

# **Peasant farmers confronting to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

**Proposals booklet, 1<sup>st</sup> version, November 2001**

## WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF THIS PROPOSAL BOOKLET?

Hard hit by the daily deterioration of their production and living conditions and aware that their very survival is threatened, peasant farmers have been involved over the last ten years in reflection on international level, in close collaboration with allies in NGOs, research organisations, etc. They decided to organise a World Peasants Assembly in Africa in September 2001, though it was postponed due to events occurring at the same time and is now scheduled for 10-17 May 2002. This booklet is based on reflection carried out over several years and attempts to present a synthesis of the main results. In particular, it relies on the following references:

- The contributions of different countries involved in preparing the World Peasants Assembly, a list of which can be found at the end of this document. These contributions were also used in the preparation process of the same assembly (meetings at Montpellier, Porto Alegre, Castelfabib and Havana).
- the reflection carried out by the APM – World network on different strategic topics. The proposal booklets take into account elements from all over the world on nine major topics. They have been formulated with peasant leaders involved in different national and international networks that collaborate with APM World. The list of these proposal booklets is available at the end of this document and on the website [www.apm-monde.com](http://www.apm-monde.com) They are the result of work carried out by workshops, work programmes, dialogues and meetings organised over the last ten years by APM (peasant farming, food and globalisation) in different regions of the world. They associate individuals and peasant organisations, social and environmental organisations, NGOs, etc.
- the results of the first phase of the federating research, action and training project known as "peasant and indigenous people's organisations faced by the challenge of globalisation" set up by the APM – World network, which involved work from eleven national teams in Latin America (Ecuador, Uruguay, Peru, Chile, Brazil), Africa (Senegal, Benin, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Mali) and China;

This booklet serves as an initial alert and a step in reflection that must continue until the voices of peasants are heard as well as those of everyone aware that family farming is vital for balanced societies; aware too of the lessons of history: *"it is easy to destroy a peasantry, but it is impossible to rebuild one"* (Louis Malassis).

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*"At the beginning of the third millennium, when the whole world is a global village thanks to the incredible progression of technology and techniques, humankind should be happy and not be bothered by problems of survival" (Kolyang Palébélé. Peasant leader in Chad).*

However...

## **HALF THE WORLD'S POPULATION IS SUFFERING FROM MALNUTRITION**

Today, food is an enormous problem for humanity all over the world.

- 800 million around the world are still underfed,
- half the world's population is affected by some form of malnutrition, deficiency diseases and those due to excess (lack of micronutrients, obesity, etc.) with often tragic consequences.
- The gulf between the rich and the poor is widening within both developing and developed countries, further worsening the nutritional and health situation of the poorest.

The FAO acknowledges that the target of reducing the number of underfed by half by 2015, a figure decided during the world summit on food in 1996, will not be reached.

## **LIBERALISATION POLICIES DESTROY THE CAPACITIES OF PEOPLE TO FEED THEMSELVES**

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, humanity now has the accumulated knowledge of both traditional and scientific approaches to farming capable of solving the many technical agricultural problems that arise.

The main question is no longer knowing how to produce more but how to feed everyone, especially the poor that mostly live in rural areas?

We are also confronted with the challenge of product quality with respect to health and nutrition, and respect for food related customs and culture.

The very different food production methods implemented over the centuries are undergoing profound change. Over the last fifteen years, they have been subjected to:

- liberalisation and world-wide competition between very different types of agriculture, fishing and trade, that destroys family farming and fishing and culturally diverse forms of food consumption;
- the concentration of major agri-business corporations involved in processing and trade;
- the rapid growth of biotechnologies, especially GMOs, which exist principally to maximise profits by transnational corporations to the detriment of food security of populations, environmental protection and control by farmers over their seeds;
- the development in most societies around the world of production and consumption methods little concerned with the environment and future generations.

Food is a complex problem all over the world, involving private actors (families, companies, etc.), NGOs and grassroots organisations, and public actors (local authorities, governments, international organisations, etc.).

Solving the problem of food also requires action in areas such as agricultural production, fishing, natural resource management, nutrition, health, education, processing, and national and international trade.

Solving these problems requires taking a new approach capable of dealing with and managing this complexity. The market, governments, major agri-businesses, NGOs, organisations of peasants, fishermen and consumers, and the FAO cannot solve these problems alone. We need new approaches that involve all these actors and instruments and new places at international level such as the World Forum for Food Sovereignty to propose solutions to these problems and take action.



# Peasants faced with the challenges of the future

## What are our origins?

**Agriculture has been the basis of every civilisation for thousands of years**, due to the food goods it produces, its capacity to harness natural resources and forming landscapes, the social relationships it builds around (in particular control over land). More than any other activity, agriculture fuels the imagination and forges people's cultures. Care is needed when considering the evolution of agriculture, since so much is at stake.

**International trade** has developed in particular since the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when the Europeans launched their attempts to conquer the world.

This trade could be considered as marginal since it has not made any great difference to production and consumption practices used by the peasants of the South: Egyptian fellaheen, Andean Indians, Vietnamese rice growers, and the nomadic shepherds in the Sahara seem to belong to an "immutable order". Indeed, if one looks at basics, i.e. the relationship between man and nature, technology has changed little over the centuries.

On other words, we can say that their integration in world trade has not given rise to additional wealth and capital and more efficient technologies, as opposed to what has occurred in the West where technical progress continues to accelerate.

**Thus trade is obviously unequal** in the invisible game of the market and their experience of this should cause peasants to be cautious when listening to the sirens of total liberalisation of trade.

If we were to forget history, we might give credence to the idea that the unequal development of today is due to the different merits of people all starting on the same line, though some are less able to exploit their advantages. This naturally leads to racist perceptions of the world.

However, we know that **violence** was at the origin of today's global economy, the violence of conquest that occurred through massacres of indigenous peoples, the violence of the slave trade that savaged Africa, the violence of colonisation that drained the wealth of subject countries, the violence of decolonisation and wars of liberation, and the violence of the Cold War that supported dictators and endless civil wars in the countries of the South.

There is nothing gratuitous about this violence, it has accompanied every stage of capitalism's expansion since it began and today's globalisation is nothing more than **a new stage in the expansion of capitalism**. Capitalism was in crisis at the beginning of the nineties, mainly because developing countries had reached saturation point and growth could only be achieved by opening up new markets (above all in the emerging economies). This new stage must above all be interpreted in political terms.

We now feel that we have reached a historic turning point: the Cold War is over, dictatorships are gradually being replaced by democracies, an unprecedented technological revolution is taking place in communications, automation and control, radically shaking up production methods and modes of thinking. Everyone can legitimately think that he or she is a citizen of the world and that we are all interdependent and jointly responsible for the world's future. In parallel, the power of supranational institutions that formulate (or impose) principles, rules and laws is growing.

Economic globalisation is part of the same phenomenon propelled by transnational corporations that acquire ever-greater power and invest all over the world to exploit potential veins of wealth. The purpose of this liberal offensive is to dismantle the nation-state to the profit of a huge world market. According to its proponents, this liberalisation should permit the free circulation of goods, capital, information and technologies, and lead to better allocation of resources, better distribution of activities according to their profitability and consequently to better satisfaction of the global needs of humanity (production being stimulated by forever more competitive prices). Thus globalisation is not presented as a machine for waging war whose aim to further enslave the poor; on the contrary, it is upheld as the best way for developing countries to achieve growth by specialising in sectors in which they possess comparative advantages (not necessarily in agriculture) even if they require aid to offset the cost of the changes required (redundancy plans, programmes to combat poverty, etc.).

### **What hope is there for family farming faced by economic globalisation?**

Since ten years ago, agriculture has been included in multilateral negotiations to liberalise world trade (the Marrakech Agreements and the creation of the WTO 1995). These agreements would have us believe that every type of agriculture around the world can benefit from globalisation. However, agriculture belongs to those sectors of production where differences of productivity can range from 1 to 30 for yields, and from 1 to 100 for labour productivity). Generalised competition between farmers using extremely different levels of technology can only result in destroying the least advanced peasant farming communities.

Countries that support ultra-liberal positions are those that are sure of their comparative advantages (such as the Cairns Group), since they are certain of rapidly concentrating control over the world's supply for food products. This would result in the speedy uniformisation of consumption around the world.

Other countries, particularly countries such as America, Japan and those of the European Union, maintain high productivity levels thanks to the strong and lasting support they give to agriculture which they intend to protect, since they want to continue exporting on the world market and maintain the activity of as many farms as possible (even those that make a loss) since they fulfil different roles, for example, they provide cohesion to territorial development.

Everyone is aware that given the stakes in play, the poorest farmers of the South have little to look forward to, apart from producing only tropical produce (coffee, cocoa, cotton, fruits, etc.). Furthermore, these products will not necessarily be produced by peasants but rather by large industrial farms. However, to reach a satisfactory technological level, according to theory, it is necessary to attract foreign investment.

On the other hand, if we get rid of this theoretical model and blueprint for progress, signs of resistance and hope can be discerned, showing that an alternative is perhaps possible.

### **Globalisation, the state of things**

⇒ *The influence of peasant farmers in the world*

The number of people working in agricultural production world-wide remains substantial. According to the FAO, it amounted to 1,292,468,000 in 1995, of which 1,246,718,000 live in

what the United Nations calls the "Third World", i.e. 96,5 % (1). The active agricultural population has increased by nearly 60% in developing countries over the last 25 years, in spite of increasing urbanisation. Although it has started to fall in the Americas (especially Brazil), it is still progressing in Africa and Asia.

The main characteristics of peasant agriculture should be borne in mind:

It is comprised of family type farms, where a large part of production is consumed by the family, the rest, in particular products for exportation, being sold on the market.

Capital investment in production equipment is low since these farms mainly exist to produce crops without any aim for expansion, i.e. for the survival of those who grow them.

Obviously, not every farm in the South is run by peasants, similarly not all farms in the North are run by businesses; however, this order of magnitude remains exact.

There are 50 million modern farmers as opposed to 1.25 billion peasant farmers, each of these types of farming produce half the world agricultural gross product.

The vast majority of the rural populations of developing countries rely on peasant and indigenous agriculture. Their relative size has grown considerably with the end of collective farming in the socialist countries (China, Vietnam, ex Soviet countries, Eastern Europe).

- ✓ They play a central role in food security; estimates for 1995 show that every person working in agriculture in developing countries fed 3.6 people (3.3 in 1970). Given the size of the agricultural population in comparison to the total population, this underlines the share of agricultural production intended for family consumption. In other words, most of humanity attempts to ensure its food security through its own production, without reliance on the market.
- ✓ In many countries, they ensure most of the agricultural production intended for national industries and exports: this is the case of Africa for cotton, coffee, cocoa, etc.; of Asia for rubber trees, for example, most of which belong to village plantations, etc.
- ✓ Lastly, it should be noted that peasant and indigenous agriculture also plays a major role regarding employment, natural resource management and territorial development.

⇒ *The situation is rapidly worsening*

**It is the very existence of family, peasant and indigenous agriculture that is threatened by the neo-liberal agricultural policies attached to globalisation.**

- ✓ The environment of family farming has changed:
  - The structural adjustment policies implemented at the beginning of the eighties have changed the rules at national level: the state has withdrawn from its function of support, price policies have been abandoned, aid and subsidies have stopped (fertilisers, loans, compensatory mechanisms, etc.), the end of administered sectors and public monopolies (privatisation, etc.). Consequently, family farmers have lost most of the support and national aid that had at least permitted them to survive, if not help them progress.  
In most countries (e.g., those of Latin America), the survival of medium family farms that had previously succeeded in capitalising production resources is now threatened.



- Secondly, international markets have been progressively liberalised: the major international agreements on agricultural products (coffee, cocoa) have ended and customs and tariff barriers have been dismantled. Now, with the WTO, the rules are being radically changed at international level, thereby leading to changes in the way family farmers are integrated in the market. Peasants are directly affected by a world market with recently very unstable prices for tropical products (due to demand lacking in flexibility and increased competitiveness on the supply side). They are also rivalled on domestic markets by imported products, many of which are subsidised by the exporting country.

✓ Competition and the search for competitiveness

In this context, family farmers are obliged to be competitive, otherwise they will disappear or take refuge in self-sufficiency.

- Differences in agricultural production between the industrialised and Third World countries have continued to increase over the last forty years (mentioned earlier).
- Increased productivity results in trends towards lower prices and the least productive farmers are confronted by international prices determined by the most productive agriculture (which benefits moreover from public aid). Many farms in the Third World that survived thanks to a regulated price system at national level, now make losses, and the situation is even worse for farms that were already in a precarious position.

By focusing almost exclusively on competitiveness, largely illusory given the differences of productivity to begin with, neo-liberal policies also lead to two consequences:

- on the one hand, they force family farmers to work according to an expensive productivist system that only a few of them can afford and whose effects on the environment are harmful: deforestation, erosion, massive use of chemical fertilisers, introduction of GMO seeds, etc.
- on the other hand, it considerably compromises the food security of the local population (concentration of land ownership, priority for crops intended for the market, since it is the monetary revenue they generate that pays for the equipment and fertilisers promoted by the dominant systems of modernisation, etc.).

✓ Marginalisation and exclusion are already occurring

**The marginalisation of family agriculture has already occurred to a great extent**

- Neo-liberal agricultural policies effectively turn farms into businesses, especially in outer urban areas. Land reforms (and agrarian counter reforms, etc.) speed up the process of concentrating the best farmland into the hands of minority interests, in fact "rural entrepreneurs" who are given as examples, whereas they start off with far more considerable resources (land, technical resources, training and information, etc.) than those of the majority of the population.

- Generally, we are witnessing a substantial increase of poverty that affects forever wider swathes of the rural population, leading them to resort to all types of action in order to survive, putting greater pressure on natural resources, etc. Some social categories are particularly vulnerable (small peasant farmers, women, the young), and entire areas are sometimes marginalised, with public and private investments going to regions with high agricultural-ecological potential that produce for export.

Societies that have already undergone fragmentation due to colonisation and/or development and modernisation policies implemented before structural adjustment are now also affected by greater social stratification, control by private interests over the resources of the population (land, forests, water, etc.), generalised impoverishment, territorial imbalances that spring up or which crystallise, and too much attention given to individual prosperity based on economic success. Rural populations, especially the young, obviously lose confidence in their future, creating fuel for crises, conflicts and wars, many examples of which illustrate that these populations are the first victims.

### **The situation could get even worse**

The WTO negotiations that ran aground in Seattle, in particular due to agricultural issues, are starting up once again (at Doha in Katar in November 2001). The Europeans seem ready to make concessions to the Cairns Group, by accepting the progressive reduction of export subsidies, though there is no evidence that concessions will be made in favour of developing countries so that they can implement a genuine agricultural policy to promote peasant agriculture. Some countries such as Peru and Bolivia implement ultra liberal policies, whereas their agriculture mostly consists of small farm production. This is because they have made the political choice of sacrificing peasant farming in the hope of returns, i.e. foreign investment in other economic sectors.

⇒ *Peasant agriculture fights back*

#### ▪ **Individual answers**

Faced with a worsening economic climate, peasants adapt in different ways, as have the peasant farmers of more advanced countries.

This first takes the form of increased work by the family to intensify production or extend areas under use when this is possible. Peasants do not count their hours worked, the only thing that counts is to try and maintain former living conditions.

However, if agricultural work pays too little, it is better to find temporary or permanent work outside agriculture in order to maintain family farms alive. Thus peasants tend to take on several activities.

Peasants are capable of developing new techniques and diversifying activities endogenously, and use techniques that consume less fertiliser (biological agriculture, integrated systems, etc.) and allow them to improve their revenues.

Lastly, they also reduce levels by which they satisfy their needs or else they divest their capital (by selling animals, equipment or land).

All these forms of adaptation explain the formidable capacity of peasant farmers to resist, since they are capable of accepting far lower revenues in return for their labour than workers on industrialised farms.

▪ **Collective answers**

The emergence of peasant and indigenous community organisations in the countries of the South shows the will of peasant farmers to fight for their existence and negotiate their economic and social integration with political and financial decision-makers.

These peasant and indigenous community organisations sometimes have historic roots, especially in Latin America, where they suffer considerable pressure from authoritarian political regimes, while elsewhere they are very recent (e.g., Africa). Peasant and indigenous community organisations take advantage of greater democracy and the withdrawal of the state. They have often had to create their proposals and action plans in a state of urgency, under pressure, since they are usually ill prepared to meet the new challenges of liberalisation. The vigour of current organisations demonstrates the capacity of family farmers to react to the new constraints that affect them and their capacity to make themselves heard, even though their voices ring out in sometimes uneven harmony.

These peasant organisations are structured according to two main directions:

- The first consists in improving the technical and economic performances of family farming in certain sectors with potential for achieving sufficient competitiveness. This standpoint conforms to integration with the prevailing system, though it is a basis on which it is possible to negotiate with the public authorities to improve production conditions (loans, training, etc.).
- The second consists in mobilising the collective energy of peasant communities rooted in their regions in order to create sufficient strength to oblige those in power to treat with these "indigenous community" organisations and acknowledge their position in society, by giving them responsibilities (concerning local development) and resources.

These peasant and indigenous community organisations are the only rampart against unbridled liberalisation, which is irreversibly destroying peasant agriculture. They alone are capable of obtaining a redefinition of the rules of globalisation.

# The peasant movement's proposals

## A. MAKE THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL WELL-BEING A REALITY

***Commitments, treaties and conventions are necessary at international and world level to ensure the right to food and nutritional well-being***

Different documents have been ratified at international level that highlight the right to food and nutritional well-being.

- The first is article 25 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which clearly states food security as a basic right.
- The International Pact of Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, also refers to the right to food as a basic human right and demands that it be respected by governments and international institutions.
- Since the world conference on food convened in 1974 by the United Nations, there has been general consensus in the international community to give explicit recognition to this right to food and nutritional well-being for all persons. This consensus was reasserted at the world summit on food at Rome in 1996.

We think that the time has come, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, to make this right a reality at both national and international levels. This requires:

- 1) The most general ratification possible of the Pact of Social, Economic and Cultural Rights by the governments of the north and south in order to give it still greater force,
- 2) In the short term, the code of conduct for sufficient food consumption, written by NGOs, including FIAN, after the Rome summit in 1996, on the basis of decisions of the summit's action plan, should be included as a reference text at UNO level;
- 3) The adoption by the United Nations of a world convention of food security and nutritional well-being, and its use as the basic text concretising this right and objective of civilisation that takes precedence over decisions taken in trade and other areas.

These proposals have been reasserted at different times, for example, at Rome in 1996 for the FAO summit, for which they were drawn up, at the APM World network meeting at Yaoundé in 1996, and during the World Conference of Food Sovereignty in September 2001 at Havana. They have been refined and promoted by several organisations and networks at world level.

## B. REGULATE TRADE AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL IN THE SERVICE OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND SECURITY

The liberalisation of trade in agricultural products began with the gradual dismantling of customs barriers on 1 January 1995, when the WTO's agricultural agreement came into force. This agreement concerns much more than customs barriers and directly affects national agricultural policies, since it regulates the use of measures used by governments to protect and support agriculture.

This agreement is inherently very unfair. It has legitimised expensive forms of aid in terms of budget that can only be used by rich countries (such as direct aid). It does not take into farming methods (whether sustainable or not) or farmers into account; however, it promotes agriculture for export and intensive farming to the detriment of peasant farming.

The agro-exporting countries of the Cairns Group campaign to open up markets completely. It includes developed countries such as Australia and New Zealand, but also intermediate countries such as Uruguay, Brazil, Thailand, South Africa and poor countries such as Bolivia.

However, agricultural activity cannot be seen merely as producing goods. The multifunctional dimension of agriculture is defended by peasant leaders and the countries of Europe, Latin America and Africa. The most efficient agricultural policies have always been those that have protected farmers from major fluctuations on the world market rather than liberalise markets and increase trade. Agriculture is the basis of food security. It is the source of rural employment and development. It permits managing natural resources and fighting against desertification; and well-managed, it plays a major role in protecting the environment.

Nonetheless, international trade is necessary for tropical products and for countries with long term food deficits.

### **The principle of food sovereignty**

*We emphasise the principle of food sovereignty to permit agriculture to fulfil all its missions and food security in particular. Every government should be free to choose how it supplies itself with food as a function of national and regional community interests.*

Respecting this principle imposes rules for each country that must be adopted globally:

- Freedom for every country to choose its agricultural policy instruments, as a function of the choices determined democratically by the populations.
- The right to protect peasant agriculture at borders: this right has been, and still is, much used by developed countries. It should be a measure applicable by all countries.
- The banning of dumping, i.e. the sale of a product at a price less than its cost price, including social and environmental costs. All forms of direct and indirect support that lead to dumping must be eliminated.
- Cushioning the structural instability of international prices: this amounts to both stabilising the revenue of peasants for products exported on the world market (e.g., tropical drinks, spices, cotton), and guaranteeing conditions of supply on world markets at reasonable prices for countries with structural and/or conjunctural deficits. This requires setting up control of production in agro-exporting countries to permit better regulation of prices.
- The promotion of sustainable agricultural practices: to be sustainable, agricultural systems must take into account local, environmental and social constraints.
- The right to refuse techniques and technologies judged to be inappropriate: countries should be entitled to refuse the introduction of production techniques (or agricultural products stemming from these techniques) into their territories, such as GMOs, growth hormones for livestock breeding, dangerous phytosanitary products, etc. according to the principle of precaution.

## **Regulate markets, reform the WTO and the organs of local governance**

International trade is vital to ensure supplies of certain products to countries with structural or conjunctural deficits.

They should be able to supply themselves at reasonable and stable prices on international markets. Food aid cannot be considered a substitute for shortcomings in markets and must be used for emergency situations. Export subsidies, export credits, and direct aid without ceilings for farmers in developed countries result in dumping. These practices should be abolished. Doing this requires that trade regulations should be entrusted to a multilateral organisation that is transparent, democratic and endowed with the means to sanction violations of the rules formulated by us, without calling into question the principle of food sovereignty.

This organisation could be World Trade Organisation, provided it undergoes radical reform. It should only concern itself with trade, and comply with other international conventions and texts (economic, social and cultural rights, conventions on the environment).

This reform should be part of a more global reform of international institutions of governance (International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the multilateral bodies of the UNO). In particular, a World Environmental Organisation should be set up with authority to solve conflicts and intervene; furthermore, the World Labour Organisation should be strengthened. A higher authority of dispute settlement should settle conflicts between the different multilateral organisations, using as reference the UNO charter, the declaration of human rights, and the pact of economic, cultural and social rights.

Regarding the current debates on agriculture and the WTO, it seems that since Seattle the countries of the South have decided to take a stand, supporting interesting proposals that we had already put forward in 1996. Thus the proposal for a "development box" put forward by India to permit developing countries to use certain agricultural policy tools should be given support. It could generate more feedback if it took into account the protection required for the peasant agriculture of developed countries.

In the context of the combat against unbridled economic globalisation and the current misdeeds of the WTO concerning family farming, we feel it is important to forge wide ranging alliances that permit making changes in the right direction and avoid isolation. Regarding this, we believe that support should be given to the proposals put forward by the developing countries based on food sovereignty and family farming.

A new cycle of negotiations has opened at Doha, but these points remain in suspension. The power of proposal by the countries of the south needs strengthening. Henceforth, China should play a pivotal role. Thus collaboration between the actors starting to emerge in Chinese society appears to be indispensable.

### **C. SET UP PUBLIC POLICIES TO ENSURE FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITIONAL WELL-BEING POLICIES AT NATIONAL LEVEL.**

Respecting and satisfying the right to food and nutritional well-being means:

- adopting an approach that resituates access to food and nutritional well-being at the centre of life, production and consumption and makes them a priority in the definition of health, social, agricultural, economic and environment policies.
- mobilising citizens and communities on the social level and providing continuous education and information aimed at changing production and consumption methods so as to ensure healthier lifestyles.

- Promoting sustainable agricultural systems around the world that favour nutrition, health and well-being.
- Guaranteeing the nutritional quality of food while respecting food related customs and preferences.

***We propose a public approach to nutrition that is integrated, multi-sectorial and participatory in view to setting up food and nutrition policies:***

- The organisation of national workshops to define and monitor food security policy and nutritional well-being that gather decision-makers, researchers and actors: farmers, companies, retailers, consumers and NGOs. Examples of this type of approach exist in some states of Brazil.

This policy should take the form of concrete measures:

- Apply already proven programmes such as promoting breast feeding to the exclusion of other types of milk, and the addition of food supplements;
- Strengthen regulations on food labelling and the contents of food advertising, especially that aimed at children;
- Tax products with low nutritional value in order to generate funds to carry out preventive actions and promote health;
- Mobilise the agricultural sector to improve the production and consumption of foods rich in micronutrients, vegetables, fruits etc.
- Set targets for nutritional quality in industrial fabrication and mass catering: less salt, sugar, fat and more micronutrients and fibres.

This also requires setting up nutritional monitoring that brings together different actors in society. It requires social and community action, above all by the young, women and consumers, to analyse nutritional problems and organise educational and communicational action in particular.

## **D. PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AGRO-FOOD SYSTEMS**

We are in a situation of rapidly changing food systems characterised by:

- increasing concentration of the agro-food industry and food product retailing;
- a process of standardisation and uniformisation at international level, which is destroying the diversity of food related cultures,;
- increasing complexity of food systems brought about by longer production, processing and retailing circuits. This makes the products more fragile and less safe;
- strong dependency on intensive, industrial type farming dangerous for natural resources, biodiversity and family farming;
- food crises (mad cow disease, dioxin contaminated chickens, foot and mouth disease, etc.) which rapidly become international crises due to the links between countries vis-à-vis food.

We must change direction and take action to ensure that the sectors of production, processing and retailing fulfil sustainability criteria, i.e. preservation of natural resources, product quality regarding health and nutritional value, and economically viable companies with socially equitable working conditions.

***Regarding agriculture, this requires a deliberate choice at national and international levels to change direction towards sustainable and biological agriculture.***

Switzerland held a national referendum on the type of agriculture that should be practiced and the result has permitted the government to pursue an interventionist policy to change the whole of farming in Switzerland to sustainable and biological agriculture. However, the situation is different between developed countries, those in transition, such as Mexico, and the developing and least advanced countries. Setting up agricultural policies that include sustainability is difficult without the financial resources of governments. Nonetheless, it is possible to include sustainability in policies that support small farmers that are now being implemented in Brazil, Mexico and other countries.

As emphasised by the co-ordinators of the Romanian organisation, Agroecologia, sustainable and biological agriculture can also be developed thanks to initiatives taken by peasants. In only a few years in Romania, 20,000 ha have changed over to biological agriculture, a national federation of biological farmers has been set up, and a sectorial organisation is being formed to solve problems related to promoting and marketing biological farming. This process is linked to hundreds of training courses given to Romanian agronomists on bio-farms in France.

Generally, this nonetheless requires national public policies and initiatives, combining agro-environmental programmes and rural development, application of the polluter-payer principle, and cross-compliance to obtain agricultural subsidies via contracts between the farmer and society, the former being remunerated in return for environmental and social services.

We are only just beginning to restructure agro-food systems so that they become sustainable and adapted to the distinctive characteristics of the world's different human communities.

## **E. PROVIDE ACCESS TO PRODUCTION RESOURCES AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

The leaders of the CCP in Peru assert that land must be considered as part of our "cultural. This standpoint has met with approval from indigenous communities in the Andes and in Africa.

A large number of conflicts around the world are still more or less directly linked with land and access to fishing areas along coastal areas for fishing and fish farming.

These conflicts are related to;

- uncertain access to land and resources in many countries: the non-recognition of customary law, lack of guarantees for farmers and share croppers, lack of rights for hunters and gatherers. This is the case in Paraguay where lack of security related to land leads to poor land management by the peasants;
- very unfair distribution of land leading to conflicts with large landowners;
- claims by indigenous communities for their rights over ancestral territory;
- pillage of fishing resources by industrial fishing fleets along coastlines to the detriment of the small fishing communities of developing countries;
- conflicts over land along coastlines due to the development of new activities such as tourism, transport and the development of new towns.

As stated by the leaders of Contag (Brazil), "The democratisation of land drives and influences the democratisation of political, economic and social power in the countryside". This access to and distribution of land is an essential step in societies that combat poverty, in order to democratise them.



**Concerning this, we make five basic proposals:**

***1) Rehabilitate agrarian reform as a vital public policy in every country where land is distributed very unfairly.***

We think that fast and efficient action by governments to redistribute land to the landless and small and medium sized farmers has never been more essential and urgent, wherever land ownership is very unequal (e.g., in Brazil, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Philippines). Agrarian reform therefore constitute a "necessary and urgent public policy" that must be implemented in strategies to combat poverty. The great majority of the rural poor is made up of peasants and former peasants that no longer have sufficient means to survive.

*"Politically, agrarian reform is the chief means of breaking with the present system of development, which is responsible for exclusion, and amassing land and revenues in ever fewer hands"* (Eugénio Connolly, Contag). However, future agrarian reforms must take into account previous experiences and not simply base themselves on old precepts. This is the purpose of the second proposal.

***2) Systematically seek to improve the agrarian reform process***

Contexts favourable to the success of agrarian reforms are relatively rare, as they include internal and external trials of strength invariably involved in attacking the interests of the big landowners. Improving the process of agrarian reform above all requires making peasant organisations more responsible and competent, which involves:

- seeking the support of different social classes, by avoiding the constitution of a reformed sector cut off from reality and especially from other small farmers;
- creating local capacities to manage land, without awaiting the end of the reform process,
- the combination of individual and community rights to build viable systems, provide security to individual farmers and manage public property collectively;
- linking agrarian reform with agricultural policy to promote genuine development of peasant farm production.

***3) Set up policies to structure and regulate land markets where inequality is less***

This proposal applies to countries that do not require agrarian reform and to those that have just implemented one. In both cases, the evolution of agrarian structures requires management to ensure the economic viability and progressive modernisation of as many farms as possible.

Here again, strong, democratic peasant organisations are needed that represent the majority.

The measures that can be taken in the framework of these structural policies are:

- measures taken to tax large estates, over-extensive use of land and land use that destroys natural resources;
- measures to regulate and improve land markets (co-management of the land market by the government and peasant organisations, as in France), land loaning facilities for those without access to long term finance to purchase land;
- policies that facilitate the redistribution of parcels of land.

However, farmers should be given the right to work on the land independently of the right of ownership. This is one of the only ways of solving the problems caused by the equal division of land in successions between generations in the peasant economy.

This requires:

- protecting the rights of tenants, share-croppers or beneficiaries who are not owners. But this is only possible if strong peasant organisations exist capable of fighting so laws are voted and applied.

- Setting up specific authorities that own the land and whose legal status may take different forms, provided that the rights of those who farm it are guaranteed.

#### **4) Substantially decentralise administrative procedures related to individual rights to land**

National land registries and other such systems that argue that the only way to guarantee the rights of peasants is give them deeds of ownership have proven to be inadequate. The cost of operations and the way in which they function often dispossess the beneficiaries; moreover, the non-existence of local procedures for updating rights means that efforts made on the behalf of small farmers will be useless in only a few years.

The idea that rights can only be guaranteed by the acquisition of property should be vigorously contested.

Decentralised management of property rights at the level of local authorities, those holding customary rights, and ad hoc committees is a priority and condition to ensure the viability of land registries at national level and that the rights of all users can be updated at reasonable prices. These purely administrative functions should also be combined with functions to solve disputes and mediation, adapted to the needs of today.

#### **5) Set up authorities to manage common resources at territorial level**

Furthermore, it is important to manage an ensemble of entities belonging to the public (soil, water, forests, biodiversity, fishing resources) within the same territory or coastal area.

This is valid for territories considered indigenous and also for all other kinds of space and territory.

This need has been given great emphasis in Paraguay, for example, where Municipal Committees for Rural Development have been set up. Indigenous community organisations have also been set up in Ecuador where they have developed territorial management centres in the place of the decentralised premises of the authorities. A similar process is at work in most African countries where decentralisation is taking place.

It also expresses the desire to avoid turning natural resources, especially water, into tradable goods. The peasant and indigenous community organisations of Bolivia insist on this point. "The water war", that is to say the combat of rural populations against the privatisation of water in the region of Cochabamba had a number of impacts at national and international level. The issue here was also to find a means of managing and controlling the use of this water and of limiting this use in certain cases.

To ensure the effective application of these proposals, we think that it is necessary to:

- set up an experience exchange network on these issues between peasant organisations and between fishermen's organisations;
- emphasise that the combat against poverty and the sustainable management of resources requires agrarian reform, interventions related to land ownership and agricultural policies in favour of small farmers;
- lobbies to influence finance and decision-makers;

setting up new alliances outside the small farming and indigenous sector concerned with subjects of interest to urban populations (links with urban poverty, the impossibility of setting up as a small farmer, the poor remuneration of small farmers, the environment, food quality, rural territorial management).

## **F. REFUSE PATENTS ON LIFE AND THE NON-CONTROLLED DIFFUSION OF GMOs IN FOOD**

### **1) Natural resources are universal resources**

Using patents to privatise the innovations of genetic engineering concerns living organisms, their reproduction and the knowledge pertaining to the technology used.

The decision to patent life is a political decision made by powerful transnational corporations. What is at stake for humanity is its capacity to refuse a technological monopoly that dispossess human beings of the right to use vital products such as the seeds produced in their fields, the plants they use to heal themselves and the knowledge that they have contributed towards creating.

The patent system, which was originally developed to protect industrial innovations, is inappropriate for living organisms and their constituents. The system should be completely overhauled by developing alternative ways of rewarding innovators. A very wide panel of representatives from different cultures should examine the issue of patenting life so that these alternative ways take into account ethical and religious beliefs.

Support should be given to communities that have expressed strong ethical convictions against patenting living organisms, such as the group of African countries led by Ethiopia.

***The regulation of access to biological resources should be promoted; moreover countries should be able to opt for a national "sui generis" law that protects the innovations of local communities, in conformity with the convention on biodiversity.***

Industrial countries have taken advantage of the WTO to dictate the implementation of an international agreement on trade related intellectual property rights (TRIPS). This agreement obliges countries to set up an intellectual property system concerning plant varieties that protects private ownership rights to the detriment of community rights. The developing countries, especially African ones, are those most interested in the revision of article 27.3 of TRIPS.

Whether via the modification of this article or by including this demand in other international texts or conventions ***we demand that no patents should be taken out on any plants, animals, micro-organisms or any other living organism or parts of these and that no patents should be taken out on the natural processes that allow plants and animals to develop.***

### **A world free of GMOs in agriculture**

The proposals we make below make use of the reflections of the Peasant Confederation workgroup, meeting at Vaihles in the South of France, the proposal booklet compiled on material from the workshops of Porto Alegre (FSM 2001) and the internal reflection of the APM World network.

### **The risks caused by the development of GMOs in agriculture**

- Intolerable and irreversible environmental risks.
  - ***The destruction of a complex and fragile balance of genomes and ecosystems***

The very function of life is negated by the massive use of transgenic plants in crops. The result of still imperfect laboratory techniques, transgenesis produces artificial

plants. By transgressing the natural reproductive barriers between species, GMO producers are introducing new imbalances in genomes and the ecosystem.

- ***The loss of agricultural diversity and the development of insect resistant and adventitious plants***

The generalisation throughout the world of insecticide GMOs and herbicide tolerant GMOs leads to a loss of diversity of varieties and crops and increases the resistance of predatory insects and adventitious plants, without any lasting guarantee of protection of soils and crops.

- ***GMOs inevitably lead us to a single, conventional and intensive form of agriculture***

The impossibility of coexistence between crops with and without GMOs has been demonstrated in many countries. In France, the French Food Health Security Agency (AFSSA) issued a statement on 23 July 2001 that revealed “*the presence of GMO trace elements appears to be a reality. Analyses carried out by official services showed that 41% (16 samples out of 39) of conventional corn comprised the fortuitous presence of GMO seeds*”. GMO pollution makes it impossible for peasants to follow any alternative in biological agriculture.

- Aggravated economic risks that condemn family farming.

- ***Elimination and disappearance of the occupation of peasant***

The industrialisation of agriculture has dispossessed peasants of essential technical activities such as plant selection, further contributing to emptying the countryside of the communities that live in it, as has happened in Europe.

***Industrial agriculture cannot guarantee quality***

Excessive industrialisation has led to very serious crises among European small farmers, such as mad cow disease and foot and mouth disease. These crises are manifestations of the dead end of chemical agriculture that limits their qualitative and quantitative capacity to produce healthy food (soil and water pollution, contamination of products, loss of gustatory quality).

- ***Unacceptable standards of acceptability***

These excesses have led society to be more aware of food related risks, whereas the control seized by multinationals has become a reality through a strategy that allows no other choice. Since genetic pollution is irreversible, mass cultivation of GMOs in different parts of the world makes it possible to justify standards of acceptability (authorised contamination thresholds) in both producing and importing countries. Industrial patents on transgenic varieties and legislation on certified seeds (such as taxes on seeds grown farms) are part of a strategy to create a captive market that condemns any independence peasant farmers might have and reduces the diversity of plant and thus crop varieties (only a few commercial varieties of profitable GMOs will be produced).

## **Trials of strength**

- **The combat of peasants and citizens opposed to GMOs** (for example, in France, the fight to ban tests on GMOs in open fields and against legislation to prohibit or limit seeds produced by farmers themselves) pits them against governments and multinational corporations, the latter being supported by scientific research financed by the public and private sectors to develop programmes for GMOs.

- **The actions carried out by peasant farmers against GMOs receive support** from many other sectors that share the same goals for society in which family farming plays a central role: consumers, citizens, independent scientists, and labour unions;
- **The de facto moratorium in Europe has run its course.** All the conditions for authorising GMOs have now been assembled. All that remains is the principle of responsibility on which we must raise our voices high!

## Proposals

**GMOs expose the world and humanity to real dangers: uncontrolled food risks (especially allergies, resistance to antibiotics, etc.), sterilisation of seeds, loss of independence of peasant farmers, loss of biodiversity and the inevitable and irreversible widespread use of GMO crops.**

Our proposals attempt to define a transition towards GMO free agriculture, by leaving the door open to the possible use of certain GMOs under specific cultivation conditions (closed environment, bioreactors), uses (well-monitored and controlled medical applications) and limited objectives (transgenesis as a laboratory procedure is not called into question).

### - **set up an international moratorium**

Confronted by the proven and potential risks of GMOs and the self-reproducing nature of transgenic varieties and species, there is an urgent need to set up an international moratorium on the cultivation of GMOs (as well as on the dissemination of transgenic animal species such as salmon).

The principles of this moratorium are:

- The prohibition of all commercial GMO crops, though research into them can continue under safe conditions, nonetheless provided that other research into sustainable agriculture is carried out in parallel with as many resources.

While awaiting this moratorium, municipalities, regions and governments can set up local moratoriums.

### - **strengthen national, regional and international legislation**

Reference should be made to the **Carthage Protocol on Biosecurity** that recognises the **principle of precaution** for cross-border movements of GMOs. However, this protocol requires ratification by as many countries as possible to be effective. It sets out the procedures for prior agreement to allow the import of GMOs, requiring the explicit consent of the importing country before GMOs can enter its territory.

But precedence must be given in WTO agreements to the Convention on Biodiversity, which is the basis for the Carthage Protocol.

Thus it is important to include the Convention on Biosecurity in regional and national legislations (labelling of every step of processing) and demand zero tolerance for traces of GMOs in agricultural products.

A wide-ranging clause of responsibility should also be applied to the producers of GMOs (covering consumer health and the environment), applicable for the entire world.

## Strategic directions

- the development of **information systems independent** from multinational corporations and political powers;
- **independent public research** for sustainable agriculture without GMOs;
- the creation of wide alliances that associate in particular consumers, farmers and public researchers;
- **start up public research that puts societal concerns to the fore** by encouraging forums of dialogue with researchers.

## Action programme

- **Continue to denounce and destroy GMO crops** that propagate artificial life that leads in time to a totalitarian design for food and agriculture. Determination is needed to continue defence of family farming, which is a fundamental component of a project for society.
- Encourage **debate on continuing a moratorium**, and push governments to **ratify the Carthegena Protocol**.
- **Develop networks of seed producers for farmers**. It is not possible to fight GMOs if peasants are not allowed to produce their own seeds. We must develop means to widen diversity. The farmers of certain countries need technical assistance to help them acquire know-how to produce seeds resulting from local selection.
- **Organise legal defence**. Confronted by the pollution of crops by GMOs, peasants should be able to plead their case at international level to pursue those responsible and obtain the right to develop their own seeds. Note should be taken that the sale of non-certified seeds in Europe is forbidden.
- **Networking and exchanging know-how between farmers** on the threat of GMOs and on agricultural seed and plant production.
- **Drastically reorient scientific research** to support the needs of peasant farmers.

## F THE SOCIAL PROMOTION OF MEN AND WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS

### Access to vital information

The rural world has practically no access to information due to lack of communication resources. In addition, this information is polluted by that promoted by the major transnational corporations (Nestlé, Monsanto, etc.). Populations in rural areas in particular must have access to essential information on key issues: farming techniques, health, medicines, environmental management, meteorology, etc.

This information is part of the common property of the human community and cannot be entrusted to the laws of the market. It must be promoted by the international community, and governments must ensure the conditions for its widespread diffusion and implementation.

Regarding this, peasants demand more information and reflection on the current and future stakes facing not only rural populations, but also humanity as a whole. These issues include nutritional well-being, life and its protection, climatic changes, etc.

### **The right to education**

Rural populations in developing countries suffer from an appalling lack of general, professional and civic education.

### **Basic education**

The leaders of Contag (Brazil) think that the way education is dispensed in rural areas should be completely reviewed. Genuine education should be available for basic schooling and professional training, with the introduction of the sciences, techniques and development.

The leaders of Agroecologia in Romania think "education limited to practical hands on training transmitted from father to son on the farm is no longer sufficient to cope with the requirements of current farming methods". Other leaders in Paraguay observe the fact "that there is no access to formal or informal training".

The whole of humankind must invest hugely in education for the young and adults, especially in rural areas.

### **And education for peasant leaders too.**

This entails the informal or popular education sector which provides education to the activists and leaders of social and community organisations. Popular education has undergone a period of crisis as has community action carried out by unions organised on strictly national lines. However, experiences and projects are re-emerging to combat liberal economic globalisation. These include the African Peasants University, a peasant leader education centre in the Mercosur, and peasant to peasant education in Central America. It is important to develop places in which the leaders of social movements can receive education. They should have an international leaning and be open to activists in other sectors, develop a world civic view and have the means for dialoguing with each other.

### **Recognition of the place of women in the rural world**

Women play a fundamental role in agriculture. Farm work in most peasant societies greatly relies on female labour. To this work must be added the domestic work that befalls them, making women the most exploited category in peasant farming.

Furthermore, they play an exclusive role in feeding their families (conservation, processing and preparation) and thus in ensuring the nutritional balance of meals.

Consequently, they play an essential role in formulating public policies related to food security, research in production and processing technologies, and environmental protection, by making use of their concrete experience of all these subjects.

Unfortunately, they are kept to the sidelines of public debate due to the influence of customs and the handicaps that shackle them, especially that of lack of access to education.

However, they are increasingly active in peasant and indigenous community organisations, and they sometimes decide to group together in specific organisations. Whatever the case, these peasant leaders show great determination in pushing for policies that allow them to acquire competencies and power: literacy, access to education and information, teaching of activists about their rights and the setting up of public spaces where women can debate together and make themselves heard.

The massive influx of women leaders in peasant and indigenous community organisations would considerably enhance debate on the future of peasant farming and further progression towards realistic solutions.





## Strategies for another kind of globalisation

The governments of this world should be informed that if sacrificing peasant farming is the price to be paid for achieving efficiency and an abstract economic optimum, it will result in major socio-political imbalances within countries (especially very large ones such as India and China) and around the world, since it will lead to uncontrollable situations given that no economy could possibly absorb the resulting migrant labour.

Needless to say, all the proposals that we have formulated here show that peasant and indigenous community organisations are not standing by corporatist positions to defend farming methods doomed to disappear.

It is clear that the question of food and agrarian issues are intimately entwined and linked to several dimensions:

Obviously, that of satisfying the needs of the whole of humanity,  
That of the sustainability of activities in a world of limited resources,  
And that of justice, i.e. access to resources and the right to work.

These problems that concern the future of humanity are too complex to be left to the market to decide. Their solution requires strengthening regulation authorities at every level, where all the actors can formulate reasonable compromises that call for both intelligence and compassion.

This means that individual interests (the actors), which are healthy and natural elements for motivating action, should finally be subordinated to the general interest.

This also means that all the questions raised should not be dealt with separately: agricultural production and trade, food, ecology, acknowledgement of the role played by women, etc. but approached globally and coherently. Most importantly, the rules drawn up in institutions that govern the economic and financial spheres (IMF, World Bank, WTO) must conform to resolutions that assert positive rights issued by political bodies (the United Nations and its specialised agencies).

Peasant and indigenous community organisations think that peasant agriculture alone can meet the challenges of this complexity. However, this does not mean that peasant agriculture should remain as it is and refuse change, since some forms of adapted modernisation can obviously be positive.

### **A scenario for the future could include two major measures:**

- The first is to gain acceptance in the framework of the WTO of the **right for developing countries to create protected economic areas** (if possible regional), and to give them the power to implement a vigorous policy to support the modernisation of peasant agriculture with the long term aim of permitting it to withstand international competition. The soundness of this position has been confirmed by every analysis and by the success of the European agricultural policy from 1960 to 1990, which is a perfect illustration. Peasant agriculture in Europe has been able to modernise itself, satisfy the needs of Europe and produce surpluses for export, achieving productivity levels among the highest in the world.

However, the European agricultural policy has led to shortcomings in areas such as respect for the environment, food safety, and so forth, but it can be used as a model for agricultural policies that take these new dimensions into account.

This option should lead society to give priority to the consumption of local products, which in the short term may lead to higher prices than if countries were to purchase supplies on the world market (this path runs counter to the policy followed up to now that systematically privileges the urban consumer to the detriment of farmers in the same country).

This change can be softened by implementing a suitable food policy aimed at the poor and vulnerable. Formulated by the public authorities, it would make use of networks of local development organisations, which would distribute food aid and draw up nutrition programmes in urban districts.

This could also lead to innovations in food distribution and packaging methods, with in particular the organisation of supply as direct as possible from the farmer to the consumer (as with the "ferias" in Venezuela).

- It is not enough to protect the domestic market, it must be possible to **satisfy demand for lower prices**. This means that peasant farmers should become more productive and generate larger agricultural surpluses to supply the market. To improve their performance, peasant farmers can use technology (2) that is adapted but which requires more know-how and capital.

However, this technological change in agriculture is not helped by the current trend. Indeed, the increase of the active population living from farming greatly exceeds the increase in the exploitation of new land, resulting in a reduction of farmland available per farmer. The size of farms is decreasing and we are heading towards a reduction of marketable agricultural surpluses, since production tends to be increasingly consumed by its producers (thus we risk returning to self-sufficiency).

The only solution is to accept that a large number of peasants should give up agricultural production and take up other activities.

Since it is neither possible nor desirable for this population to swarm to cities that cannot accommodate them under decent conditions, jobs must be created in production activities (agro-food industry, machines) and services (transport, tourism, maintenance of farm machines, accounting-management, education and agricultural consulting, etc.), to permit the population to continue living in rural areas.

This is the problem at present in China (seen by the APM groups during a study mission in the province of Ningxia in 1999), which is trying to transfer 3 to 400 million people from peasant agriculture (out of a billion peasants) to new activities in the countryside.

For this scenario to see the light of day, **a strategy must be formulated based on peasant and indigenous community organisations**.

Whatever their weaknesses and shortcomings, these indigenous peasant organisations are alone capable of protecting the interests of peasant farming.

Thus, they have a **crucial role** to play.

Furthermore, they are drawn between different goals that have to be achieved simultaneously.

- Firstly, they have to provide concrete solutions for various, often vague and sometimes contradictory demands from their members who rarely make up a homogenous group;
- They must then gain recognition from the dominant economic and institutional players and thus accept the rules set up while working to change them.
- Lastly, they must reflect and prepare the future of family agriculture by formulating proposals for the medium and long terms, ahead of thinking by the powers that be, to create conditions favourable for negotiation.

To achieve this, **it is necessary to strengthen the powers of proposal and negotiation of peasant and indigenous community organisations**

- **Rooting proposals in reality**

Continual confrontation with the problems faced by peasants at grassroots level is necessary so that peasant leaders can give consistency to their social activities and the positions they take vis-à-vis the outside. The debate on social questions at national level risks cutting them off from their base, causing them to abandon material problems to become politicians. This requires constant vigilance to ensure these organisations function democratically, so that peasant leaders genuinely convey the proposals made by their communities.

- **The right of peasants to information and education**

This should not simply entail the transfer of "expert knowledge" to farmers, rather it entails peasant and indigenous community organisations formulating their own interpretation of change, their own concepts and building collective expertise, and strengthening their individual and collective confidence in their own capacities. It entails greater access to information and education, by setting up systems controlled by them, exchanges of experience and their implementation and the forging of alliances with external social actors and confrontations with others (Cf. APM initiatives in this area, the African Peasants University UPAFA, the Peasant Leaders Training Centre CEFODIR in the Mercosur region).

- **"Global solidarity between peasants"** is one direction in which peasant and indigenous community organisations have made much progress recently. The aim is to unify the peasant movement around shared challenges at local, regional, national and sub-regional levels while recognising the specific identities of each component.

Setting up co-ordinations such as the National Consultation Council of Rural Groups (CNCR) in Senegal and the Network of Peasant and Professional Organisations (ROPPA) in West Africa represent progress in gaining recognition from public authorities and actors involved in international development of the importance of peasant farming in all future projects.

- **Building alliances** with other social and socio-professional categories with converging objectives and interests has been given little attention by peasant and indigenous community organisations up to now. However, this is necessary in order to change the balance of power, avoid risks of corporatism and simple coalitions of interest.

Significant efforts in this direction have been made in Mexico (with the Zapatists), Ecuador (the indigenous people's movement), Brazil (the landless people's movement), and France (the Peasants Confederation, etc.).

- Strengthening the negotiating power of peasant and indigenous community organisations also requires better **use of the manoeuvring space** left by the dominant players; this supposes better identification of the strategies used by different economic and institutional actors.

Interesting opportunities may occur thanks to efforts made by the World Bank and development organisations in the framework of the "combat against poverty", now supposed to be the mainspring of their action.

## **Start debate on the future of family farming**

The main challenge at present is to launch reflection on the future of agriculture. This challenge is crucial for family farmers since for many, their short-term survival depends on the existence of

economic, social, sectorial and territorial regulations and local, regional and international levels. But it is also a **challenge for society** due to the many functions fulfilled by agriculture. This leads to the questions: "What agriculture? and For which society? which not only concern farmers but other socio-professional groups living in rural areas, consumers with their different demands, the citizen in general and public authorities.

In most cases, peasant and indigenous community organisations can gain from taking the initiative by questioning policies and politicians, getting media exposure, organising demonstrations, and so forth.

### **The debate must be organised on different geographical and decision-making levels**

However, the importance of the national level should be taken into account, since it remains the framework for implementing agricultural and food policies. What is more, international negotiations are carried out by governments that must take into account the opinions of those representing civil society.

### **Make public life more democratic**

Recognition of civil and political, and individual and community rights underlies and motivates the action taken by peasant and indigenous community organisations, often being their reason for existence. With democracy gaining ground, this recognition is increasing, but building democracy also entails widening social participation, recognition of economic and social rights (fairer access to resources, jobs, education, etc.), recognition of the lifestyles of local communities, genuine recognition of gender and generation issues, mechanisms to prevent and settle conflicts, etc.

Two types of measure could contribute to achieving the above:

- **Recognition by public authorities of the role played by peasant and indigenous community organisations for the benefit of the general interest**

This requires legal statuses adapted to the reality of peasant and indigenous communities (thus negotiated between them), that legitimate their actions and make them a part of public life. It also requires recognition of their initiatives in legislation and sectorial regulations (regarding services, management of community facilities). This recognition by the public authorities is also vital so that peasant and indigenous communities can participate efficiently in consultation and negotiation with other actors.

- **Set up frameworks for transparent and fair negotiations**

A large number of bodies responsible for negotiation and regulating contractual relations are being set up at local, national and sub-regional levels, representing a very important step forward. However, the relations formed between peasant and indigenous communities and other actors suffer from numerous imbalances.

Logically, it is up to the public authorities to ensure fairness in negotiations between the different actors involved, that the process is carried out transparently and that the decisions taken are applied. By doing so, governments can restore their credibility, provided that they put the general interest to the fore and rediscover the means for action they so often lack. This implies a more general political debate from which peasant and indigenous communities cannot be excluded.

# **CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WORLD PEASANTS ASSEMBLY AND THE PROPOSAL BOOKLET "PEASANT FARMERS CONFRONTED BY THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY"**

## **1) Specific contributions by country or organisation**

1. Peasant organisations, excluded communities and minorities in Cameroon: their role and the conditions for strengthening them (CNOP-CAMEROUN)
2. Social capital, a decisive element in the combat against poverty (APM-IVORY COAST)
3. Food sovereignty and natural resources (COPRASAT-TCHAD)
4. The role of women in peasant organisations (CFPC-CAMEROON)
5. Peasant organisations confronted by globalisation. Perspectives for the development of competitive and sustainable family farming (CNOP-CAMEROON)
6. The role of farmers' groups in maintaining liveable agriculture (AGROECOLOGIA-ROMANIA)
7. Ecological agriculture – a possible solution for making agricultural development in Romania sustainable (AGROECOLOGIA-ROMANIA)
8. Agricultura familiar en Paraguay (UAN-PARAGUAY)
9. Agricultura familiar e construção de alternativas de desenvolvimento rural sustentável (CONTAG-Brasil)
10. Mujer campesina, poder de decisión. Su aporte al fortalecimiento de los gremios campesinos para el desarrollo rural (CCP-PERU)
11. El tratado de agricultura de la OMC y el impacto en la agricultura campesina (CIOEC-BOLIVIA)
12. El grupo de Cairns y sus posiciones extremistas en las negociaciones sobre agricultura en la organización mundial del comercio (CIOEC-BOLIVIA)
13. La OMC y la integración regional (CCP-PERU)
14. Tiempo de alianzas o tiempo de independencias? Autogestión y control social en la organización económica campesina (CIOEC-BOLIVIA)
15. Workshop for reflection and dialogue on approaches to building a culture of peace in Casamance (Carrefour des initiatives citoyennes – Senegal)
16. Quelles nouvelles étapes dans la résistance aux OGM? (Confédération Paysanne – France)

## **2) The proposal booklets at world level issued by the APM World network.**

**These booklets have been written on different subjects by the partners of the APM network. The peasant leaders who participated have been involved in these reflections for many years.**

### **The proposal booklets at world level:**

The right of people to feed themselves and accede to food sovereignty  
Land policies and agrarian reform  
Food, nutrition and public policies  
Agriculture and sustainable development  
Refusing the privatisation of life  
Food sovereignty and trade negotiations  
Civil society and GMOs: what international strategies?  
The soil action programme proposal booklet

Educating the leaders of social movements

Most of these booklets and their summaries are available in several languages on the site [www.apm-monde.com](http://www.apm-monde.com)

### **3) Contributions from the Federating Project Research-Action-Education: "Peasant organisations confronted by the challenges of globalisation".**

Report and main results of the international workshop at Cape Town – October 1998

#### **Dossiers par pays :**

Senegal

Cameroon

Benin

Ecuador

Peru

Uruguay

Chile

Chine

#### **Continental workshops:**

Report of the comparative analysis of experiences in Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Uruguay.

#### **Overall synthesis:**

Implementation of the results of the first phase – November 1999 – November 2000

Documents available from Ciepac [ciepac@wanadoo.fr](mailto:ciepac@wanadoo.fr), the APM Africa network [apm@camnet.cm](mailto:apm@camnet.cm) and the Riad network [www.riad.org](http://www.riad.org)

## Notes

- (1) The figures are taken from " Globalisation, agro-food systems and peasant populations" by Pierre Campagne, CIHEAM – IAM / 1998 and rely on FAO statistics.
- (2) This implies a wide-ranging development policy that includes in particular the development of innovations, availability of production resources, education to acquire these techniques, loans, etc.