

***Agrarian Reform and Access to Natural Resources, A Peoples' Demand***

***Valencia, Spain, December 8, 2004***

From December 5, we, representatives from more than 200 peasant, workers', women's, indigenous peoples', and human rights organizations, non-governmental organizations, and academic and public institutions from 70 countries and five continents came together at the World Forum on Agrarian Reform in Valencia, Spain. Over three days of sharing and discussion, we concluded that rural communities and the countryside are being systematically destroyed in every part of the world and that the continuing agrarian crisis has grave consequences for all of humanity. After identifying the historical and contemporary roots of this crisis, we crafted alternative strategies for agrarian reform based on peoples' struggles and the principles of human rights and peoples' food sovereignty.

Although agrarian reform held a central role in the agendas of international organizations and in the development policies of many countries during most of the twentieth century, its profile and achievements diminished during the last two decades despite the tensions arising from increasing poverty, hunger, and conflicts over land and natural resources.

Today people of the world are confronted with two models of agriculture, rural development and food production. The dominant one is an agro-export model based on the neo-liberal logic of free trade, privatization and commodification of land, water, forests, fisheries, seeds, knowledge and life itself. It is guided by a drive for corporate profits and the boosting of production for export, and is responsible for the increasing concentration of landholdings, resources, and chains of production and distribution of food and other agricultural products in the hands of a few corporations. The price of food and agricultural goods are constantly declining because of dumping and other factors – as are wages for farmers and workers. Consumer prices, however, continue to increase. The model is chemical-intensive and is causing incalculable damage to the environment and the health of producers, workers and consumers alike.

The peasant and family farm-based food sovereignty model, on the other hand, prioritizes local production of food for local and national markets, negates dumping, and uses sustainable production practices based on local knowledge. Evidence shows that this model is potentially more productive per unit area, more environmentally sound, and far more capable of providing rural families with a decent life with dignity, while providing rural and urban consumers with healthy, affordable and locally-produced food. However, the dominant, neo-liberal agro-export model is pushing peasant and family farm agriculture towards extinction.

Over three billion people live in rural areas, many of who are being increasingly and violently expelled from their lands and alienated from their sources of livelihood.

Race, social exclusion, culture, religion, gender and economic class have been and continue to be even today, powerful determinants of who has access to, and control over these resources, and who is systematically excluded from them.

The expropriation of land and natural resources from local populations, and the accumulation and concentration of wealth in the hands of traditional and modern elites has been a violent process. Rural communities, especially indigenous peoples and socially excluded groups, continue to be subjected to extreme forms of physical and economic violence by state and non-state actors such as private corporations and landed elites. This violence has escalated to shocking levels ranging from political persecution, repression and incarceration to killings, massacres and even genocides in the case of some indigenous peoples. Mega development projects such as large dams, infrastructure projects, extractive industry and tourism have displaced local populations and destroyed their social fabric and the very resource bases on which their lives depend.

In both the North and the South, the destruction of peasant production systems, displacement, deteriorating work conditions and distress migration have particularly severe impact on women and young people. Young people are denied the ability to work on land. In the case of women the hardship created by neo-liberal development model exacerbates traditional discrimination which prevents women of having access to and control over natural resources.

The agro-export model is entrenched by the structural adjustment programs of the World Bank and the IMF, and the free trade regime imposed by the WTO. At the same time, the state has stepped back from the redistribution of land and has abdicated its obligation to deliver essential services such as health, education, social security, protection for workers, public food distribution systems and marketing support for small producers. The promotion of individual private property through land cadastres and alienable titles has hastened the commercialization of land. Market based land policies, promoted by the World Bank and bilateral donors have led to heavy indebtedness among poor small scale producers and resulted in re-concentration of land in the hands of traditional and modern elites.

The agrarian crisis created by the agro-export model under neo-liberalism is bleak indeed. But despite this, peasant, fishers, indigenous people's and rural workers' movements are more alive, more organized and more sophisticated than ever, and are actively engaged in resisting the destructive, dominant model. Over the course of history, peasants, fishers, rural workers and indigenous peoples have developed ways of producing food and of relating to nature that are based on caring for the land, water, seeds, animals and life itself. As the dominant development model advances across the countryside, peoples movements are ready, willing and able to organize and struggle for, and build the alliances that are needed for achieving genuine agrarian reform adapted to the needs of each country and people.

Faced with the disaster that the dominant model is generating, we propose an alternative model of peoples' food sovereignty based on the rights of women and men farmers, rural workers and fisher-folk to produce food for their own local and national markets, with access to and control over their own territories--including land and natural resources. Peoples' food sovereignty assures the right of every person to affordable, safe, healthy, culturally appropriate, nutritious and locally produced food and to a life with dignity. We urgently demand effective implementation of Article 25 of the UDHR, Articles 2 and 11 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Human Rights, as well as Articles 55 and 56 of the U.N. Charter in order to make the human right to food a reality and to protect and guarantee access to natural resources.

State-led, redistributive agrarian reform is a key building block of the peoples' food sovereignty model and must be given a central place in the development agenda by both governments and society. Contemporary agrarian reform programmes must guarantee to peasant and indigenous peoples – with equal opportunities for women and the youth - access to and control over land, water, seeds, forests, and fisheries, as well as means of production (financing and training), distribution and marketing. Furthermore, agrarian reform must guarantee security of land tenure, support the use of land for productive purposes, and avoid the re-concentration of land.

### **We call on our organizations, allies and society to:**

1. Recognise land as a common good of peoples!
2. Work to get the WTO and other trade and investment agreements out of food and agriculture!
3. Firmly oppose the World Bank's land and rural development policies!
4. Urgently speak out and act against the violence being perpetrated against rural peoples to silence their organising and resistance!
5. Organise against the ongoing wars and military occupations which rob peoples of their food sovereignty and self-determination!
6. Oppose the privatization and commercialization of life through patent protections and genetic engineering!
7. Actively defend ongoing processes of effective agrarian reform, including settlements created through land occupations around the world and other forms of active civil disobedience in the defense of maintaining natural resources in the hands of the people.
8. Work together to build successful examples of peoples' food sovereignty at local and national levels!

**For a World without Hunger  
Another Agriculture  
Agrarian Reform Now!**