

THE “Pascual Carrión”¹ WORLD FORUM ON AGRARIAN REFORM (WFAR)***New challenges for land management and access to natural
resources in the 21st century*****10 February 2004**

The issue of agrarian reform seems to have lost importance in recent decades – after occupying a prominent position during most of the 20th century in the social struggles of peasants’ movements, on the agendas of international organisations and in the development policies of many countries. This has happened despite major social tensions linked to poverty, hunger and the struggle for land and water which now face humanity with the risk of future conflicts greater than those occurring now. The major global challenges arising out of neo-liberal globalisation call for new policies for access to and management of land. Also needed is a new reflection about the agrarian reform issue leading to new approaches which can reduce inequalities and guarantee the fundamental human rights of all the world’s inhabitants.

- **FOOD SECURITY, FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND AGRARIAN REFORM**

In establishing the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 1945, the United Nations set out the objective of attaining global food security through food production, whilst improving the living conditions of rural populations and contributing to world economic development. The World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development convened by FAO in 1979 invited governments to adopt an effective programme of action in those countries where a considerable reorganisation of land tenure was required, by means of land redistribution to landless peasants and smallholders, as part of a rural development strategy and as a means of redistributing power.

More recently, the heads of state and government attending the World Food Summit 1996 agreed that the objective of global food security was far from being achieved. They therefore made the commitment to take all available measures so as to reduce

half before 2015 the number of hungry people in the world. Five Years Later, in 2002,

¹ *Pascual Carrión (1891-1984) was born Sax, (Alicante, Spain). An agronomist, his progressive ideas led him to propose rural reform for Andalucía. His book, “La Reforma Agraria, problemas fundamentales” (Agrarian Reform, fundamental problems), was published in Madrid in 1931. He was a member of the Agrarian Technical Commission which drew up the draft law in 1931 to solve the problem of the ‘latifundia’, which became the Agrarian Reform Law of 1932, considered as one of the most important projects of the emerging Second Spanish Republic. After the end of the civil war he was interned for a period, condemned and deprived of civil rights, as were so many civil servants of the Republic. During the years when he was forbidden to take part in any type of public activities he continued his writings, the most prominent being “La Reforma Agraria de la II República y la Situación Actual de la Agricultura Española” (Agrarian Reform under the Second Republic and the present situation of Spanish agriculture) published in 1973 and the republication of “Los Latifundios en España” (large landholdings in Spain) published in 1975. He also promoted the co-operative organisation of grape growing and winemaking in Valencia.*

the World Food Summit found that this goal could not be reached under existing policies. Subsequently, FAO indicated in its Report on the State of Food Insecurity in the World, published in 2003, that instead of improving the world food situation had continued to deteriorate over recent years.

An estimated 2.8 billion people have less than two dollars a day to live on, while more than two billion suffer from malnutrition due to serious micronutrient deficiencies (iron, iodine, vitamins A, C etc). More than 840 million people, of which 800 million are in developing countries, suffer hunger daily. Three-quarters of the world's poor and hungry live in rural areas, and amongst them a huge mass of peasants poorly endowed with means of production and/or land. The majority of the remaining quarter were formerly peasants condemned to flee poverty and hunger by migrating to urban slums.

All these peasants and ex-peasants are to a great extent victims of global agri-food trade policies implemented by many governments under the guidance of multilateral organisations and institutions. Over the last ten years, such policies have halved real agricultural prices (at constant exchange rates). The poorest are the landless peasants or those owning plots whose quality and size make it impossible for them to maintain their families. All of them are victims of the abandonment by many governments of agrarian reform policies and measures designed to support family farms. On the other hand, much land remains unproductive worldwide while other areas have been either abandoned or sold at distress prices by farmers who cannot meet their contractual commitments.

Food sovereignty is now posited as an alternative paradigm to deal with the problems of hunger and poverty, as well as of environmental degradation and the worldwide disappearance of peasants from rural areas. Food sovereignty is based on three pillars: the right to food as a basic human right; the right of all countries and peoples to draw up their own agricultural policies; the central role within such policies of food producers – crop farmers, livestock raisers and fisherfolk.

The human right to food, recognised under Article 11 of the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, implies for peasant communities the right to access resources needed to produce food, in particular, land. Every state and the community of states which have ratified the Convention are thereby obliged to respect, protect and guarantee access to means of production. Agrarian Reform is the central measure for enabling peasants' access to and control over land, seeds, water and other means of production. In this context, the effective implementation of agrarian reform is not a question of governments' good will, but a human rights-related legal obligation. Agrarian Reform must be recognised as an efficient instrument of public policy to combat poverty.

- **MANAGEMENT OF LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

The discussion on agrarian reform in the 21st century involves several aspects additional to land distribution. It is not only the landless peasants who have an interest in the establishment of more equitable mechanisms for access to land. It is also of interest to urban social sectors, to consumers, business people and family farmers in developed countries. All these groups see their survival or development threatened by the situation of millions of impoverished peasants, expelled from agriculture and condemned to extreme poverty. All are concerned by the disruption of ecological balance at the

planetary level, as well as by a new type of conflict generated by the forms of access to land and territorial management.

Land is increasingly perceived as a complex, multifunctional space with an environmental dimension, natural resources, biodiversity reserves and climatic impacts. Rural economies repose increasingly on tourism activities which often involve conflicts of interest with the rights of the peasant population. The interactions between the countryside and the city take on new forms and the opinion of town dwellers about territorial management and methods to produce healthy food cannot be ignored. All this makes it essential to update agrarian reform policies.

- **SCOPE AND FOCUS OF THE WFAR**

The Forum's scope and focus were defined by the International Executive Committee which met in Valencia, Spain on 12 and 13 December 2003, bringing together experts and organisations from various parts of the world.

WFAR identifies itself as a space for dialogue, exchange of experiences and reflection, as well as for the construction of processes and proposals, where agrarian and social organisations, experts, NGOs and governmental organisations from various continents will address the question of land, positing the influence of agrarian reforms in social and economic processes aimed at attaining food sovereignty, the fulfilment of human rights and the creation of conditions necessary for world sustainable development.

On the basis of these premises – food security and sovereignty, human rights, world economic development, environmental protection, peace and democracy – and their links to agrarian reform processes, **THE INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS SIGNING THIS DOCUMENT CONVENE THE WORLD FORUM ON AGRARIAN REFORM.**

- **OBJECTIVES**

WFAR's main objectives are to:

- help situate the land question on the priority agenda of world social movements.
- contribute to developing a new paradigm for agrarian reform in the 21st century and demonstrate that these policies are justified both for reasons of social justice and for economic reasons as well as to debate the new approaches to land policies required within the present context
- Strengthen social processes and alliances between various sectors seeking to bring about new policies for access to land and natural resources management.

- **CONTENT**

WFAR will endeavour to answer the question: what new approaches are needed for agrarian reform under present conditions? To arrive at the answer, the following major themes will be addressed:

- 1.- The analysis of 20th century agrarian reform experiences, their social, political and economic context, of successes, failures counter-reforms, derived from a range of cases selected as a function of their contemporary relevance

- 2.- The need for agrarian reforms and suitable tools for their implementation at the dawn of the 21st century. A detailed examination will be made of existing relationships between the land issue, food sovereignty, sustainable development and ecological balance.

1.- LESSONS OF AGRARIAN REFORMS IN THE 20TH CENTURY

During the last century, agriculture occupied a central position in the national economic development of countries, and land policies endeavoured to favour the economic capacity of this production sector. Land was fundamental to the structure of social and political relations in rural society. Given the great weight of the latter within national political and social life, land policies were critical to strengthening the power base of political and social forces as well as to modifying them and to reducing social inequalities.

A number of agrarian reforms carried out during the 20th century will be studied: Mexico, USSR, Spain, Italy, Poland, Japan, China, Guatemala, Ecuador, Vietnam, Cuba, Algeria, Chile, Portugal amongst others. The following aspects will be analysed:

- the very varied political economic and social conditions in which these reforms arose and were implemented
- basic objectives to be achieved
- trade, macro-economic and sectoral policies which endeavoured to guarantee not only access to land, but also access to credit, training and technology as well as the strengthening of agrarian organisations.
- the success or failure of agrarian reforms, the measure in which they achieved or did not achieve their objectives, could or could not be implemented, and whose results lasted or did not last. In this review will be included the "market-based agrarian reform" promoted in recent decades by the World Bank, as well as several governments and international organisations.

2.- AGRARIAN REFORMS AT THE DAWN OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

Several agrarian reform processes are underway in various parts of the world: Brazil, Venezuela, Indonesia, Philippines, South Africa, etc. There are also a number of critical situations in Africa or Western Europe where access to land is becoming increasingly difficult for small family farmers.

To what extent and how can present day and future agrarian reforms impact the political, economic and social development of these countries, achieving the eradication of poverty and enabling food sovereignty?

As from the 1980s, and this trend will doubtless become stronger in the future, control over land has lost much of its meaning as an element of power. Under the present process of globalisation, with new technologies for production, marketing and consumption and with the expansion of the role of multinational corporations, true power in agriculture is before and after the actual production process itself. True power is now exercised by those who control credit, input supplies, dissemination of new technologies such as GMOs, as well as those controlling storage, distribution, transport

and retail sales to consumers. An agrarian reform which only distributes land, even on a large scale, would not of itself increase the power of peasants unless accompanied by various types of producer organisations (co-operatives, peasant enterprises, financial entities, distribution and marketing organisations) so as to control the pre-and post-production sectors.

The debate in the 21st century is not only about unfarmed latifundia and smallholdings, but also about apparently very profitable enterprises (although the social, environmental and economic consequences of their success may be disastrous for society as a whole), and an impoverished family farm-type agriculture deprived of public policy support enabling it to express its potential. What new type of agrarian reform is required to face up to such a situation?

Much of the best agricultural land throughout the world is now dedicated to non-agricultural uses as a consequence of the operation of the market (urban sprawl, development plots for the urban rich, rural tourism, real estate speculation etc) This process is removing extremely valuable land from agriculture and in certain cases reducing available arable land resources to a dangerously low level from a food security point of view. How does this situation affect agrarian reform processes?

In many countries with large indigenous populations the recognition of autonomous territories for these groups has been achieved. Land tenure systems have been established which differ from the traditional model, and are fundamentally based on use and not ownership. How can this situation be fitted in with agrarian reform policies?

Future social relations in rural areas must be transformed so as to guarantee womens' equal rights. Existing discriminatory gender relations both in traditional patriarchal systems as in the predominantly masculine agro-industry must be redefined. How is gender equality to be guaranteed in agrarian reform policies?

The multiplication of free trade agreements and the subsequent opening of borders by developing countries is resulting in the import of frequently subsidised agricultural and food products. The result is the ruin of millions of small farmers who through this process tend to become landless peasants. How does this situation fit in with new agrarian reforms and what is being done about it?

Structural adjustment policies in agriculture have blocked integrated agrarian reforms; the liberalisation of markets has benefitted large producers and excluded or despoiled the most marginalised groups of access to means of production. Recent history demonstrates that to consider and treat land as a commodity and let the market solve the problems does not work. Territorial management increasingly obliges policy makers to reason in terms of user rights, often shared between various actors, and not only in terms of ownership. How can present day agrarian reform deal with this issue and ensure that land use rights are distributed in accordance with the interests of society as a whole?

- **THE EVENT**

The WFAR will take place in Valencia, Spain from the 5th-8th of December 2004 ².

The programme will comprise lectures, seminars and workshops. Spaces will also be available for self-organised activities related to Forum issues.

WFAR participants will include farmers', indigenous peoples' and fisherfolks' organisations, experts, researchers and non-governmental organisations. Also invited will be consumer and environmental organisations, international institutions and development co-operation agencies.

The WFAR International Executive Committee (IEC) is responsible for decisions about the programme and its implementation. The IEC will be assisted by an executive secretariat elected from its members.

WFAR is set in the dynamic of thematic fora arising out of the spirit of the Porto Alegre World Social Forum and adopts its Charter of Principles.

WFAR TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT (CERAI-Spain)

Sergio Escribano fmra@cerai.es (Tel. : 00 34.96.352.18.78)

Elba García fmra@cerai.es (Tel. : 00 34.96.380.98.27)

Carmen Prats fmra@cerai.es (Tel. : 00 34.96.380.98.27)

WFAR INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- CARITAS. Spain
- CENSA (Center for the Study of the Americas). USA
- CERAI (Centro de Estudios Rurales y de Agricultura Internacional). Spain
- CONTAG (Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura). Brazil.
- FIAN (Food First Information and Action Network). Germany.
- FOCUS ON THE GLOBAL SOUTH. Thailand.
- FORUM DU TIERS MONDE. Senegal.
- FPH (Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer pour le Progrès de l'Homme). France
- IBASE (Instituto Brasileiro de Análisis Social y Económico). Brazil.
- LRAN (Land Research Action Network). International.
- MST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra). Brazil.
- PLATAFORMA RURAL. Spain

² *By organising WFAR in a Southern country of Western Europe, and not in a country with an agrarian reform process in existence, the aim is to emphasise that agrarian reform is now a strategic problem for everyone. WFAR also seeks to facilitate exchanges on policies of land access within different contexts, including countries with historically peasant agriculture structures in which there are now grave land access problems for young farmers and enormous difficulties facing family farming.*

- VETERINARIOS SIN FRONTERAS. Spain
- VIA CAMPESINA

- Samir Amín, Dakar. Senegal.
- Eladio Arnalte, Professor on Agrarian Structures, UPV. Spain
- Jacques Chonchol, ex –Minister of Agriculture, Chile.
- Shalmali Guttal, Thailand
- Marcel Mazoyer, Professor at the Institut National Agronomique. París. France.
- Michel Merlet, agronomist. France
- Fernando Oliveira Baptista, ex–Minister of Agriculture, Portugal.
- Peter Rosset. USA.
- Dao The Tuan, ex–Director del Institut National des Sciences Agronomiques. Vietnam

PRELIMINARY LIST OF ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER BODIES SUPPORTING WfAR

1. ALIMENTERRA – Europa
2. Friends of the Earth International
3. ANAMURI (Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Rurales) – Chile
4. ANDAR – Costa Rica.
5. APM – Africa
6. ASOCODE (Asociacion de Organizaciones Agrarias Centroamericanas).
7. CAFOLIS (Centro Andino de Formación de Líderes Sociales). Ecuador
8. CENESTA (Centre for Sustainable Development). Iran.
9. CER (Centre d'Études Rurales). Albania.
10. CIC (Centro Internazionale Crocevia). Italy.
11. CLOC (Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo).
12. CNC (Confederación Nacional Campesina). Mexico.
13. CONAIE - ECUARUNARI (Confederacion de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador).
14. CONFEUNASSC (Confederacion Nacional Unica del Seguro Social Campesino). Ecuador
15. CPE (Coordination Paysanne Européenne).
16. FENOCIN (Federacion Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas y Negras). Ecuador
17. Fons Valencià de Solidaritat. Spain

18. World Forum of Fisherfolk and Fishery Workers
19. FSPI (Federation of Indonesian Peasant Unions). Indonesia
20. GAK (Grupos Autogestionados de Consumo). Spain
21. Instituto de Sociología y Estudios Campesinos. Universidad de Córdoba. España.
22. INTERMON – OXFAM. Spain
23. Land tenure Management and Rural Equipment Project. Côte d'Ivoire
24. RONGEAD (Reseau d' Ong Europeennes sur l' Alimentaire, le Commerce, l' Environnement et le Developpement). France
25. SLOW FOOD – Internacional
26. Sociedad Española de Agricultura Ecológica, Spain.
27. Sociedad Iberoamericana de Agroecología.
28. TERRANUEVA. Ecuador
29. UNORCA (Union Nacional de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas Autoctonas) – Mexico.
30. Xarxa de Consum Solidari/Red de Consumo Solidario. Spain