments of speculators which they currently receive.

In relation to climate change, agrofuels also produce a net negative. Their production requires fertilizer and fuels that intensify climate change. In addition, agrofuels emit all the carbon that they have sequestered into the air when they are burned. Most significantly however, the development of agrofuel monocultures on lands previously occupied by forests or by small-scale farming practices weakens the capacity of soils to store carbon. Thus, far from the claim of acting as “carbon sinks” these monoculture forests (eucalyptus, African palms) increase the quantities of carbon in the air, which in the mid-term puts the very possibility for the existence of animal and human life on earth in the balance. These forest monocultures are also very susceptible to fire, which was demonstrated by the large forest fires in Indonesia in 1997 (African palms), or in Portugal (eucalyptus) in 2007: after these disasters, enormous quantities of CO₂ were released into the air. Finally, the multinationals try to use the green image of agrofuels to introduce GMO trees whose impact upon ecosystems and health could be dramatic.

The solution to the energy crisis and to climate change is therefore not to substitute fossil fuels with agrofuels. It is necessary to change our production and consumption methods and patterns and, in industrialized countries, to drastically reduce our consumption of non-renewable energy.

While industrial agriculture is a net energy negative, family farming agriculture produces more calories than it consumes. The reduction of our energy consumption therefore depends on maintaining and developing small-scale agriculture which uses more human energy (the work of men and women farmers) and

less energy derived from fossil fuels. We need more farmers to stop climate change! The development of industrial agrofuels destroys family farming by monopolizing land and available water, and by eliminating plant biodiversity. The introduction of fossil fuels led people to believe that human labour would be reduced. Agrofuels, by giving priority to feeding cars over people, effectively eliminate the people altogether!

While some farmers have started producing Agrofuels, which may lead to some short term benefits, in the long run their existence will be threatened by their dependence on trans-national corporations. Far from being a solution, agrofuels are a threat!

Protected Areas: Protected for Whom?

The third main theme of discussion at the convention on biological diversity is on protected areas. The method currently proposed by the CBD for choosing these areas does not take into account whether they abut on human populations or whether local populations are a fortiori consulted when these territories are categorised. This can have terrible consequences for the populations of these areas, including their expulsion in the name of preserving the environment.

Similarly, criteria for establishing the «sustainability» of the biodiversity in these areas is defined by the same certifying organs who are promoting the exploitation of these forest resources and other important ecosystems. Generally as soon as local populations are prohibited from having access to these resources, contracts are signed with large companies to exploit the wood or acquire the phytogenetic resources present in the territory.

The environmental consequence of the displacement of these indigenous populations and peasant farmers and of the sale of the rights to exploit the territories is the replacement of a rich agroforestry system of great biodiversity with a system of monocultures (of teak for example) and the consequent loss of an immense heritage of knowledge and agroecological practices.

In other words, far from protecting the environment, when the Food Sovereignty And Trade: populations living in these areas are ignored, these protected areas can become zones of environmental pillage.

The Solution : A Diversity Of Human Cultures And The Biodiversity Of Plants And Animals

Only small scale farming and the defence not only of plant and animal biodiversity, but also of the diversity of cultural human models can respond in a sustainable way to the current environmental crises (loss of biodiversity, climate change and the energy crisis) with which the world is faced.

In order to adapt, seeds must be diversified and variable. That goes for animals as well. Only a biodiversity conserved and renewed in the fields of small-scale farmers will permit the development of plant and animal species which can adapt to the context and climate of tomorrow. Instead of investing millions of dollars in the ex-situ conservation and laboratory research on genes, it is urgent to support field-based conservation and participatory selection. The essential work of renewing biodiversity in the fields can only continue with the presence of numerous men and women farmers in all the regions of the world through models of diversified production. The massive destruction of farming communities that is already advanced in Europe and North America and is increasing in Asia, Africa and Latin America imperils the very ability of humanity to survive the changes that this century has ushered in.

In order to continue to play a role which favours biodiversity, the rights of family farmers must be respected. This a question of making sure that the rights of peasants are affirmed under the international Treaty on Phytogenetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (TIRPAA), to confirm the right of farmers to « save, use, exchange and sell seeds reproduced on the farm. »

We the small-scale farmers of the world refuse to abandon the right to collective use in opposition to a so-called «benefit sharing» dependent on the application of private property rights on seeds (via patents and certificates of plant acquisitions). Seeds are the

collective inheritance of indigenous and farming communities: they do not belong to any private person, but it is the obligation of all to pass them on to future generations. Similarly, the rights of farmers must also include access to land and to water as collective usage rights, the right to exchange and to sell the products of small-scale agriculture on local markets and the right to participate in all decisions that Food Sovereignty And Trade: concern us. It is through respect for and active application of these rights alone which will allow the farmers of the world to fulfil their role of preserving biodiversity and struggling against climate change.

The presence in all territories of family farmers producing food locally and preserving the soil is both the solution to the energy crisis and climate change tied to the increase in carbon in the atmosphere. We must replace the industrial production model of agro-exportation based on high levels of energy consumption and long distance transport for a localized model of production that is intensive and based on human work. The Food Sovereignty And Trade: forms of production that most conserve energy are those that require human labour: to maintain the fertility of the soils and to diversify production (of both animals and plants) in the selection of the plants and the animals most adapted to that territory etc... At a time when millions of landless farmers die of hunger in the shantytowns and only demand a bit of land to cultivate, it is urgent to replace chemical fertilizers and pesticides with small farmer's labour.

The diversity of peasant and indigenous societies, which constantly renew their traditional knowledge specific to their territory, constitute our greatest wealth in the face of the current situation. We must not only stop the rural exodus and the destruction of farming communities, but encourage a significant part of our population to become farmers in order to respond to the current threats.

Food Sovereignty And Trade: Position on Free Trade Agreements

What is behind Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)? Why are we against them?

FTAs Violate The National Capacity To Produce Food

Bilateral and Bi-regional Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) have been negotiated and signed between nation states and/or between regional economic unions with increased intensity over the past decade. The International Commission on Food Sovereignty and Trade of La Via Campesina wants to express its rejections of these economic Agreements. Free Trade Agreements are proving disastrous for peasant farmers, agricultural workers, artisanal fisherfolk, women and landless people in North and South. These vulnerable groups of people are the backbone of food production and processing all over the world. The impacts of FTAs violate their capacity to produce and process culturally-adapted and safe food.

The mainstream ideology always tries to convince farmers (men and women) that they will benefit from world trade liberalisation if they manage to export goods on the world market. Some small peasant farmers get lured into producing cash crops instead of basic food. This change to cash crops has clearly worsened access to local food for the whole population. The promised profits from export production do not materialize or cannot make up for the loss of home-grown staple foods. The nutritional situation of farming families worsens.

Free Trade Agreements pave the way for foreign investors. Therefore, they impact the patterns of land and water use. Tourism

for example attracts many foreign investors. Small farmers are often expelled from their land to allow for hotels to sprout up and they then have to compete hard to get access to water.

Free Trade Agreements Undermine National Sovereignty

FTAs are usually negotiated in secrecy between the governments of 2 countries without a transparent and democratic process involving the people. Nevertheless their impact on national legislation is severe: laws are changed very radically and very fast and national sovereignty is undermined. FTAs trade liberalisation commitments often reach further than the international agreements within the WTO because they are negotiated between 2 countries or regional economic unions and can target desired market liberalisations more specifically.

FTAs Secure Trans National Corporation (TNC) Investment And Tnc Monopoly Of The Food Chain

Free Trade Agreements are striving to open markets for trade by abolishing or reducing tariffs and non-tariff trade barriers. Like Bilateral Investments Treaties (BITs), Free Trade Agreements include regulations which enable and protect foreign investment in the country. They give far reaching legal concessions guaranteeing the protection of these investments for the investors, and even the use of military force does not seem unlikely any more.

Free Trade Agreements are a great advantage to the biotech industry especially in the area of intellectual property rights. Free Trade Agreements often force countries to join UPOV, Budapest Treaty and/or allow patents on plants and animals (especially GMOs). This leads to the commodification of life forms and outweighs the UN Convention on Biodiversity. Trade in agricultural commodities and of modified seeds poses the threat of contamination with GMOs. For La Via Campesina food is not a commodity like any other. Likewise, seeds as the prime agricultural input are too valuable to be controlled by transnational companies whose interests lie with profit, not with the sustainability of food

production. The recent soaring of the food prices and the increasing demand on agrofuels have accelerated the trend of foreign investments in national agricultural sectors. As transnational companies expect to make big profits with agrofuels, many Free Trade Agreements aim to secure this new market. Foreign investors are not hampered by national legislation and can often buy all the land they want. They create very large scale farms to produce cash crops intensively.

FTAs Are A New Form Of Colonialism

Liberalisation of trade and Free Trade Agreements aim to make it easier for companies to operate internationally and have access to natural resources and cheap workers. The logic is the same as the one that guided the powerful European Countries at the beginning of the XX century. The difference is that this time the winners and the leaders of the game are the transnational corporations. Free Trade Agreements clearly bring to light the fierce war for profit that the big companies all over the world compete in.

To increase yield and reduce cost, workers are exploited in all sectors. In case of protest or workers' organisation, transnational corporations shift to another place in the world. To find work, people are forced to migrate and to accept humiliating conditions. Free Trade Agreements bring along with them an increase in the number of agricultural refugees : People migrate from rural to urban areas or to another country because they can't survive any more in agriculture at home.

This new form of colonialism is not only a depredation of the South through the North but also through the other countries of the South. Free Trade Agreements are also signed between countries of the South (between China and Thailand for example) with the same damages for the weakest counterpart as in a North/South FTA.

How Do We Resist FTAs?

At the regional level, in order to resist Free Trade Agreements large coalitions of farmers (men and women), workers, fisher folk,

indigenous people, teachers, and scientists, have been organised. In Thailand in January 2006, strong mobilisations at the time of the sixth round of negotiation on the US-Thailand FTA managed to stop the round. Thai people said they were inspired by the struggle of the Korean people against WTO in Hong Kong in December 2005. They implemented a similar strategy and attempted to enter the venue of the negotiations. This created a huge confusion within the negotiators and most of them were evacuated or ran away from the meeting.

In Costa Rica, small scale farmers managed to control San Jose city for 24 hours. This helped to raise awareness about the difficult social situation of the country among the people of Costa Rica. Half a million people mobilized themselves to obtain a referendum on the issue US-Costa Rica FTA. The struggle for the referendum created very strong alliances between various sectors of the civil society in Costa Rica and also within some countries of Central and Latin America. These alliances are still active in the struggle against the implementation of the FTA and its consequences (such as changes in the national law on biodiversity for instance).

In Korea, farmers managed to build alliances with the other hardest-hit victims of neoliberalism such as HIV/AIDS patients and movie makers. Video clips were made on the impacts of the US-Korea FTA and EU-Korea FTA. This was very helpful to touch the young and urban Korean people and get them involved in the rallies and candlelight vigils.

In some cases, time was saved as enough pressure and local resistance were developed : in Africa for example, in December 2007, various governments did not sign the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) led by the European Union. The struggle against the EPA (December 2007) is an ongoing example, dependent on the role of the African governments and the growing linkages between farmers organisations and civil society. All of these victories are extremely important as they renew our commitment to struggle against Free Trade Agreements and our hope that we can stop some.

What Do We Want?

We don't want to choose between the World Trade Organisation (WTO) multilateral treaties or bilateral Free Trade Agreements. To us this is only the choice between 2 kinds of poison. We reject WTO and Free Trade Agreements because Food Sovereignty is not compatible at all with trade liberalisation. We need existing legislation which protects small scale farmers to be maintained. Farmers should first produce for their local and national markets. In case of surpluses, we need regulation tools to allow export without any dumping on others market. International trade in agriculture needs to be regulated and not liberalised. Regional integration is important and can be a relevant scale to organize trade and rules between countries if its done without the hegemony of one country on the others.

Food Sovereignty And Trade: Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty, Nyéléni 2007

We, more than 500 representatives from more than 80 countries, of organizations of peasants/family farmers, artisanal fisher-folk, indigenous peoples, landless peoples, rural workers, migrants, pastoralists, forest communities, women, youth, consumers and environmental and urban movements have gathered together in the village of Nyéléni in Sélingué, Mali to strengthen a global movement for food sovereignty. We are doing this, brick by brick as we live here in huts constructed by hand in the local tradition and eat food that is produced and prepared by the Sélingué community. We give our collective endeavour the name “Nyéléni” as a tribute to and inspiration from a legendary Malian peasant woman who farmed and fed her peoples well.

Most of us are food producers and are ready, able and willing to feed all the world’s peoples. Our heritage as food producers is critical to the future of humanity. This is specially so in the case of women and indigenous peoples who are historical creators of knowledge about food and agriculture. But this heritage and our capacities to produce healthy, good and abundant food are being threatened and undermined by neo-liberalism and global capitalism. Food sovereignty gives us the hope and power to preserve, recover and build on our food producing knowledge and capacity.

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who

produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers and users. Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal - fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just incomes to all peoples as well as the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social and economic classes and generations.

In Nyéléni, through numerous debates and interactions, we are deepening our collective understanding of food sovereignty and learning about the realities of the struggles of our respective movements to retain autonomy and regain our powers. We now understand better the tools we need to build our movement and advance our collective vision.

What are we fighting for?

A world where...

...all peoples, nations and states are able to determine their own food producing systems and policies that provide every one of us with good quality, adequate, affordable, healthy and culturally appropriate food;

...there is recognition and respect of women's roles and rights in food production, and representation of women in all decision making bodies;

...all peoples in each of our countries are able to live with dignity, earn a living wage for their labour and have the opportunity to remain in their homes, if they so choose;

...food sovereignty is considered a basic human right, recognised and implemented by communities, peoples, states and international bodies;

...we are able to conserve and rehabilitate rural environments, fish populations, landscapes and food traditions based on ecologically sustainable management of land, soils, water, seas, seeds, livestock and all other biodiversity;

...we value, recognize and respect our diversity of traditional knowledge, food, language and culture, and the way we organise and express ourselves;

... there is genuine and integral agrarian reform that guarantees peasants full rights to land, defends and recovers the territories of indigenous peoples, ensures fishing communities' access and control over their fishing areas and eco-systems, honours access and control by pastoral communities over pastoral lands and migratory routes, assures decent jobs with fair remuneration and labour rights for all, and a future for young people in the countryside; where agrarian reform revitalises inter-dependence between producers and consumers, ensures community survival, social and economic justice, ecological sustainability, and respect for local autonomy and governance with equal rights for women and men...where agrarian reform guarantees rights to territory and self-determination for our peoples;

... we share our lands and territories peacefully and fairly among our peoples, be we peasants, indigenous peoples, artisanal fishers, pastoralists, or others;

...in the case of natural and human-created disasters and conflict-recovery situations, food sovereignty acts as a form of “insurance” that strengthens local recovery efforts and mitigates negative

impacts... where we remember that communities affected by disasters are not helpless, and where strong local organization for self-help is the key to recovery;

... peoples' power to make decisions about their material, natural and spiritual heritage are defended;

... all peoples have the right to defend their territories from the actions of transnational corporations;

What are we fighting against?

- Imperialism, neo-liberalism, neo-colonialism and patriarchy, and all systems that impoverish life, resources and ecosystems, and the agents that promote the above such as international financial institutions, the World Trade Organisation, free trade agreements, transnational corporations, and governments that are antagonistic to their peoples;
- The dumping of food at prices below the cost of production in the global economy;
- The domination of our food and food producing systems by corporations that place profits before people, health and the environment;
- Technologies and practices that undercut our future food producing capacities, damage the environment and put our health at risk. These include transgenic crops and animals, terminator technology, industrial aquaculture and destructive fishing practices, the so-called White Revolution of industrial dairy practices, the so-called 'old' and 'new' Green Revolutions, and the "Green Deserts" of industrial agrofuel monocultures and other plantations;
- The privatisation and commodification of food, basic and public services, knowledge, land, water, seeds, livestock and our natural heritage;
- Development projects/models and extractive industries that displace people and destroy our environments and natural heritage;

- Wars, conflicts, occupations, economic blockades, famines, forced displacement of peoples and confiscation of their lands, and all forces and governments that cause and support these;
- Post disaster and conflict reconstruction programmes that destroy our environments and capacities;
- The criminalization of all those who struggle to protect and defend our rights;
- Food aid that disguises dumping, introduces GMOs into local environments and food systems and creates new colonialism patterns;
- The internationalisation and globalisation of paternalistic and patriarchal values that marginalise women, and diverse agricultural, indigenous, pastoral and fisher communities around the world;

What can and will we do about it?

Just as we are working with the local community in Sélingué to create a meeting space at Nyéléni, we are committed to building our collective movement for food sovereignty by forging alliances, supporting each others' struggles and extending our solidarity, strengths, and creativity to peoples all over the world who are committed to food sovereignty. Every struggle, in any part of the world for food sovereignty, is our struggle. We have arrived at a number of collective actions to share our vision of food sovereignty with all peoples of this world, which are elaborated in our synthesis document. We will implement these actions in our respective local areas and regions, in our own movements and jointly in solidarity with other movements. We will share our vision and action agenda for food sovereignty with others who are not able to be with us here in Nyéléni so that the spirit of Nyéléni permeates across the world and becomes a powerful force to make food sovereignty a reality for peoples all over the world. Finally, we give our unconditional and unwavering support to the peasant movements of Mali and ROPPA in their demands that food sovereignty become a reality in Mali and by extension in all of Africa.

Now is the time for food sovereignty!

Food Sovereignty And Trade: Position on Agricultural Prices and Speculation

Analysis of the causes of the current instability of agricultural prices on world markets

The principal reason: Financial speculation on agricultural markets

The current high agricultural prices are principally the result of speculation in the stock markets. In 2001-2002, after the bursting of the financial bubble in the telecommunications sector, capital was invested in real estate. Then, when in 2007 the real estate bubble burst, they moved towards markets of primary materials (commodities), essentially petrol and agricultural products, thus creating artificial demand and inflammatory prices. While in 2003, 13 billion dollars were invested in primary materials on the US stock market, in 2008, this figure rose to \$260 billion.

The investment funds bought « futures», that is to say the harvest of the next years, not with the objective of truly supplying agricultural products but instead to earn money by reselling later and at a higher price, their rights on production.

The Role Of Agrofuels In High Prices

In 2005, the production of cereals peaked globally. Agro fuel businesses, then, decided that it was necessary to seek a way to create higher prices, notably in transferring some agricultural lands towards the production of agro-fuels. Under the pretext of the fight

against climate change and to respond to the depletion of fossil fuels, the United States and the European Union therefore began to strongly support the production of agro fuels, in such a way that an important part of agricultural production was diverted from food usage. Even if the total quantities displaced towards agro-fuels remained limited, this creates a certain lowering of supplies on food markets, which pushes prices up.

False Reasons Or Margins

Any analysis that explains the current inflation of agricultural prices by a heightening of demand and a lowering of agricultural production, is not supported by the facts. There hasn't been a sudden increase in agricultural demand these last months. An analysis that explains the sudden heightening of food prices by the increase in consumption by emerging countries, notably China are similarly unfounded. On the one hand, one notes instead a stabilisation in economic growth these last years. On the other, one doesn't remark a sudden increase in the consumption of meat, because of changing food habits. The lowering of the volume of agricultural supplies is for its part very limited. If certain countries have known more difficult harvests because of difficult climatic conditions (drought in Australia), the lowering of production is minimal globally and cannot, in any case, explain the surge in prices.

There is enough food to feed the whole population of the world. By consequence, all the so-called solutions based on higher agricultural yields by the use of more fertilizers or GMO's in order to « to feed the population » are nothing but false excuses to promote a model of production that reinforces the power of the agro-chemical industry.

A Volatile Structure, A Tendency Toward Lasting High Prices

Agricultural prices on the international market could very well lower again in a brutal manner in the months or years to come, because as one has seen, they are essentially linked to the

mechanisms of stock market speculation. The speculative bubble on agricultural markets can explode at any moment. If high prices are therefore a very unstable phenomenon, the volatility is lasting. Or, just as the sudden high prices are destabilizing, in the same way brutally low agricultural prices also have dramatic consequences for farmers and consumers. It is therefore necessary to take measures in order to face these two situations.

However, in insisting on the fact that prices risk experiencing new movements in coming years, one can also foresee in the long term a general trend upward in prices, notably due to the fact of the climatic crisis and the depletion of soils, which puts in danger sustainable agricultural production in the medium and long term.

Why do high prices on world markets have such impacts on food security at local and national level?

The dismantling of national food sovereignty

Faced with these sudden high prices of non-perishable grains on world markets, numerous countries have found themselves destitute, because they had abandoned their national production during the 1980's and 1990's and become dependent on agricultural imports in order to feed the population.

For the to last decades, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and GATT, then the World Trade Organisation, have little by little obliged all countries to dismantle all their public policy tools which allowed them to maintain national food production capable of covering the needs of the population.

- Countries were pushed to produce for exportation and to abandon food production.
- Tariff barriers that protected small farmers from destructive international competition were lowered.
- “Structural Adjustment” policies obliged states to dismantle their food reserves and to reduce, in a drastic manner,

public support for agriculture.

- Control price mechanisms and/or control of production were dismantled.

In this way, numerous countries that were self-sufficient in food supplies in the 1970's became very dependent on food imports throughout the 1990's.

The changing of food habits also plays a significant role in the loss of food sovereignty. The fact that populations have abandoned local products and have turned, essentially for fashion reasons and under the influence of media propaganda, towards diets based on imported products, has destabilised local agriculture in numerous regions of the world.

The Middlemen Profit Margins Are No Longer Regulated

The high price of produce has also had an important impact on the food security of populations, because the intermediaries, the food industries and large-scale distribution companies have increased their profit margins, at the same time, to the detriment of producers and consumer. Thereby, while prices paid to farmers often remained stable, the price of consumption has sky-rocketed. The big businesses such as Cargill, or Bunge, which trade in grains, have increased their profits during the first quarter of 2008 in a scandalous manner. A report from a Spanish organisation shows how in Spain the price paid by the consumer is up to 7 times higher than the price paid to the producer.

False formulas do nothing but make the situation worse

Again More Free Trade

While the liberalisation of markets under the pressure of the World Trade Organisation and bilateral free trade agreements these last fifteen years have largely contributed to making countries

vulnerable when faced with high food prices on world markets, the big powers and the international institutions advocate a continuation of that track.

Certain national governments notably in Africa are also tempted to lower trade barriers to be able to supply food at a lower price to urban populations. This « solution », if it can attract adherents in the short term, is very dangerous in the long term, because it prevents farmers inside the country from selling their production at decent prices and contributes therefore to increase the countries dependence on very unstable international markets.

A New Green Revolution In Africa

The food crisis isn't a result of the lack of food or of very weak food production, in relation to demand. The farmers of the world can produce the food necessary to feed everyone sufficiently in quantity and quality. The green revolution, which proposes increasing production by using "modern" agricultural technologies, is therefore based on a false diagnosis of the reasons of the crisis.

This being-said, the solution thus proposed is dangerous. In Asia and Latin America, this led to a strong dependence of farmers on chemical inputs and seeds sold by industry. At the time of the launching of the green revolution in the 1960's and 70's, these inputs and seeds were strongly subsidized; however, the fall of public support for agriculture because of structural adjustment plans in the 1980's and 90's involved an evolution of the prices of these products as well as the costs of agricultural production. Numerous farmers were strangled between higher and higher costs of production and falling agricultural prices, and as a result had to abandon agriculture, with some going as far as suicide. At the present time, promoting the use of chemical fertiliser products with a petrol base must be viewed as irresponsible, when one knows that petrol supplied are being exhausted. Moreover, if the utilisation of fertiliser and industrial seeds strongly increased the output in the first years, one remarks that they impoverish the soils and in the long-term call into question the capacity of assuring sustainable and healthy agricultural production.

The new green revolution reinforces the power of agrochemical multinationals and the monoculture model to the detriment of small farmers, also calling into question the food sovereignty of populations.

Alternatives for stable and more just agricultural prices

The food security of all, can only be achieved with stable agricultural prices, which cover the costs of production and assure a decent remuneration for the producers. The model of low agricultural prices, promoted by western governments to increase mass consumption of manufactured products and services (tourism, entertainment, telecommunications, etc...) isn't sustainable, not on the social nor environmental levels. This model essentially benefits big businesses and, in hijacking the democratic expectations of populations towards mass consumption, it benefits the political and economic elites of countries, which also seize power.

In view of the current food and environmental crisis, radical changes are essential and urgent. The propositions below offer paths for agricultural and commercial policies based on food sovereignty and, which allow a stabilisation of agricultural prices at levels capable of assuring sustainable food production in the majority of countries in the world.

At the local level:

- Support local agricultural production, notably in supporting and facilitating credit mechanism for small producers, etc...
- Support and develop direct/short-distance commercial networks between producers and consumers to assure decent prices for farmers and affordable prices for consumers
- Encourage The Consumption Of Local Produce
- Support the most autonomous modes of production in relation to chemical inputs and also less subject to variations in the cost

of production (grass livestock farming rather than maize or Soya for example)

At the national level :

International law allows nation states to govern with sovereign unilateral acts in order to protect their agriculture and to guarantee the sovereign utilisation of national resources. Thus, the Pact on Economic, Social and Cultural rights recognises the right to food. It is the responsibility of states to make sure that this fundamental right takes precedence over, for example, commercial law. States can justify abrogating signed treaties, which menace the sovereignty and food security of their population in the name of fundamental changes in circumstances and of necessity of maintaining social peace and to allow populations to fulfil their fundamental needs. Resting on this legal basis are the following propositions, that national states have the responsibility to put in place.

- Re-establish true political support for family farm agricultural production;
- Don't sign and if need be denounce multinational and bilateral free trade agreement (FTA and EPA) which contradict food sovereignty;
- Establish and re-establish border protections from agricultural imports;
- Reconstitute public food reserves in each country;
- Re-establish guaranteed mechanisms for agricultural prices;
- Develop a policy of control of production (supply management) to stabilize agricultural prices;
- Control middleman profit margins and forbid them from speculating on agricultural and food prices,
- Put in place agrarian reforms to assure that farmers who produce food for the population have access to agricultural resources, rather than big businesses which produce for export (this equally concerns seeds)

At the international level:

- Speculation on food should be forbidden. Speculation on the lives of people is a crime, that's why Governments and international institutions must forbid speculative investments in agricultural products;
- Write food sovereignty into international law so that the law of each country develops its own farm politics and protects its agriculture, without harming other countries, (notably in the Charter on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights);
- Put in place a moratorium on industrial agro-fuels;
- Establish and re-establish international organisations regulating markets and the production of principal export products (cartels of producing countries, for example, in the sectors of coffee, cocoa, bananas...) in order to assure stable prices at the international level;
- Put an end to Structural Adjustment Plans (SAPs), which oblige states to renounce their food sovereignty;
- Put an end to enslaving mechanisms under external debt;
- Reform the Common Agricultural Policy of the EU and the Farm Bill of the United States that have devastating effects on the balance of agricultural market.

Women :
**La Via Campesina's Global
Campaign To End Violence Against
Women!**

Call to join the Campaign

We, the women and men of La Via Campesina stand together to denounce violence in all its forms against all people, especially women.

Statistics on the injury and death of women in all countries unequivocally prove to us that women are more vulnerable to violence, not only from institutions and the state, but from men in their own homes and communities where they should expect and deserve respect, peace, and safety.

Rural women are particularly excluded and oppressed, economically and socially. This is why as a farmer's movement, we have to mobilise against this massive injustice.

We know that we women and men have to be truly united against the neoliberal system that takes our dignity, our livelihoods, and the resources we need to survive, a system which steals our labor, exploits our powerlessness and poverty to gain more wealth, power, and control.

But in reality we men and women are often divided by the same lack of respect and rights as we are shown by the rich and powerful and

the governments and institutions which support them. By reproducing this exclusion pattern, we show that we accept their model of the strong against the weak without regard for justice.

It is our tireless task to build a model of society from the grassroots up in which all people, men and women, reject violence in all forms; economic, social, physical, mental, sexual, and environmental, and ensure that our model has NO tolerance for violence.

A society where violence is excused, condoned, or covered up under the guise of culture or religion is not the model of society we are working to build. The whole community must confront and challenge violent individuals, institutions, and governments in every place and situation in this world. We need a society which will build safe and nurturing communities which value the worth of every human being, and recognize that women's rights ARE human rights.

To this end, we will demand laws at every level of society which will protect and defend equal rights of all women. The end to all violence begins in our hearts, our homes, and our communities.

We can never win our struggle until we focus our anger and indignation and will to create a new society on the systems and institutions which use violence to control and repress human beings for their own selfish needs, not against women who hold up half the earth!

Ending violence will require education and a new awareness that violence steals the vitality of the individual, the family, and the larger community by preventing true equality and participation of women who can and do use their intelligence, talents, strength and courage to grow communities and a world with justice for all.

Until we commit to ending violence against women, we will never build the model of a just society to which the principles of Via Campesina speak. Please join us in ending violence by supporting this campaign. What is the campaign?

The neoliberal model of agricultural production based on monoculture, export-oriented agriculture and high use of chemical inputs has destroyed rural livelihoods and pushed millions of farmers to the big cities, while destroying nature. It has created hunger, misery and exclusion for the benefit of large transnational companies. The capitalist system organized on a global scale through governments, the international financial system and transnational corporations imposes hunger, misery, and exclusion from access to work, to goods and to natural resources on the world's population, especially the working class and poor people. It destroys the environment with the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and genetically modified seeds. The model of extensive agriculture, monoculture of soy, sugar cane, eucalyptus, pines, and acacia for the production of cellulose paste and ethanol expels farmers, indigenous people and afro-descendant communities from their traditional lands, forcing them into the outskirts of big cities. It also affects women because of the inequality between men and women in the division of work that keeps women for domestic work and the care of children, the sick and the aged in families. In salaried jobs, women who have the same or greater qualifications get paid less than men for doing the same work.

Moreover, women are also victims of domestic violence. Power relations are hidden, submission and violence have become "natural", the society "washes its hands" and applies the slogan "in a fight between a husband and wife, don't get involved". These values are handed down from generation to generation, perpetuated and reinforced by religions that use their tools, rites, and rules to justify and maintain patriarchy and with this, affirm that a woman should be submissive to a man.

The patriarchal capitalist culture is held up by four pillars of violence:

- 1) Violence based on the Economic dependency of women, unemployment, and underemployment in the cities. In the countryside, the work of women is not recognized as something that creates income and wealth; it is seen as a help to the husband/partner. Women have limited access to production

resources, health, education, leisure, social protection and welfare, and security, among other things.

- 2) Violence because women have no control over the decisions about her own body. Men, the state, religion, family, and many social movements impose a pattern of obedience and behavior on women, preventing them from making their own decisions. For example, abortion rights are not granted in many parts of the world and trafficking of women occurs on a global scale.
- 3) Violence based of the exclusion of women from Political participation – Women have little participation of women in the spaces of power and decision-making, from domestic spaces to leadership roles, these remain primarily with men (property, religious communities, political parties, the decision-making places of the state apparatus, social movements)
- 4) Physical and psychological Violence against women – not succeeding in dominating by other means, physical and psychological violence is used against women when men do not manage to dominate by other means that is naturalized (men's honor, machismo, control, power). Some rites and customs also marginalise women such as initiation rites, marriages at a young age, mutilations, forbidden food items, and other practices humiliating and hurting women. Those practices are culturally reproduced, by men and women alike. More over, the state repression of women in protests and demonstrations show an institutionalized form of violence.

Objectives of the Campaign

- To denounce and confront all forms of violence practiced against rural women in all the countries and also to give visibility to the violence against all women of the working class. The goal is to denounce and put an end to all forms of violence, to demystify violence « normalized » against women and to show that violence is structural in a neoliberal and patriarchal society. We need to build mechanisms of social control, to publicly expose violence, in the social movements and in society.

- To strengthen the organization and the struggle of women for their emancipation and to advance in the equality of gender and participation of women in the spaces of power.
- To increase the level of consciousness of women to understand the causes of the violence and the way out of it. Special training should be organised in all Via Campesina organisations to allow women farmers to know their rights and to defend them.
- To strengthen alliances with all the groups, movements, and people who may be disposed to take up the campaign as a banner of struggle.
- To pressure governments to comply with the agreements and international treaties and implement public policies to combat all forms of violence against women. To confront the lack of political will by most governments to implement all the national and international laws, conventions and treaties related to women rights.
- The final goal of the campaign is to put an end to all forms of violence against women and to contribute to the construction of a project for a global society that is just and egalitarian, understanding that in neoliberalism and patriarchal culture there is no space for changes.

The campaign should be ongoing, with a calendar of short-term, medium, and long-term actions and confrontations promoting concrete struggles and actions in each country.

Differences in each continent should be considered in the campaign, it's necessary to eliminate inequalities, whether they are social, class, gender, cultural, ethnic.

Women :

Gender Equity in La Via Campesina

Marginalization of Women

Patriarchy is a concept grounded in a social system of domination of women by men, where gender violence is an element of social “order” that is the result of a construction based in material and ideological “norms” that permit a society to exist in a determined moment. Such “norms” or embedded structures introduce an unequal distribution of power and of material goods and supports, thus providing for the domination of one group over the other, such as the case we see here.

Currently, it is calculated that there are more than a million people in a state of absolute poverty. According to the United Nations Fund for Women, 70% of these people are women. In addition to this, it is estimated that for every 10 people that die of hunger in the world, 7 of them are women and children.

Women also make up the majority of the group known as “the working poor”; or rather, people who work but do not earn enough to escape absolute poverty. According to the International Labor Organization, women currently constitute around 60% of workers and the working poor. All of the statistics demonstrate that women suffer a lack of opportunities at all levels: health, professional, educational, political.

Women end up being charged with domestic tasks: to care for children and the elderly, since this work is not recognized as work, much less remunerated, rendering invisible the relation that exists between the economy of care and its contributions to the global economic life.

In the rural world, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recognizes that 70% of global food production is done by women. However, this contribution is not recognized, and yet this lack of recognition contrasts with the fact that only 14% of properties and of use of land is in the name of campesinas, that is women family farmers.

Women in Via Campesina

In Via Campesina, the fight of women takes place at two levels. On the one hand, we women are fighting to defend our rights as women, inside organizations and society. On the other hand, we fight as peasants together with men, against the neo-liberal agricultural model that oppresses peasant women as much as men.

Respect for sexual and reproductive rights are violated daily in the private sphere as much as in public spaces, accompanied by permanent and systemic political, social, and economic violence against women, driven and supported or abetted by governments. Gender violence is the principle factor responsible for half of the violent deaths of women in the world. It cancels out women's abilities, destroys homes, increases the number of victims and affects millions of productive women, also affecting family security and food production. The statistics indicate the necessity to increase assistance to maltreated women, and also to increase the denunciations of the violations of women's rights and also of violence as a negative phenomenon in our society.

Another situation is that traditional leadership posts are in the hands of men. As such, all of the decisions are oriented to men; the focus of power was structurally given to men. These practices, therefore, are possible to change and should be modified; this is our largest promise, as much from women's organizations as mixed organizations, because together we reach the desired equality of opportunities between the genders, an indispensable condition to democratize and get a development plan for our countries. The women's fight for our own space is the same fight that men should make for the liberation of their feelings and the values that patriarchal societies have kept them from expressing, typically with

the pretext that the feelings and their expression are women's things; the difference is that we women are already conscious of this sad situation, while most men still haven't taken the first step to change it.

Women have limited access to the two types of information necessary to enable them to participate in leadership positions: information about essential themes and information about how to participate. The traditional channels of information, like newspapers, do not often reach the women in the countryside owing to the cost of distribution to rural areas; but there is an even graver problem, illiteracy and migration are problems that affect women more frequently than men, distancing these women from the opportunities that can develop their lives.

On the other hand, the difficult situation of women in rural areas and indigenous territories is the consequence of a crisis that currently effects the rural sector, with a non-functioning agrarian reform, with problems of land ownership, small public support and lack of basic services beyond the mercantile profit-making aspects of food. Because of this, we women are at the front of the fight against neo-liberal economic principles, such as so-called free trade agreements and their associated economic accords because these worsen the crisis situation and the social and political marginality of the majority of our countries and especially the women of the countryside.

The role that Via Campesina has come to play for gender equity and against the model has allowed the creation of alliances that strengthen the peasant organizations in our countries. The integration of women has come to contribute to the fight, strengthening the plans and actions of the global movement of peasant organizations and contributing to gender equity, such that inside Via Campesina we can say that we are advancing with great force, yet we still face a great challenge to fight against the capitalist model that divides, marginalizes, and makes invisible our identity as afro-descendants and indigenous people, a system that reinforces patriarchy.

Our promise for the future

Inside Via Campesina we women should continue demanding and applying gender equity in all instances without this being necessary to increase our numbers, and that also has its budgetary returns. We have to take advantage of all meetings so that they are made into workshops with political material and communication especially for women. Our male counterparts have to participate in training events against discrimination so that they can be sensitized to show greater respect for women.

It is time that women of the countryside and indigenous women reclaim the initiative to engage in the fight, for example, affirming the feminine aspects, not only in political themes but also in themes of our own interest. To construct popular power under a constructed equality, passing this agenda from inside Via Campesina to the outside.

It is necessary to design a plan of action for training and for national, regional, and international education of political empowerment, which should contemplate, among other themes, the origins of patriarchy, its restructuring and how we should position ourselves for the structural change that we are developing with Via Campesina and in coordination with other organizations of women and men with the intention of making a world of equality possible.

We can not overlook the efforts to construct strategic alliances with other women's organizations, and with all the movements with similar positions to ours, so that together we can fight against the neo-liberal, capitalist, and patriarchal model and that we always raise up *Food Sovereignty* as a right of the people. We need to be able to decide on our own productive capacity, without any type of intervention or discrimination, that would guarantee public policies and legislation that respect and execute those rights and have the consequence of supporting and stimulating gender equality in the countryside, that would guarantee women's access to and control of resources, both natural and productive (land, capital) in equal conditions with men, and that would bring about

the development of the peasant way of life of mutual help, and of trade that is fair and respectful of the environment, water, natural resources, and minerals.

1. **Non-sexist education and training for resistance:** These are the principal instruments of the fight against the model that promotes discrimination, limiting women's access to school. We should motivate an initial schooling both is both basic and advanced, that gives women the tools necessary to defend their rights and gain gender equity, with greater participation and political, economic, labor, and social integration and that provides the woman her financial independence resulting definitively in the re-education of men in order to eliminate family and gender violence.
2. To make visible the forces and practices that inside Via Campesina have recognized indigenous women, afro-descendants, and peasants with gender equality. To exchange experiences and analyze the origins of inequality in the patriarchal relations in gender relations, describing above all a history of difference that discriminates, oppresses, and marginalized the rights of women resulting in violence and feminicide.
3. To analyze the bases of our organization, the trajectory and the contributions of feminism for the insertion of women into some social, political, and economic spaces, empowering men and women in their equitable positions in marital relations, inside organizations, institutions, and basically during the process of training and education of children, beginning with birth, to gain the structural and cultural change through a return relations with the principles and values of equality and respect for all humans.

The Via Campesina along with the International Commission for Women should call people en masse to large meetings against gender discrimination and violence, in each of our countries together with civil society organizations, political parties, governments, international organizations that support women, by providing means of communication and other spaces with the

objective of encouraging them to join in a pact to elaborate and implement the public policies of gender equity in order to mobilize to raise consciousness in order to produce the changes of practices and attitudes to create opportunities for gaining access, control, and well-being to create equality between women and men, planting the seeds of change.

Women :

Women's Declaration On Food Sovereignty

Nyéléni 2007

We, women of 86 countries and diverse Indigenous peoples, from Africa, the Americas, Europe, Asia, Oceania and various sectors and social movements, are gathered at Nyeleni 2007 in Sélingué, Mali, to work together on the construction of a new right—the right to food sovereignty. We reaffirm our will to act together to change the capitalist and patriarchal world that prioritizes market interests at the expense of human rights.

Women, who have historically held the knowledge about agriculture and food, who continue to produce up to 80% of the food in the poorest countries, and who today are the principal custodians of biodiversity and seeds for farming, are particularly affected by neoliberal and sexist policies.

We suffer the grave consequences of these policies: poverty, inadequate access to resources, patents on life, rural exodus and forced migration, war and all forms of physical and sexual violence. Monocultures, including those used to produce agro-fuel, and the massive use of chemicals and genetically modified organisms, have a negative impact on the environment and human health, particularly reproductive health.

The industrial model and transnational companies threaten the existence of peasant agriculture, artisanal fisheries, pastoralism, artisanal production, and local food businesses in urban and rural areas—all sectors in which women play a major role.

We want to remove food and agriculture from the World Trade Organisation and free trade treaties. More than that, we reject the capitalist and patriarchal institutions that consider food, water, land, people's knowledge and women's bodies simply as merchandise.

In our struggle for equality between the sexes, we want an end to the oppression we face in both traditional and modern societies and the market system. We want to use this opportunity to put sexist prejudice behind us and develop a new vision of the world based on the principles of respect, equality, justice, solidarity, peace and freedom.

We are mobilized. We are struggling for access to land, territories, water, and seeds. We are struggling for decent working conditions. We are struggling for access to training and information. We are struggling for our autonomy and the right to make our own decisions and participate fully in decision-making bodies.

Under the eye of Nyeleni, an African woman who defied discriminatory regulations and burned with creativity and agricultural prowess, we will find the energy to transform the right to food sovereignty into a beacon for the construction of another world.

We will find this energy in our solidarity. We will bear this message to women across the world.

Towards An International Convention On the Rights of Peasants

Human rights embody the visions of oppressed people - and their longing for freedom. Many freedom struggles - of slaves, of women - were carried out to break the shackles of oppression both in antiquity, the middle ages, and early modern times. Human rights instruments provide a means to facilitate the elimination of oppression. These instruments attempt to cover all spheres of human life. Indeed, human rights exist for the oppressed to defend or obtain their human standards in situations of oppression.

La Via Campesina has called attention to the fact that the international human rights system has not paid sufficient attention to the promotion and protection of peasant's human rights. Even though the standards and procedures of international law on human rights are supposed to be universal, in practice the human rights system has largely ignored violations of the human rights of peasants. Other social movements such as the women's movement and indigenous peoples have also challenged the international human rights system before.

The existing UN human rights instruments have not been completely able to prevent violations of peasants' human rights. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights shows limitations in protecting peasants' rights. Besides that, the Charter of Peasants issued by the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development in 1979 was not able to protect peasants from international liberalization policies. Other instruments like the ILO Convention N° 169, Clause 8-J of the

Convention on Biodiversity and the Cartagena Protocol have been poorly implemented. In the name of development, peasants' and indigenous peoples' land has been grabbed to make way for engines of "development" which the poor can never own - large plantations, mining compounds and dams. While most of the hungry and malnourished are marginalized small holder peasants living in rural areas, national and international development policies focus too seldom on the needs of peasants facing hunger and poverty. Still development needs are defined only as macroeconomic growth.

Peasant production systems have evolved over hundreds of years often in equilibrium with the environment, ensuring a wealth of adequate food and clean water. It is not a rare occurrence that in the name of development that is forced upon peasant families and that favours private actors such as big transnational corporations (TNCs) and large land owners, etc. peasants are evicted from their land while their traditional natural endowments are being destroyed, unable to support life any longer.

Because of the limitations and shortcomings of the existing human rights instruments, it is important to create an international policy to protect, fulfill and uphold peasants' rights – the International Convention on Peasants Rights (ICPR). Applying pressure on the UN to produce this ICPR is the logical thing to do. There are already conventions to protect groups like women (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) or children (Convention of the Rights of the Child). ICPR will contain the rights of peasants which will have to be protected and fulfilled by governments and international institutions.

Since the year 2000, La Via Campesina has talked about an international convention on peasant rights and we have produce the declaration of peasants' rights.

Education within La Via Campesina

This document is a synthesis of numerous debates that have taken place throughout the seminar about methods of education (June 2007). This seminar has used the base of the MST (Landless Worker Movement) as a model.

This is a document in progress and we invite everyone to comment, contribute to, and complete it. Education or consciousness-raising should be a priority in each of our organizations and we hope that this document will help initiate a dynamic debate about the role and character of our education.

As the document was quite long, we chose to select some paragraphs. The whole text (paragraph 1. 3. 4. 5. 9.) are available at our regional office.

Political Planning and Principles of Education. Conception of Consciousness-Raising

The following are some basic principals of Education/Consciousness-Raising :

1. Education should be tied to a strategic and political project that works for the transformation of society. As the project is in construction, education should support this process. It should encourage questions, doubts, and truths.
2. Education should be a part of our struggles and our search to strengthen ourselves. These same activities are spaces for raising the level of consciousness. They should have middle and long- term objectives.

3. The key point should be the social practices of peasants. This enables understanding, orientation, improvement, and reorientation of practice by constructing a dynamic and permanent interaction between theory and practice. In this process we should value native or “home-grown” wisdom.
4. One’s formative process should create itself on top of a foundation that has been developed in different moments and in unique ways: from the behavior of leaders with permanent roles in meetings and assemblies to demonstrations, conferences, individual forums, courses, exchanges of experience, to workshop visits. It does not only consist of educational courses alone. The involvement and the example of leaders and founders mobilize the organization.
5. Political education should be organized and implemented on all levels: the grassroots, counsels, leadership circles, squads, task forces, sectors, etc., always according to the objectives and demands of an organization. Each level of the organization requires a genuine political education with adequate and fitting content, language, and methodologies. Consciousness-raising education should be a permanent process at each level. Approaches to education should be creative, collective, happy, open, and non-authoritarian, while encouraging participation and strengthening the autonomy of each organization.
6. We should incorporate an open political thinking process in our educational work. It is important to recognize the internal diversity of La Via Campesina. We must respect minority positions and opinions. We do not want to create an elite group of leaders who hold absolute power. If we invite “experts” to offer advice, we should interpret their message for the entire organization.
7. Another principle of education is the development of different dimensions of each human person: strengthening autonomy, creating equal opportunities, and increasing the self-esteem of peasant family farmers. We should support

self-reflection and self-critique in each person's own way of acting and working. The process of formation should stem from ideas at the grassroots, where people know what they want to learn and design ideas according to their needs.

8. One challenge is interpreting the strategy of transnational businesses, institutions, other social sectors, etc.
9. Nutritional Sovereignty and the proposals of La Via Campesina should be the central focus of consciousness-raising.

Special Effort Is needed for the Formation of Youth

The process of education should touch all generations. It is important to create new youth fronts. Such youth want to get out to the countryside, go into the Free Trade Zones, and meet other young people. This makes it difficult to create a continuous force of young people, when there is so much migration and movement.

Women's Situation

There is a lot of disparity between women and men. Women, particularly younger women, have a number of obligations and have difficulty participating in organizing. Educational methods should be taken into account for these women. Information should arrive where the women are and we should facilitate their integration into the organization.

Some central ideas for training at the national and regional level

1. Training Schools

Every movement within Via Campesina should construct its own **Educational Schooling Process**. It doesn't have to be about constructing a physical structure, but to develop policies of training militants and local point persons (cuadros).. It is necessary to have spaces for training, with planning, division of tasks and responsibilities that involve the bringing together of movements. The training is part of the organization.

The training school should be the meeting place of political ideas, the principles that found and strengthen the organization, that orient the political praxis of the militants and leaders as constructors, builders of the organization..

2. Continental courses

Each continent can begin thinking about the possibility of organizing and implementing at least one course per year of political training for militants, directors, organizers. It is necessary to define who the participants will be well and to mount an adequate program, as well as to define a good pedagogical coordination. The contents can be coordinated in part at the international level to integrate this level into the continental course.

These courses, in addition to developing a theoretical study, would be: a) a space to unify the debate around common questions; b) an important place and time to exchange experiences between different movements and countries; c) a space to discuss and deepen the methodologies and strategies of training in different countries; d) a space to understand the international context and La Via Campesina.

3. Applications of formal education

We should use applications of formal education. Diverse experiences exist in many countries. We have to see how to influence universities for a diverse and different education.

4. Exchanges of experiences between countries

Personal exchanges between countries are crucial for the work of training. They are part of the activities of many organizations and we think that it is important to strengthen them. For people with little experience, a basic way to improve their understanding involves an exchange in the region. One advantage is that not as many resources are needed (travel by land) and this facilitates the participation of more people. The exchange of experiences with other regions is important to exchange experiences of conflict, of education, and of strengthening organization by strengthening a

common analysis and strategy. Another important form is the exchange of materials and methods through the web page, electronic mail, video, etc.

Many initiatives already exist that can serve as examples:

- El IALA (Agroecology Institute Paulo Freire) in Venezuela. It can develop itself as an important space for training youth.
- Special university courses for campesinos and campesinas (agroecology in Paraná, Brazil).
- Special training for all, and especially for women (seminars, schools...)
- Collaborations with community radio, artist collectives, collections of exchange of knowledge.
- Schools of historical memory.

The Francisco Morazán School of Nicaragua, the “Nyeleni” training center in Selingué, Mali, a center of training for ecological agriculture in Indonesia, the Summer Campesina University in France, and many other initiatives.

What role for the Via Campesina on the international level?

Both vision and mission of the Via Campesina international should be clear in order to bring forward a coherent proposal regarding education. Via Campesina should analyse the international context in order to define what are the needs in terms of training and also analyze the process on a continuous basis and in every region, in order to establish common grounds.

Via Campesina should develop a memory bank of its history, and the peasant history through the use of words and images. It should show the role played by peasants in every country. There is a need to create within the Via Campesina a cultural idea of peasantry, to build values and as well as a common identity within its diversity. The Via Campesina can help to dynamically coordinate its member-organizations, with NGOs, networks, researchers etc.

A coordinating team able to articulate the work needed for training at an international level must be created.

Addressing the main issues of Via Campesina and its international context

The Via Campesina must distribute analysis, strategy and proposal documents relevant both to the international context and to the central themes of the organization (Food Sovereignty, Gender issues, Agrarian Reform, Biodiversity, Human Rights, Migration, Sustainable Peasant Agriculture, World Trade, Climate Change, GMO...)

The various organizations can approach the topics using the most suitable methods and teachings according to their cultural and ideological situation. They can develop documents referring to the reality of their bases and adapt them to the situation of every region and every country. In this way every organization will be able to add topics that they consider relevant.

Special training for activists who have to operate at the international level

Within its international meetings the Via Campesina must create a space for training for the participants in order to increase their weight in the international political process. This requires a specially assigned time, material aimed to satisfy every need of the participants and maybe the presence of people, either internal or external to the Via Campesina, who can carry out the task.

Exchanging practical experience of production

To make available and distribute among all the organizations of the LVC practical experiences endorsing our political ideas. If we believe that it is important to advocate for seed preservation, we should show tangible examples of networks that struggle against the use of GMO imposed by transnational companies.

Exchanging material and experiences on education

The use of existing experiences on training can be a base for the development of new proposals for training. The Via Campesina can create a database of training experiences in order to share problems and challenges. The exchange of training staff will allow the evaluation of the training programs in the countries in which we operate. We need to find ways to strengthen training initiatives within the organizations.

Concrete possible actions for education to be coordinated at the international level

- a. To launch an edition of "Via Campesina booklets" aimed to prepare activists, training staff and collaborators. These booklets may approach topics of study; include official documents of meetings; documents regarding common analysis; documents regarding both the international topics and our local realities; etc. The decisions regarding the topics treated in these booklets, as well as their translation and distribution will have to be coordinated.
- b. Specific documents must be produced. Their function will be to prepare those members of the Via Campesina staff who are directly involved in specific struggles (i.e. "the strategy regarding the FAO International Conference on climate Change" or the "proposed analysis for the struggle of free trade agreements")
- c. Special material for women and young people must be developed.
- d. Develop an efficient system of promotion and distribution and an internal web page easily accessible by the organizations. The page will be a database for material and there will be a list of "experts" on resources, both internal and external to the Via Campesina.
- e. Promote the exchange of experiences between the training schools and the LVC. The Francisco Morazán school in Central America could help to coordinate it.
- f. Promote the exchange between regions of experiences central to struggle and training (priority to be defined)

Peasant-Based Sustainable Agriculture: The Future Of The Planet

Introduction

The defense of the peasant-based model of sustainable agriculture is a basic issue for us. Peasant based production is not the “alternative”! It is the model of production through which the world has been fed for thousands of years and it still is the dominant model of food production. More than half of the population works in the peasant agriculture sector and the vast majority of the world population depends on peasant based food production. This model, the peasant way (“la Via Campesina”) is the best way forward to feed the world in the future, to serve the needs of our people, protect the environment and maintain our natural assets or common goods. Peasant based sustainable production is not just about being “organic”. Peasant based sustainable production is socially just, respects the identity and knowledge of communities, prioritizes local and domestic markets and strengthens the autonomy of people and communities.

Sustainable family farming agriculture is a way of agriculture production imagined and practice by family farmers, men and women. It is based on local resources using technologies that allow striking a balance between nature, social and economic development and the cultural diversity of peoples, in a scale that is suitable for family labor.

The food, climate and energy crises have brought the issue of food and how it is produced back to the top of the international and

national agenda. Instead of reducing the number of poor people has increased because of the current multiple crisis. A crisis that is the direct result of the neo-liberal, corporate led model of production and consumption.

The corporations have launched another aggressive attack against the peasant sector under the pretext to help to solve the climate and food crisis. transnational corporations grab the best land occupied by peasants for agro fuels and other mono cultures. Their interest is to destroy our own farming practises and technologies and force us to use their technologies and inputs **that ruin the environment and the health of our families.**

Massive displacement of the farmers, indigenous and black communities to marginal barren areas lacking water resources, or drift away from the land towards cities where they still suffer from hunger because of lack of employment and money.

What is peasant based sustainable agriculture?

Peasant agriculture it is not an “economic model of production”, it is a way of life, and thus it has complex aspects.

The way of production and consumption La Via Campesina defends is characterized by the following aspects:

Peasants and small farmers at the heart

It is diverse, based on family farming and peasant agriculture, it develops and renews production based on cultural roots, imagined and practiced by peasants and family farmers, men and women. A model that can feed entire nations and guarantee the whole peasant population the right to a dignified life, socially, culturally and economically based in the work on the land as they have already practiced for many generations.

Basic rights are respected, the center of all policies should be people and not the market: we are speaking of just rural society.

The protection of farmers, indigenous people and black communities, their cultural and human values, because they are the basic human resources needed for production. Without men and women to till the land, there can be no agriculture. Without agriculture, what will people eat?

Women and men are equally treated

Women are equally treated as men and have full access to means of production. Women also participate fully in the decisions taken by the communities as well as the organizations that represent them.

Producing as autonomously as possible

Production is as autonomous as possible and independent from external inputs (fertilizers, pesticides, capital, hybrid seeds...) however acknowledging the role of government to support peasant based agriculture. It therefore maintains and takes care of natural assets that are used in production (land, seeds, soil, biodiversity, water, diverse human knowledge, etc.). Key is the reproduction of seeds on the farm and the rejection of patented and hybrid seeds. In Africa 60% of agriculture is still autonomous and we want to maintain and strengthen this model.

Access and control over the use of the means of production

Peasants and the rural communities should be able to control the use of the land, enabled to reproduce their own seeds, control the use of water, and have access to sufficient credits. It allows them to leave to future generations a rich and fertile soil that produces multiple products in a diversified production system. A genuine agrarian reform is crucial to bring the land back in the hands who work it and to create a dynamic peasant agriculture!

Peasant agriculture is diversified production

Contrary to industrial production that works with mono – culture cropping, peasant production is diverse, from the same land up to 10-12 different crops and products are produced. Peasants also

combine in an effective way crop mixtures with livestock husbandry (fish, cattle, chicken, ...).

Local and domestic markets have priority

Local and domestic needs should have priority and peasants and small farmers should have access to their own local and domestic markets! They should be able to control the ways of commercialization in collaboration with urban communities and consumers so that products can be sold at fair prices for producers and consumers.

High quality food

It produces diverse food and culturally appropriate for consumption in the area closest to production. This allows to reduce transport costs and avoid unnecessary industrial processing costs.

Appropriate technology

This peasant agriculture is dynamic, integrates innovations and needs a blend of traditional and modern knowledge and technology. However this technology needs to be adapted to the way of production help to respect the environment. It should be controlled by peasants themselves. Technology should be at the service of people and not at the service of capital, generating profits for banks and industry and banks. We oppose GMOs and chemical poisons.

Peoples and indigenous knowledge is key

It sees peoples, indigenous and traditional knowledge and experiences as key to the development this model of production. It maintains local varieties and livestock breeds as well as biodiversity in the surroundings (flora and fauna).

Promoting agroecological methods

Agroecological production methods, based on the notion of

obtaining good quality food products without negatively affecting the environment and enhancing the conservation of soil fertility on the basis of a correct use of natural resources and the smallest possible quantity of industrial chemicals, are part of it. Agroecology requires a technological development that based on both traditional and indigenous knowledge, and the science of agroecology, which favors the protection of natural environment, biodiversity, economic viability and social sustainability. A diversified production is key to respond to all needs and obtain a stable form of production. The experiences of many Vía Campesina member organizations, most notably that of ANAP in Cuba, have demonstrated that the "Campesino a Campesino" (farmer to farmer) methodology is the best way for peasants and family farmers to develop and share their own agroecological farming technologies and systems. In contrast, the conventional top-down method by which institutions and corporations develop technology and promote it to farmers leads in inappropriate technologies that destroy the environment, poison people, bankrupt farmers, and enrich the private sector.

Peasant agriculture is linked to a geographic space or territory

Peasant agriculture is linked to a specific geographic space, a territory. Peasant are rooted in the place were they have build their livelihoods for many generations. One cannot understand peasant agriculture without understanding the link of the people to their land.

Pillar in the local economy

Peasant agriculture gives employment to many people, not only those who work in the production directly. Peasant based agriculture is a pillar of the local economy and helps to maintain and increase rural employment and keep villages and towns alive. It allows communities to strengthen their own culture and identity. An equitable small farmer, peasant based rural economy does also provide the basis for a strong national economic development.

It allows a dignified life for all

It should allow sufficient income as well as good health care, education for all members of the community (men, women and children, small farmer-peasant-landowners and agricultural workers).

Cooperation instead of competition and conflict

Solidarity and cooperation and not competition should be the basic principle of organization. This includes the need for conflict resolution over the use of land and water and the will to look for solutions in conflicts of interests between landed farmers, agricultural workers, pastoralists and indigenous people.

Direct links with consumers and urban organizations

Peasant communities should develop direct links with consumers and urban groups to exchange products and services. This will allow communities to enjoy the fruits of their work instead of paying them into the pockets of TNCs and traders.

Peasant agriculture feeds the world and is far more productive than industrial production

At the moment food production is enough to feed the world and there is still an enormous potential to increase production. Beside this the productivity of peasant based production is far higher than of industrial production. Industrial models show “higher yields per hectare” for a specific product. Peasants produce except this product up to 10-12 more crops and products on the same land and make more intensive use of labor. Also the quality of their labor is higher, they are more effective in maintaining the productivity of the soil and use less purchased industrial inputs. For this reason a much higher food output per hectare than industrial farms, this can be up to 10 times more! Beside that peasants produce the food directly for the communities that need it, they give much more people directly access to production and to food. Beside this peasants manage more effectively other resources such as forests and aquatic resources.

On large industrial farms labor is substituted by mechanization and purchased industrial inputs (seeds, pesticides and fertilizers). This requires simpler production systems (mono-cropping). Although the yield of one product (the mono crop will be higher, the total output goes down dramatically and the destruction of the soil increases. Also the overall efficiency of the use of all the different factors that go into production the larger farms are less efficient than the medium small farms.)°

Peasant agriculture cools down the planet

Sustainable small-scale farming and local food consumption will reverse the actual devastation and support millions of farming families.

- Sustainable small-scale farming, which is labor-intensive and requires little energy use, can actually contribute to stop and reverse the effects of climate change
- by storing more CO₂ in soil organic matter through sustainable production
- by replacing nitrogen fertilizers by organic agriculture or/and cultivating nitrogen-fixing plants which capture nitrogen directly from the air
by making possible the decentralized production, collection and use of energy

Defending a model based in people against a corporate take over

Corporations intend to destroy the peasant based model in order to convert peasants into slum dwellers or workers on their plantations, both consumers of industrial food!

Peasants, indigenous people and agricultural workers are confronted with extremely low prices for agricultural product, totally liberalized markets drive peasant into ruin, obliging them to leave their land and their villages. Industry pushed a model of mono-cultures, production independent from the soil, based on GMOs, using huge quantities of dangerous pesticides and spoiling

enormous amounts of fossil energy (fertilizers, intensive mechanization, ...). The accumulation of PCB's, DDT and heavy metal compounds in the marine ecosystem.

High production costs of the so call "Green Revolution technology" (imposition of the use of expensive industrial inputs) absorb every possible income rise and bar poor farmers from using their own production methods.

In general it enormous need for fossil energy makes it a key cause of the climate crisis. It spreads desertification, destroying the soil because of erosion and salinisation, and water reserves through pollution or exaggerated irrigation. It accelerates de-forestation which aggravates the climate crisis and creates huge losses of biodiversity. More than 5000 species of our genetic heritage are lost every year.

It causes an increase in the number of increasingly dangerous pests produced by among other things the use of monoculture, genetic standardisation of plants and animals, eradication of the natural enemies of pests, and increasing resistance to insecticides and fungicides.

It produces bad quality products that are intensively processed which leads to very expensive food products bad for your health and bad for the environment because of high use of fossil energy.

In the rural areas this model of industrial production creates landlessness and emigration to the cities, it create endemic hunger, under nourishment and misery. It causes illness and death because of the use of dangerous pesticides imposed by the transnational corporations. The negative impact on health of food produced with agrochemicals makes medical science devote a large amount of time, human and material resources to the treatment of diseases that should never have existed. This model is violent, displaces people from their land, uses paramilitary and security forces to kill peasant leaders, to destroy communities and create an

environment of far an repression. The misery and the violence of this model especially hits women and children, they suffer most from bad and violent treatment, over exploitation and attacks on their rights.

La Via Campesina rejects with determination these industrial farming methods .

We must be wary of the concept of sustainability that transnational corporations are now proposing. They try to replace inputs that have adverse effects on the environment with inputs that are less destructive. This strategy is only based on the search for alternative inputs, it does not question either the structure of monoculture or the dependence generated by the use of such inputs. transnational corporations use the foundations, NGOs and governmental institutions to hide behind, letting them introduce the programs that sell their products to farmers. In other areas transnational corporations support social programs and bring “solutions to the people” trying to undermine the resistance of the local population to their domination. And instead of driving peasant from the land, in some regions they offer contracts, buying up their products. However at the same time they put conditions and oblige farmers to buy expensive inputs. In the end the peasants remain poor or go bankrupt, forced to leave the land.

Migrations and agricultural workers: The Migrations Question

At present, societies are facing one of the more important social and human crises to presented itself in the history of humanity. That crisis is forced migration, the movement of millions of human beings trying desperately to escape hunger, persecution, violence, plunder and societies that exclude them.

This crisis is an unequivocal sign of the failure of the neoliberal capitalist model.

Starting at the 4th International Conference, in Itaici, Brazil, La Via Campesina (LVC) has included the question of migration as part of the key points for the elaboration of its strategy of struggle. At this conference the issue was debated within the Work Group that was designated for this to take place in and a report with proposals was presented to the assembly of 4th International Conference.

As a peasant and rural worker organization, at the 4th International Conference we reached the conclusion that the neoliberal capitalist model is the cause of the intensification of migration. In addition, concerning the agricultural and rural sector, the massive displacement of human beings is caused by anti-peasant agricultural policies and free trade agreements, both core instruments of the neoliberal model.

This was why it was decided to create the International Commission on Migrations and Rural Workers of LVC. The 5th International Conference is an opportunity to advance the construction of this Commission and to deepen our political understanding on this issue.

As LVC we have held two international gatherings to continue debating elements that will allow us to adopt a political position on the issue of migration. The first encounter took place in Seville in 2004 and the second one in Murcia last year. In both, we emphasized as a fundamental part of this issue, the accelerated *de-ruralization* that occurs in our countries due to the disastrous neoliberal agricultural model. At the same time that neoliberalism incessantly pushes small producers and farmers into ruin, many youth lose interest in continuing within agriculture, precipitating the massive internal migration from the rural areas into the cities and, mainly, the external migration towards the North. With the ever increasing incorporation of women into the migratory flows and migration resulting from the violence and wars of plunder and occupation, we could not miss concluding that the appropriation of land and rural territories, particularly of indigenous people, not only intensifies human migration, but in addition, represents the most serious offensive against the environment and the natural resources of people, mainly in the global south.

On the other hand, migrants constitute the cheap manual labor force that is used by industrial agriculture and food production on such a large scale that it allows a few corporations to flood the markets with agricultural and food products below the cost of production. Paradoxically, these products produced by migrants destroy more communities and create more displacement of human beings who lose the capacity to survive on their land. In other words, the agricultural workers of the North, who are the same ruined farmers of the South, produce to ruin more farmers and convert them into migrants.

The present crisis is reflected in the thousands of migrants who die trying to cross from the South to the North. It also results in policies of criminalization, mainly by the Northern governments, in the persecutions, imprisonment, deportations, militarization of borders and the construction of walls. But in the middle of all this, in recent years a migrant movement has risen up such as has never been witnessed before by humanity. It is a response by migrants to a system that has cornered them.

The neoliberal capitalist model, in serving only to increase the concentration of wealth in fewer and fewer hands (a handful of multinational corporations) and pushing even more people into extreme poverty, triggers the same forces that will gradually consume it. At the moment, the massive involuntary migration is the most visible rift of the system. The millions of desperate destitute peoples, who according to the International Organization for Migration are more than 200 million, are today an important force in the struggle against neoliberalism. Because of this, the migrants of the world and the issue of migration, are for LVC key elements for the construction of a strategy of struggle that will allow us to create an alternative to the neoliberal capitalist model.



Women farmers from the UNAC cooperatives from the Marracuene district selling their products in the street.

Additional Text

Accelerating Into Disaster – When Banks Manage the Food Crisis^(*)

Civil society statement for the High Level Meeting on Food Crisis – Madrid

Against the dramatic background of a profound global food and general economic crisis the Spanish government organizes the “High Level Ministerial Meeting on Food Security for All” on the 26-27th of January 2009 in Madrid.

The emergency of today is rooted in decades of neo-liberal policies that dismantled the international institutional architecture for food and agriculture and undermined the capacity of national governments to protect their food producers and consumers.

The central cause of the current food crisis is the relentless promotion of the interests of large industrial corporations and the international trade that they control, to the detriment of food production at the local and national levels and the needs and interests of local food producers and communities.

At the World Food Summit in 1996, when there were an estimated 830 million hungry people, governments pledged to halve the number by 2015. Today, in the midst of a terrible food crisis, the figure of hungry people has risen to well beyond 1 billion.

Stop land grabbing for agrofuel and industrial food production

In this context the World Trade Organisation (WTO), World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are pushing for more trade liberalisation, more support for agribusiness and increased sales of fertilizers and genetically modified seeds.

As the vicious food price crisis deepens, transnational companies are moving into southern countries on a huge scale and starting to capture millions of hectares of land in order to bring agricultural production further under their control for industrial agrofuel and food production for the international market. Millions of peasants will be pushed out of food production, adding to the hunger in the rural areas and the slums of the big cities.

The few that remain will work under full control of the transnational companies as workers or contract farmers. This is the very model that the World Bank and the AGRA (Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa) initiative are trying to impose with the funds they have designated to resolve the food crisis.

The solution exists: food sovereignty

Contrary to the impression that is given by confused officials, a solution to the crisis exists and is easy to implement if there is sufficient political will. Peasant based agriculture and livestock raising and artisanal fisheries can easily provide enough food once these small-scale food producers can get access to land and aquatic resources and can produce for table local and domestic markets. This model produces far more food per hectare than the corporate model, enables people to produce their own food and guarantees stable supply⁽¹⁾.

In June 2008 during the High Level Conference on the food and climate crisis, organized by FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations), many concrete proposals were made by peoples' organisations and other non-governmental organisations in a declaration "No More Failures-as-Usual" that was supported by over 800 organisations⁽²⁾.

The declaration called on governments to:

- Reinstating the right of governments to intervene and regulate in the food and agricultural sector in order to achieve food sovereignty.
- Reject Green Revolution models. Industrialized agriculture and fisheries are no solution. This view was clearly supported by the broad based international assessment ⁽³⁾.
- Prioritize the participation of small scale farmers, pastoralists and fisher-folk in the formulation of policies,
- Make Food sovereignty and the right to food prevail over trade agreements and other international policies.
- Restructure United Nations (UN) agencies involved in food and agriculture to make them more effective.

Governments at the Madrid Meeting have yet to take these demands into account.

No effective response so far

Since the earlier food crisis in the 1970s, many initiatives have been taken to tackle the food crisis. In the seventies, a so-called World Food Council was set up to tackle the crisis.

The council never functioned and was in the end abolished in the nineties. In 2002 the international Alliance Against Hunger was adopted by the FAO World Food Summit: five years later but it is totally ineffective. At the moment France and other G8 countries and Spain are proposing a “Global partnership”.

This initiative will generate more fragmentation and provide more of the same wrong recipes. For the first time in the UN, this ‘partnership’ would give Transnational Companies (TNCs) and the big foundations such as the Bill Gates Foundations an official seat at the table.

Last year, a UN-High Level Task Force was set up to coordinate actions of the UN agencies, the Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO, and a Common Framework for Action (CFA) was developed.

Although increased coordination between UN agencies is desperately needed, the Task Force is mainly driven by the G8 donor countries and Multilateral Institutions like the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation and the International Monetary Fund.

The CFA was written by the international bureaucracy without any serious consultation of governments and civil society.

Although support for small farmers is mentioned in the text, the interests of the multilateral institutions and the G8 countries dominate. The text clearly pushes for more trade liberalisation and the World Bank wants to use this mechanism to channel big funding to agribusinesses for a second green revolution, particularly in Africa. The FAO and other UN agencies, that have a mandate and the expertise to implement effective programs, are isolated and marginalized.

Where is the political will to address the crisis in a serious way?

The show in Madrid orchestrated by Jeffrey Sachs and the Spanish government that includes some “panels with Civil Society” presents itself as a total sham. By way of preparation for the meeting, the Spanish government presented a proposal for a "Global Partnership", in which "the voices of the poor shall be enhanced, heard and taken into account in the whole process", but the way the Madrid meeting is set up hardly reflects this commitment.

One or two peasant representatives may perhaps speak a few minutes from the floor while transnational companies such as Monsanto and the Bill Gates Foundation, the World Trade Organisation, World Bank and the International Monetary Fund sit on the podium! **In the midst of the present financial crisis when banks go bankrupt one after the other primarily due to excessive gambling, it is absurd to ask banks and financial institutions to solve the food crisis.** The principle of “one dollar – one vote” that the World Bank and the donor countries are trying to introduce has to be rejected.

No serious effort has been made to bring representatives of peasant farmers, fisher-folk, indigenous people and urban organisations that represent affected people to the table. Once again, the main stakeholders in the debate on the food crisis have been completely sidelined. Only some hand picked Non Governmental Organisations are asked to give their opinion. This event just serves to push through initiatives that lack any legitimacy and will again be totally ineffective or may even make things even worse!

Policies based on food sovereignty are desperately needed

National governments have to take up their responsibility and urgently implement the following measures:

- Bring the disastrous volatility of food prices in domestic markets to a standstill. National governments should take full control over the import and export of food in order to stabilize local markets.
- Set up policies to actively support peasant-based food production and artisanal fishing, local markets and the implementation of agrarian and aquatic reform. Peasant based production, based on agroecology, has proved to be more effective: it produces more food per hectare and gives work (and access to food) to many more people^o .
- Stop corporate land grabbing for industrial agro-fuels and food production.

The UN agencies have to support the initiatives of national governments and forbid the World Trade Organisation, World Bank and the International Monetary Fund from interfering in national policies regarding food and agriculture. The World Trade Organisation, World Bank and International Monetary Fund should therefore be excluded from implementation of the proposals of the UN Task Force.

No more new structures and initiatives!

We protest vigorously against this circus of the ongoing creation of new structures and spaces. They are bound to fail again and again as they undermine existing bodies yet continue to implement the same bad policies. The space where the issue of food is discussed at the international level used to be concentrated in one agency, the FAO.

This space has been fragmented, since the last food crisis, into many different institutions that all have their say over food and agriculture: FAO, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Program (WFP), the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), World Trade Organisation, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, etc. On top of this, exactly those who bear the heaviest responsibility for this crisis (World Trade Organisation, World Bank and International Monetary Fund) will dominate the new structures.

One single space in the UN system needed

Until now UN agencies (FAO, IFAD, WFP) as well as the CGIAR have dramatically failed to address the crisis in an effective way due to lack of funding, inefficient functioning and lack of focus on support for peasant and fisher based domestic food production. This has to change.

The global governance of agriculture and food has to be dramatically improved. We need one single space in the UN system that acts in total independence of the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, with a clear mandate from governments, a decisive participation of peasant, fisher-folk and other Civil Society Organisations and a transparent and democratic process of decision making.

This has to be the unique space where food and agriculture issues are discussed, where policies and rules are set and where all financial resources are controlled. Donor countries should show the same commitment to the financial crisis as to the food crisis

and commit the necessary funding to the UN agencies to really tackle the issue. Of the US\$24 billion promised at the Rome Conference in June 2008, only a small part has been provided.

Funding to solve the food crisis is important. But we don't want this money to be spent on providing more high tech seeds, more chemical fertilizer and more of the same old recipes that have already failed in the past, as is happening now. We want support for a true re-orientation of the global food system towards food sovereignty.

(1) www.foodfirst.org/en/node/246

(2) more concrete proposals in the declaration “No more failures as usual” published at the occasion of the FAO High Level Conference, June 2008, and supported by over 800 organisations (www.nyeleni.eu/foodemergency)

(3) see <http://www.agassessment.org>, this is the so-called International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD)

This statement was facilitated by members of the IPC, the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty. The IPC is a facilitating network in which key international social movements and organisations collaborate around the issue of food sovereignty. For more info and to see the list of signatories : www.foodsovereignty.org

(*) This is the only text that has been added to this compilation a few months after the 5th Conference.



La Via Campesina

International Peasants Movement
Movimiento Campesino Internacional
Mouvement Paysan International
Movimento Camponês Internacional

International Operational Secretariat (IOS) of La Via Campesina

Address: Jl. Mampang Prapatan XIV No. 5
Jakarta Selatan 12790 Jakarta – Indonesia
Phone: +62 21 7991890, Fax: +62 21 7993426
Email: viacampesina@viacampesina.org

www.viacampesina.org

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