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### **World Forum on Agrarian Reform**

Do you consider agrarian reform to be one of those "1980s" issues? If so, you need to know about the World Forum on Agrarian Reform.

The forum, which has brought together 500 activists and researchers from around the globe, has been taking place this week in Valencia, Spain.

According to a description of the opening of the event:

"Dozens of indigenous people from around the world celebrated a "mística", a pagan ritual similar to a mass, in which they worshipped the earth and its fruits. During this ritual, they used symbolism to show how international institutions like the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and Monsanto corporation tear land and seeds from the hands of *campesinos*. Ending the ritual with calls of "occupy, resist and produce," the farmers take back what belongs to them."

The idea of the Forum is to bring together people working on land issues in many different contexts to share experiences, strengthen global networks and to elevate the profile of land issues at the international level.

In his opening speech, Forum organizer Vicente Garcés challenged participants to claim a fundamental right. "Hunger relentlessly pursues over 800 million people in this world. Among the great challenges faced by the planet is the demand to change natural resources management so as to guarantee the right to land, which, together with the right to food, is a fundamental right of humanity."

The Landless Workers' Movement, one of GRI's partners in Brazil, was on the organizing committee for the Forum and a prominent participant in all of its key events. We are still gathering information regarding the participation of other GRI partners.

We at Grassroots have a natural skepticism regarding large, costly gatherings of activists that often do little to strengthen local organizing. In this case, however, we are glad to see an event of this significance focused on agrarian reform and the right to land. For more information about the event, you can consult the Spanish language website put together by conference organizers. The website lists the key organizations in the network as well as those international funding organizations that saw reason to provide financial support for this sort of gathering.