

Rural youth to build the future agriculture

A policy paper addressing politicians, producers, consumers and society as a whole in an attempt to rethink agriculture in terms of Food Sovereignty

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The obligation to commit oneself to the well-being and greater good of all people is an individual duty, and equally one of the global community as a whole (men, women, societies and nations). It's not possible to achieve improvements only through the isolated efforts of individuals. As European youth from rural areas, we stress the importance of solidarity as human virtue and our responsibility to preserve God's creation for future generations.

75% of the estimated one billion hunger-stricken people alive today, live in rural areas. The agricultural world has never been as modernized as it is today, nor has it produced as much food. Despite this, there is still a gross over-consumption *in particular parts of the globe and extreme hunger in others*. This polarisation is largely due to the effects of global capitalism and the neo-liberal policies that have promoted a power imbalance in the food production, the agricultural sector as a whole and its markets. As a result of these policies, the imbalance is most clearly felt in the developing nations and their emerging markets, the most direct result being an obvious disrespect of our environment as well as the well-being of the world's human populations.

25 We, as young people from rural areas all across Europe, we believe that a world without poverty and hunger is possible. We believe that there are alternatives to the current food production, distribution and consumption. The concept of food sovereignty according to our convictions, is a viable solution to achieve sustainable agriculture and sustainable development for all, particularly in rural areas.

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The term 'Food Sovereignty' defines 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. Food Sovereignty defines the right of each nation to have the power to protect themselves from price dumping from other countries thus safe guarding their own food production. Conversely, countries are equally obliged to avoid negative consequences from their food production for third party nations.

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I. Agricultural policies

We have noticed that:

45 The European agricultural system is in crisis. There is enough food produced on this planet to feed the global population but there is a lack of political initiative to organize the food sector in such a way that everyone can exercise his/her right to food. The current "free" trade has not led to the reduction of hunger in the world. On the contrary, food policies remain inadequate and unfair: they promote

unsustainable food production methods and distribution, which do not benefit the majority of rural and urban population resulting in 36 million deaths from hunger every year¹ .

5 On the international level, the Structural Adjustment Policies implemented by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Agreement on Agriculture in the World Trade Organization (WTO) as well as bilateral free trade agreements like EU's Economic Partnership agreements and Free Trade Agreements (EFTA) endanger *farmers'* ability to feed their own people. On European level, the
10 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) does not prioritize sustainable agriculture sufficiently nor at all levels. This has led to large scale commercial and environmentally hostile farming whereby consumers have become detached from producers and the (agricultural) food processes.

15 Intellectual property rights (IPR) (like patents), seed breeders' rights and other national and international efforts to control seeds also undermine farmers' autonomy and young people's possibilities to start up.
A lack of investments in infrastructure and social activities, economical perspectives in rural areas on top of the difficulty to access land lead to a
20 decreasing number of young farmers. Rural areas are not attractive anymore and young people see no opportunities to become farmers.

We call for:

- 25 • Food Sovereignty as regional and national right and adopted in international food policies
- National land reforms that ensure equitable and fair access to land, where it's necessary.
- Policies which favor environmentally friendly agriculture.
- 30 • Prioritize small-scale sustainable agriculture as it can feed the world, a conclusion supported by the International Assessment of Agriculture and Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD). They stated that 'business as usual' is no longer an option.
- Fair trade for all, including the preference of local trade, the right to protect local food products in order to prevent dumping and bring decent
35 incomes for farmers. This means that it cannot be done by big transnational companies.
- The rejection of intellectual property rights on life (e.g. on plants, seeds)
- The recognition of these proposals in the European CAP 2013: CAP has to promote Food Sovereignty, allow decent incomes for farmers, promote
40 sustainable use of all natural resources, help to access land and set-up of farms for young farmers. CAP's focus has to be on rural development rather than on international trade rules. CAP has to stop the promotion of

¹ [Commission on Human Rights, "The right to food : Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/25". Office Of The High Commissioner For Human Rights, United Nations](#), April 22, 2002, p. 2. "every year 36 million people die, directly or indirectly, as a result of hunger and nutritional deficiencies, most of them women and children, particularly in developing countries, in a world that already produces enough food to feed the whole global population".

[United Nations Information Service. "Independent Expert On Effects Of Structural Adjustment, Special Rapporteur On Right To Food Present Reports: Commission Continues General Debate On Economic, Social And Cultural Rights". United Nations](#), March 29, 2004, p. 6. "Around 36 million people died from hunger directly or indirectly every year".

genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and of large-scale industrialized agrofuels. GMOs contribute to the loss of seed biodiversity and its access for farmers all over the world. European Governments have to take responsibility for a lack of accountability in their policies. This short-coming has long existed in world history and can be observed in neo-colonialism and neo-liberal systems.

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- Strengthen youth participation in consultation and policy making bodies.
- Strengthen the rights of women in agricultural policies, as they are most often marginalized, even though they produce 50 % of the food in the world (and up to 80 % in most developing countries).
- Investments to rejuvenate rural areas.
- Policies which support young farmers to start-up their farms.
- Sustainable and local production and consumption of agro-fuels as long as it will not compete with food production.
- Stop land grabbing: foreign direct investments and speculations that endanger the food production for the local population

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II. Governance for food decisions

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We notice that:

Currently, food decisions are taken by undemocratic and non-transparent bodies. Multinationals have too much power. They represent the commercial interests of a small number of people, and yet they have gained control over farmers and consumers, production and consumption habits, dictating what we eat. The World Trade Organization (WTO) controls global food policies without respecting local, regional and national sovereignty. There are not sufficient opportunities for civil society to participate in all aspects of agricultural issues.

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We call for:

- Local democratic control over resources for food production: natural resources, land, seeds, credit and markets.
- The installation of multi-participatory decision bodies concerning food and agriculture policies: Priority should be given to the participation of producers as well as consumers. Global governance is a chance for stakeholders at all levels to participate.
- The strong imbalance of means between private companies' lobby and social movements should be compensated by political regulations.
- Global governance is a chance for stakeholders at all levels to participate.
- The United Nations shall have more power than IMF and World Bank.
- Young voices have to be heard in policies that affect rural youngsters and their common future.
- The recognition of small and medium young farmers as sustainable managers of the natural resources.
- Community market orientation policies: democratic structures by farmers, consumers and national governments

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III. Food Markets and Economy

We notice that:

There are several economic factors which are central to the struggle for Food Sovereignty. The privatisation and commodification of food and water are a result of capitalist ideologies which are proliferated on a global scale. This paradigm threatens the production of good, healthy and sufficient food on local and national level. The ruinous practices of multi-national corporations such as land grabbing, the destruction of local markets via price dumping (*dumping of food at prices below the cost of production in the local economy*) and the export of the high quality products have a knock-on effect on the power balance between farmers, consumers, and the multi-nationals. As a consequence of hunger and lack of income farmers leave the rural areas and migrate to the urban centres. Rural migration progressively raises costs and threatens the future of food production. Agriculture has a key role in rural development in terms of employment, social life, etc.

We call for:

- 20 • ‘Not mass production, but production by the masses’³: which improves economic stability via increased employment, opportunities, wages and standard of living
- The promotion of affordable food that is healthy, sufficient and culturally acceptable
- 25 • Priority for local and national economies and markets over the demands of global markets and international corporations
- Promotion, protection and equal access to local markets
- Fair prices and wages for farmers & agricultural workers which enable a ‘fair’ standard of living
- 30 • Redistribution, equitable access and control over natural and productive resources
- Price protection policies (e.g. increased import taxes on products which can be produced in the ‘home’ country and lower import taxes on not-local products)
- 35 • Support and rewards for farmers’ initiatives to generate business and economic activity
- Facilitate economic stability (e.g. via mechanisms for periodical review)

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IV. Food and agricultural education

We notice:

The future of youth in agriculture is uncertain. The promotion of industrialized monoculture farming and the orientation of agricultural education do play an important role in this. As the future generation, we criticize the lack of recognition of traditional farmer knowledge concerning ecologically-sound and sustainable farming methods. While many believe that new technology will save the world,

³ Georges Dixon Fernandez, President of MIJARC World

peasants' knowledge is disregarded. Agricultural education and training do not emphasize the link between farmer and consumer. The actual education system does not promote enough local trade methods and alternative production systems.

This reduced access to and presence of agricultural networks that are active in providing opportunities on a social and professional level are due to individualised agriculture. It became thus difficult to connect young people with fewer opportunities. Schools do not educate students about farming and food production. Consumers are not informed anymore about the origin and the real price of food. This would permit fair incomes for producers. Urban environment does not offer enough opportunities to get in touch with nature.

We call for:

- The recognition of traditional methods and peasants' knowledge; passing on the knowledge, combining it with modern knowledge.
- 15 • Agricultural education that includes teaching of alternative agricultural methods as organic farming, agro-ecology, biodynamics, permaculture; that stresses teaching on how to diversify local production.
- Education and information so that everyone knows what he/she is eating and how it was produced
- 20 • Improve link between rural and urban, create network between farmer and consumer. Small scale farming is a way to improve this relationship via transparency .
- Teaching both ways between farmer and technicians, to prevent top-down processes.
- 25 • Training and information sessions on market changes at glocal levels.

V. Our commitments

30 We, youngsters from rural areas all over Europe, commit ourselves to these proposals. In order to achieve our goals we initiate lobby work on national and international level. We sensitize young people, politicians and civil society by campaigns and call for changes in formal and non-formal education.

35 Lobby work

- Focus on essential aspects of food sovereignty, in particular access and control over land and food resources, democracy and transparency in food policies and policies that target young farmers.
- Promotion of youth and women participation at consultations on food policies on local, national and international level
- 40 • Promotion of youth participation at Nyeleni process, at regional as well as international meetings such as the Young People Summit, Social Forums, etc.
- Demand more democracy and transparency in food policies.
- Lobby for the reduction of transportation miles in the food system.
- 45 • Promote local services in rural areas.
- Strengthen movements of young people for food sovereignty at the grass-roots level.
- Lobby for the inclusion of farming education in school curricula and programs, including cooking sessions, field trips, gardening etc.
- 50 • Lobby for the enrichment of farmer education by

- ✓ the inclusion of traditional agricultural methods and knowledge
- ✓ alternative systems of production
- ✓ Politics and economics (market functions, etc.)
- ✓ Good practices (agricultural, agro-ecological, social) and positive experiences to develop the local economy
- 5 ✓ ethical and sustainable consumption

Campaigns

- 10 ✓ Organize campaigns that sensitize and inform politicians at all levels, which reach all social classes and particularly young rural people with fewer opportunities.

Main topics of campaigns:

- 15 ○ The real price of food that permits a fair income to producers
- Access to land (land grabbing, speculation, prices of the land)
- Food policies and recent developments
- Link between urban consumers and rural producers
- Waste of food, food waste utilization (collection, composting, feeding animals etc.)
- 20 ○ Alternative agriculture and trade (permaculture, organic, local chain of selling)
- ✓ Educate local people on their local culture by non-formal and formal education
- 25 ✓ Press releases on local farming activities.
- ✓ Use traditional means of communication (petition, forums documents, and movies) as well as new ones (cycle-tour for access to land, games, internet...)

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Non-formal education

- Encourage organizations to improve non-formal education about agriculture and food sovereignty, to create and strengthen social networks, e.g.
 - AMAP (Associations for the preservation of peasant farming)
 - 35 ○ associations of producers/ consumers
 - farmer groups of discussion
- Organize trainings about agriculture
- Promote sustainable production via agro-ecological, small-scale and family farming. This should be supplemented by resource support (e.g. subsidies)
- 40 • Promote capacity building
- Promote and develop gardening to strengthen food autonomy.
- Have a special attention for persons with fewer opportunities. Field trips to local small-scale farmers and local, skilled manual food producers (butchers, bakers etc)
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