

From Maputo to Jakarta



**5 YEARS OF AGROECOLOGY
IN LA VÍA CAMPESINA**

From Maputo to Jakarta

—5 Years of Agroecology in La Vía Campesina—

By:

International Commission on Sustainable
Peasant Agriculture



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Agroecology is not for sale!

Introduction

At our Fifth International Conference, held in October of 2008 in Maputo, Mozambique, La Va Campesina (LVC) declared that, “we are men and women of the earth, we are those who produce food for the world. We have the right to continue being peasants and family farmers, and to shoulder the responsibility of continuing to feed our peoples. We care for seeds, which are life, and for us the act of producing food is an act of love. Humanity depends on us, and we refuse to disappear.”¹ In producing that food, we made a commitment to use “sustainable peasant and family farm agriculture,” as, “only agroecological peasant and family farming can de-link food prices from petroleum prices, recover

degraded soils, and produce healthy local food for our peoples.”²

As LVC’s International Working Group, or Commission, on Sustainable Peasant Agriculture, the Fifth Conference gave us a mandate to:

- Analyze political issues and the political context concerning the defense of sustainable peasant agriculture in the global conflict with the dominant industrial, agribusiness model of farming, and prepare position statements and proposed strategies, and work and action plans, for the consideration of LVC.
- Help make the political, social and

1 <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/our-conferences-mainmenu-28/5-maputo-2008-mainmenu-68/declarations-mainmenu-70>

2 <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/our-conferences-mainmenu-28/5-maputo-2008-mainmenu-68/declarations-mainmenu-70/602-open-letter-from-maputo-v-international-conference-of-la-vcampesina>

In the present volume we provide some of the key documents produced over these past five years, which give a feel for both the political struggle to defend sustainable peasant agriculture and the practical process of supporting the agroecology processes being carried out by member organizations and regions.

technical argument to public opinion about the benefits to *Society* and to the *Planet* of Sustainable Peasant Agriculture.

- Support the efforts of our member organizations to build alternatives to the dominant model, from the ground up, especially supporting them to agroecologically transform the productive processes of their member families.

In this booklet we provide the delegates to the Sixth International Conference of LVC, being held this June of 2013 in Jakarta, Indonesia, with some of the key documents produced by the Commission as we have sought to fulfill our mandate from Maputo.

After Maputo, the full commission met in Malaga, Spain, in July of 2009 to plan our work. There we collectively drafted the document, *Sustainable Peasant Agriculture: The Future of the Planet. Analysis, Position and Work Plan of the Sustainable Peasant Agriculture Commission of La Via Campesina*, in which we developed the guidelines we have been following ever since. That document is the first in this collection. In Malaga we planned a series of internal encounters of LVC organizations at the regional and continental levels, in order to map out sustainable peasant agriculture and agroecology processes at the national and regional levels, carry out collective reading of the political context in each region, and develop joint work plans and plans of struggle. Over the following years we held two continental encounters in the Americas (Venezuela 2009, Guatemala 2011), one continental encounter in Asia (Sri Lanka 2010), two regional encounters in Africa (Africa 1, Zimbabwe 2011; Africa 2, Ghana 2011), and

a continental encounter in Europe (Basque Country, 2012). Together with the Commission of Biodiversity and Genetic Resources we held the First International Meeting of Seed Farmers in LVC (Indonesia 2011), and the First Global Encounter of Agroecology and Peasant Seeds (Thailand 2012). As part of the latter, we held the First Global Encounter of Agroecology Schools in LVC, which now number more than 40 worldwide.

Along the way the commission met a second time, in Cuba (2009), and a third time at the Global Encounter in Thailand (2012). During that time we facilitated agroecology exchange visits by LVC delegates to Cuba, India, and the Philippines. The Commission supported all of LVC in holding the First International Internal Seminar on Public Policy for Food Sovereignty (Mexico 2012), and helped guarantee the presence of LVC at the climate summits (COPs) in Copenhagen (2009), Cancun (2010) and Durban (2011). Among the other activities of the Commission has been a process of identification, documentation, systematization and analysis of our best cases of agroecology inside LVC, for the purposes of socializing the lessons of these experiences to other organizations and countries, and also to produce study materials for our agroecology schools. So far we have produced one book on the agroecology experience in Cuba, and are working on two more, one on the Zero Budget Natural Farming movement in India, and the other on the experience of the agroecology schools of CLOC/LVC in South America.

This booklet ends with a draft of our proposed new position document and work plan for LVC for the defense and promotion of agroecological peasant agriculture in the coming years. We provide it for discussion and debate here in Jakarta. Please remember



that as of the date of the publication of this volume it is just a proposed draft, and not yet an official LVC position and work plan. But if you compare its' contents to that of the Malaga document, you will see that the struggle has intensified, that there is a growing consensus for agroecology inside LVC, and that agroecology itself is a territory in dispute with other actors who wish to co-opt it. Under those conditions we feel it is important that LVC defend agroecology as, like seeds, it is a heritage of rural peoples, that we place in the service of humanity, free of charge. AGROECOLOGY IS OURS AS PEASANT AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, AND IT IS NOT FOR SALE.

Sincerely,

Sustainable Peasant Agriculture Commission

La Via Campesina.

Jakarta, Indonesia, June 2013



Sustainable peasant agriculture: the future of the planet

Analysis, Position and Work Plan of the Sustainable Peasant Agriculture
Commission of La Via Campesina*



*Document approved by the
Commission at its meeting in Málaga,
Spain, 6 to 8 of July, 2009.

The defense of the peasant-based model of sustainable agriculture is a basic issue for us. Peasant based production is not the “alternative.” It is the model of production through which the world has been fed for thousands of years, and it still is the dominant model of food production. More than half of the population of the world works in the peasant agriculture sector, and the vast majority of the world’s population depends on peasant based food production. This model, the peasant way (“la Via Campesina”), is the best way forward to feed the world in the future, to serve the needs of our people, to protect the environment and to maintain our natural assets or common goods. Peasant based sustainable production is not just about being “organic”. Peasant based sustainable production is socially just, respects the identity and knowledge of communities, prioritizes local and domestic markets, and strengthens the autonomy of people and communities.

The food, climate and energy crises have brought the issue of food and how it is produced back to the top of the international and national agenda. Instead of the number of poor people in the world dropping, the number has actually grown, because of the current multiple crises. These crises are the direct result of the neoliberal, corporate led model of production and consumption.

The corporations have launched another aggressive attack against the peasant sector under the pretext of helping to solve the climate and food crisis. TNCs grab the best land occupied by peasants, to use for agrofuels and other monocultures. Their interest is to destroy our own farming practices and technologies and force us to use their technologies and inputs, which ruin the environment and the health of our families. This causes the massive displacement of peasants, indigenous and black communities to marginal areas lacking water resources, or makes them drift away from the land

Food sovereignty protects national markets from the low prices caused by dumping as well as from the high prices caused by speculation.

towards cities where they still suffer from hunger because of lack of employment and money.

La Via Campesina puts forth Food Sovereignty as the only real way out of the current crises. Food sovereignty responds to the food crisis with peasant agriculture whose vocation is to feed human beings. Food sovereignty protects national markets from the low prices caused by dumping as well as from the high prices caused by speculation. It de-links food prices from the price of oil through production methods based on agroecology.

Food sovereignty responds to the climate crisis and the energy crisis because the use of fossil fuels in industrial agriculture and long-distance shipping represents 30-40% of all the greenhouse gas emissions on our planet. The re-localization of production and consumption of food, together with agroecological production methods, would eliminate one of the principal sources of fossil waste and causes of global warming. Peasant agriculture cools the planet.

Food sovereignty would wrest control over our basic foods from multinational corporations and the private sector, and prohibit hoarding, speculation, and forced exports. A key measure for limiting the impact of the financial crisis on people's wallets pocketbooks would be the banning commodity speculation in our food markets.

The peasant and family farm sectors feed the world's people; large industrial farms dedicate themselves to exports. So we should demand food sovereignty based on peasant family farming, stabilizing the prices of foods and crops, and promoting peasant production of food throughout the world—healthy and safe foods for people, with fair prices for both producers and consumers.





I. What is peasant based sustainable agriculture?

Peasant agriculture it is not an “economic model of production”, it is a way of life, and thus it has complex aspects. The organization of production and consumption that La Via Campesina defends is characterized by the following aspects:

Peasants and small farmers are at the heart

It is diverse, based on family farming and peasant agriculture. Production is developed and renewed based on the cultural roots of peasants and family farmers, men and women. It is a model that can feed entire nations and guarantee the rural population the right to a dignified life, socially, culturally and economically, based on work on the land, as they have already practiced for many generations.

Basic rights are respected, and people should be at the center of all policies, rather than the market: we are speaking of a *just* rural society. This includes the protection of farmers, indigenous people and black communities, their cultural and human values. They are the basic human resources of food production. Without men and women to till the land, there can be no agriculture. Without agriculture, what will people eat?

Women and men are equally treated

Women are treated equally to men and have full access to means of production. Women also participate fully in the decisions taken by their communities as well as by the organizations that represent them.

Producing as autonomously as possible

Production is carried out as autonomously as possible, independent from external inputs (fertilizers, pesticides, capital, hybrid seeds,...), and conserves and takes care of the natural assets that are used in production (land, seeds, soil, biodiversity, water, diverse human knowledge, etc.). The reproduction of seeds on the farm is key, and/or by the few public institutions and research centers that do not patent seeds to make money off of them, as is the rejection of patented, hybrid and GMO seeds. In Africa, for example, 60% of agriculture is still autonomous, and we want to maintain and strengthen this model.

Access and control over the use of the means of production

Peasants and rural communities should be able to decide the use of the land, be able to reproduce their own seeds, control the use of water, and have access to sufficient credit. This allows them to leave to future generations a rich and fertile soil that produces multiple products in



a diversified production system. A genuine agrarian reform is crucial to put the land back in the hands of those who work it, and to create a dynamic peasant agriculture.

Peasant agriculture is diversified production

Contrary to industrial production that is based on monoculture, peasant production is diverse, producing as many as 10-12 diverse crops from the same land, in addition to trees and livestock. Peasants combine diverse crops with raising livestock (fish, cattle, poultry, etc.) crop in an effective way.

Local and domestic markets have priority

Local and domestic needs should have priority and peasants and small farmers should have first access to their own local and domestic markets. They should be able to control the commercialization and local processing of their products, in collaboration with their communities and with urban consumers, so that products can be sold at fair prices for both producers and consumers. Current Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are ruining farmers, and these agreements liberalize food markets, imposing prices of misery on the peasants of the world, which is why we continue to demand that both the WTO, and bi- and multilateral

trade agreements, get out of agriculture.

High quality food

It produces diverse food and culturally appropriate for consumption in nearby areas. This helps reduce transport costs and avoids unnecessary industrial processing costs.

Appropriate technology

This peasant agriculture is dynamic, integrates innovations, and is based on a blend of traditional and modern knowledge and agroecological technology. The technology must respect the environment, and be controlled by peasant men and women, that is, controlled by peasants themselves. Technology should be at the service of people and not at the service of capital, generating profits for banks and industry and banks. We oppose GMOs and pesticides.

The knowledge of peasant families and indigenous peoples is key

It sees peoples, indigenous and traditional knowledge and experiences as key to the development this model of production. It maintains local varieties and livestock breeds as well as biodiversity in the surroundings (flora and fauna).

Promoting agroecological methods

Agroecological production methods, based on the notion of obtaining good quality food products without negatively affecting the environment, and while enhancing the conservation of soil fertility on the basis of a correct use of natural resources, and the smallest possible quantity of industrial chemicals, are part of it. Agroecology requires technological development that based on both traditional and indigenous knowledge. The science of agroecology favors the protection of natural environment, biodiversity, economic viability and social sustainability. A diversified production is key to respond to all of our needs and obtain a stable form of production. The experiences of many Via Campesina member organizations, most notably that of ANAP in Cuba, have demonstrated that the “Campesino a Campesino” (farmer to farmer) methodology is the best way for peasants and family

The peasant organization is much stronger and controls its own destiny to the extent that it is autonomous of influence by private companies, political parties, NGOs.

farmers to develop and share their own agroecological farming technologies and systems. In contrast, the conventional top-down method of extension by which institutions and corporations develop technology and promote it to farmers, leads to inappropriate technologies that destroy the environment, poison people, bankrupt farmers, and enrich the private sector. Diversified peasant production is key to meeting the needs of all through stable production.

Peasant agriculture is linked to a geographic space or territory

Peasant agriculture is linked to a specific geographic space, a territory. Peasants are rooted in the place where they have built their livelihoods for many generations. One cannot understand peasant agriculture without understanding the link of the people to their land and territories.

Pillar of the local economy

Peasant agriculture gives employment to many people, not only those who work in the production directly. Peasant based agriculture is a pillar of the local economy and helps to maintain and increase rural employment and keep villages and towns alive. It allows communities to strengthen their own culture and identity. An equitable small farmer, peasant based rural economy does also provide the basis for a strong national economic development.

It allows a dignified life for all

It should provide adequate income as well as good health care, and educational opportunities for all members of the community (men, women, children, the elderly, family farmers, peasants, and farm workers).

The autonomous peasant organization is the base

A well organized community is fundamental. This strengthens the whole process of production and

exchange. The peasant organization is much stronger and controls its own destiny to the extent that it is autonomous of influence by private companies, political parties, NGOs.

Cooperation instead of competition and conflict

Solidarity and cooperation, and not competition, should be the basic principle of our organizations to resolve conflicts over the use of land and water. We must find solutions that are fair to all parties when there are conflicts between peasant farmers, farm workers, pastoralists, nomads and indigenous people. For example, we must take into account the needs of nomadic pastoralists for grazing lands, through local agreements that are fair and just and avoid conflicts.

Direct links with consumers and urban organizations

Peasant organizations and communities should develop direct links with consumers and urban groups to exchange products and services. This will allow communities to enjoy the fruits of their work instead of paying them into the pockets of TNCs and traders.

II. Peasant agriculture feeds the world and is far more productive than industrial agriculture

Food production today is enough to feed the world and there is still an enormous potential to further increase production. Beyond this fact, the total productivity per unit of area of peasant based production is far higher than that of industrial agriculture. Industrial models show “higher yields per hectare” for a specific product, grown in monoculture. But peasant agriculture typically produces various crops and diverse animal products from the same land, and is more profitable per unit area and more economically efficient. The quality of labor of the peasant family is also better, and they are better at maintaining soil fertility while using fewer purchased industrial inputs. Peasant farms also produce food directly for their communities, thus offering direct access to production and to food to more people. Peasants also manage their natural heritage, like forests and water, more sustainably and efficiently.

On large industrial farms, human labor is substituted for by mechanization and purchased industrial inputs (seeds, pesticides and fertilizers). This requires simpler production systems (monocultures). Although the yield of one product (the mono-crop) will be higher, the total output goes down dramatically, and the destruction of the soil increases. Also the overall efficiency of the use of all the different factors that go into production on the larger farms, is much lower than on medium and small farms.

Peasant agriculture cools down the planet

The “solutions” that corporations and their governments offer to climate change –based on market mechanisms– are a threat to peasant agriculture. Sustainable small-scale farming and local food consumption will reverse the current devastation and support millions of farming families. Sustainable small-scale farming, which is labor-intensive and requires little energy use, can actually contribute to stopping and reversing the effects of climate change:

- by storing more CO² in soil organic matter through sustainable production.
- by replacing nitrogen fertilizers with organic



fertilizers, or/and cultivating nitrogen-fixing plants which capture nitrogen directly from the air.

- by making possible the decentralized production, collection and use of alternative energy sources.

We urgently need to stop the real emitters of greenhouse gases, instead of penalizing peasant farmers. We cannot accept the “carbon market” mechanism, as it neither punishes nor stops the polluters.

III. We defend a model based on people, against the corporate take over

Corporations intend to destroy the peasant-based model in order to convert peasants into slum dwellers or workers on their plantations, and in consumers of their industrial food.

Peasants, indigenous people and agricultural workers are confronted with extremely low prices for agricultural product and/or extremely low wages. Totally liberalized markets drive peasants into ruin, forcing them to leave their land and their villages. Industry pushed a model of monocultures, large-scale, “factory in the fields-style,” confined animal production, and GMOs, using huge quantities of dangerous pesticides and wasting enormous amounts of fossil energy (chemical fertilizers, excessive mechanization, etc.). All of this has given us GMO contamination, the dangerous accumulation of PCB’s, DDT and other pesticides, and heavy metal compounds in soils, water, and the marine ecosystem.

The high production costs of the so-called “Green Revolution technology” (imposition of the use of expensive industrial inputs) absorb every possible rise in income, and stop poor farmers from using their own farming methods.

Overall, the enormous use for fossil energy in industrial agriculture and the long-distance transport of food, make the industrial food system a key cause of the climate crisis.

The industrial agriculture model spreads desertification, destroying the soil because of erosion, compaction and salinization, and wastes and contaminates water reserves through chemical run-off and excessive irrigation. It accelerates deforestation, which aggravates the climate crisis and creates huge losses of biodiversity. More than 5000 species of our genetic heritage are lost every year. It also causes an increase in the number of serious pests produced by, among other things, the use of monoculture, the genetic standardization of plants and animals, the eradication of the natural enemies of pests, and the increasing

resistance of pests and crop diseases to insecticides and fungicides. This system is also generating new human diseases through large-scale confined production of poultry, hogs and cattle. And it produces bad quality food products that are intensively processed, which leads to expensive food that is bad for human health.

In the rural areas this model of industrial production creates landlessness and joblessness, and migration to cities. It generates endemic hunger, under-nourishment and misery. It causes illness and death because of the use of dangerous pesticides imposed by the TNCs. The negative impact on health of industrial food makes already stressed public health systems devote ever more time, budgets and human resources to treat diseases that should never exist in the first place.

The industrial capitalist model also speculates with farm land, with the complicity of governments, driving up land prices, and leading to forcible land grabs. These land grabs (from peasants and indigenous people) are for the construction of industrial complexes, large scale plantations and industrial agriculture, infrastructure development, mining, urbanization, etc. This generates

huge profits for corporations and the eviction of people from their own land and territories, and their forced displacement under ever worsening conditions, using police, soldiers, paramilitaries and private security forces, who murder peasants, destroy their communities, and create an atmosphere of fear and repression. The misery and violence that this model generates affects women, the elderly and children worst of all, who are treated with violence, exploitation and the constant violation of their rights.

The high production costs of the so-called “Green Revolution technology” (imposition of the use of expensive industrial inputs) absorb every possible rise in income, and stop poor farmers from using their own farming methods.

IV. La Via Campesina rejects with determination the industrial farming methods, even when speaking of supposedly “organic” farming

We must be wary of the concepts of sustainability that transnational corporations, and their captive governments, are now proposing. They only try to replace inputs that have adverse effects on the environment with inputs that are less destructive. This strategy is based only on the search for new marketable inputs, and it does not question either the structure of monoculture or the dependence generated by the use of any purchased inputs. TNCs use foundations, NGOs and governmental institutions to hide behind, letting them introduce the programs that sell their products to farmers. In other areas TNCs support

social programs that bring “solutions to the people,” trying to polish their public image, while they pay peasants ever lower prices for their harvests and sell them ever more expensive inputs. As a result, peasants remain poor or go bankrupt, and are forced to leave the land. Industry is also appropriating so-called “organic food”, so we need to differentiate between “industrial organic” and “peasant” or “family-farm organic”.

Work Plan of the Sustainable Peasant Agriculture Commission 2009-1011

1. Transformation of Production Models

A. Network of Agroecology Trainers Inside La Via Campesina (LVC)

The construction of a network among all the agroecology programs, projects, schools, and trainers inside the Via Campesina – first at the continental, and later global scale – will strengthen the agroecology work that we are carrying out at the local, national and regional levels inside LVC. It will lay the foundation for future synergies, and facilitate the exchange of experiences, methodologies, educational materials, teachers, etc. With our current communications capabilities, this network could be a real tool at the service of sustainable peasant agriculture worldwide. We will begin to build this network with continental encounters in the Americas (Venezuela, 10-20 August 2009), Asia (2010), Europe (2010) and Africa (2010), followed by a global encounter (2011). The delegates to these meetings will be responsible for creating structures of communication and exchange, based on their regional needs. They will develop work plans, including training courses and workshops, the collection and/or production of educational materials, exchange visits, etc. They should also create networks of allies (researchers, professors, NGOs, etc.) who can

help us with specific needs in terms of training and materials. In effect, each encounter will develop a continental work plan.

B. Exchanges of Experiences

As we have learned from our experiences with “Farmer-to-Farmer” or “Campesino-to-Campesino” methods, direct exchanges of experiences (exchange visits) are the most effective tools for disseminating agroecological practices and sustainable peasant agriculture; it is a form of horizontal learning. We plan to identify outstanding cases in each continent, via the networks that we create, and organize exchange visits so others can learn from these experiences. In particular, to prioritize the exchanges, we will identify “problems” in some locations, and match them with “solutions” in others. Priority will be given to national and regional level exchanges.

C. Documentation, Systematization, and Socialization (sharing) of Experiences of Agroecology, Sustainable Peasant Agriculture, Responses to Climate Change, and Food Sovereignty

Once we have identified the most interesting local or national cases (in La Via Campesina), we will carry out

studies to document and systematize these experiences, emphasizing lessons learned, which we will publish in books and popular education pamphlets (and videos), to be socialized (shared) among the La Via Campesina and our allies, as part of the horizontal learning process. This Commission will publish a series or “library” of the best experiences of sustainable peasant agriculture, agroecology, responses to climate change, and food sovereignty, in La Via Campesina.

D. Educational and Outreach Materials (Study library)

We will publish 7 books (in a series, like a mini-Study Library) to provide our movement with our own broad perspective about agroecology and sustainable peasant agriculture. These could be entire books (like *Agroecology* by Miguel Altieri), and/or edited collections of articles. We will translate these materials into the 4 official languages of La Via Campesina (Spanish, English, French and Portuguese). We will also make an effort to collect educational materials and important documents, and make them available in a special section of the Via Campesina web site.

2. Campaign to Convince the Public of the Virtues and Benefits of Sustainable Peasant Agriculture, and the Struggle Against the Industrial Agriculture Model of the Transnational Corporations

This Commission must develop and promote a process of analysis, reflection and debate inside the Commission, and within and between the organizations of La Via Campesina, about our strategies of struggle against the dominant model of industrial agriculture by transnational corporations. In the struggle to defend peasant and family farm agriculture, La Via Campesina must develop and support/back-up certain arguments about the virtues and benefits of this kind of farming. For example, we must develop arguments that sustainable peasant agriculture:

- a. *Can feed the world.*
- b. *Can cool the planet (is a solution to climate change).*
- c. *Is a commitment with the construction of societies*



We will also make an effort to collect educational materials and important documents, and make them available in a special section of the Via Campesina web site.

that are sustainable and just (fair) for producers and for consumers.

- d. *Is the alternative to GMOs, pesticides, etc. (does not need them to be productive).*
- e. *Generates, together with food sovereignty, sustainable ways to make a living (livelihoods) that benefit local cultures.*
- f. *That farmer-to-farmer (“campesino a campesino”) methods are better than “NGO-to-farmer” or “Extensionist/technician-to-farmer” methods, and why.*

We will carry out a process of research, analysis and synthesis of arguments and supporting data, in order to publish convincing reports and publicity/press materials on each one of these arguments.

3. Public Policies for Sustainable Peasant Agriculture and Food Sovereignty

La Via Campesina needs to move forward in the formulation and promotion of Public Policies for Sustainable Peasant Agriculture and Food Sovereignty. In those cases where we can already count on “receptive” governments and/or institutions, we need to influence processes of policy-making and implementation, and monitor implementation and compliance, at the local, provincial and national levels.

In coordination with the Food Sovereignty Commission, the ICC and the IOS, we will hold an international *Internal Seminar (La Via Campesina plus allies) on Public and State Policies for Food Sovereignty and Sustainable Peasant Agriculture* (early 2010), and we should strengthen our participation in dialogues that are already in process with receptive local and national governments, and with regional processes (ALBA, Petro-Caribbean). We propose to begin the construction of a much-needed shared political space of exchange, accompaniment and permanent dialog with governments, processes and receptive officials (from agricultural, domestic commerce, food, health, and education, etc., sectors). We propose to begin with a series of 3 annual international conferences (2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12) on *Food Sovereignty and Peasant Agriculture: State Policies, Programs, Instruments, Mechanisms and Institutions*. Possible host countries include Venezuela (where we have had made initial contacts, with favorable responses), Ecuador, Bolivia and Cuba. There is a possibility of funding through the Bolivarian Government of Venezuela, the ALBA Bank, and Petro-Caribbean.

4. Strategy of Alliances

In the work of this Commission, especially on the topics mentioned above, we need to identify our needs in terms of alliances, and potential allies for each of our issues/topics, and we should build those alliances with the desired allies. These allies could

include researchers, professors, NGOs, donors, other peasant and indigenous peoples’ organizations, and organizations from other sectors, like consumers, environmentalists, urban slum dwellers, etc.

5. Functioning of the Commission and Fundraising

The current political coordination and technical support of the Commission at the global level is hereby ratified. The delegates from each region will take on the task of coordinating the activities of the Commission in their respective regions, with the support of the technical staff from their regions, and in coordination with their ICC members.

The Commission will meet again this year in Havana on November 16-21, in the context of the 2nd International Encounter of the “Farmer-to-Farmer” Agroecological Movement, and the following meeting will be in 2011.

Intensive fundraising will be carried out in every region, and at the global level, to support the Work Plan of the Commission. This will require political work with donors by the Commission members, and the support of the technical staff of the organizations and the LVC regions, as well as be the ICC and the IOS.

Debate concerning the concept of Agroecology

We, men and women peasants, indigenous peoples, afro-descendants and emergent social processes, representing 46 organizations from 16 countries, met together for the 1st Latin American Encounter of Agroecology Trainers in La Via Campesina (LVC), from August 10 to 20 of 2009, at the “Paulo Freire” Agroecological University Institute (IALA) in Barinas, Venezuela. We declare that Agroecology is necessary so that our peoples can guarantee Food and Energy Sovereignty for human emancipation. Furthermore, agroecology is vital for the advance of the struggle of our peoples to construct a society in where there is no private ownership of the means of production nor of our natural heritage, where there is no form of oppression or exploitation, and where the goal is not economic accumulation.

Agroecology is part of our ancestry, and of our

dynamic and rational way of being part of nature, respecting her biodiversity, cycles and equilibrium. It is one of our forms of struggle against the advance of capitalism and all forms of domination, therefore, it is a political, popular, social, cultural, ancestral, scientific, economic, strategic and class-based construction.

Agroecology is able to, and should, feed all of our peoples, and must be accompanied by an intense political struggle for food and energy sovereignty, the defense and recovery of territories, and genuine agrarian and urban reform.

From our perspective of agroecology, we reject all external certification of the fruits of our labor –we should not permit commercial trading in certification seals created by corporations– rather our guarantee consists of the calluses on our hands, of our ethics, of the hope that you can see in our eyes, of our banners of struggle that we have planted in the very heart of the large private estates (latifundios), of our roots, of



our veins opened in the struggle, and of our blood that has fertilized the soil for so many centuries.

Agroecology should be massive and international. The knowledge accumulated by our peoples should contribute to the development of new productive forces based on Nature and human labor, giving us the time and conditions needed to organize all the other dimensions of our lives; that is, our struggles, communities, culture, education, festivals, and others.

Agroecology includes: caring for and defending life, producing food, and political and organizational consciousness. Through it we move forward in our processes of cooperation, in transforming and adding value to our products (small-scale agroindustry), in exchanging the fruits of our labor, and in promoting an alliance between the peoples of the countryside and the city.

In our process of approximation toward a concept of agroecology, we carried out a collective exercise based on making explicit the aspects that we defend as part of what we in LVC see as agroecology, and those that we reject or that we feel have no place in our vision of

agroecology.

Our intention in sharing these lists is to reflect all the issues that we have touched upon, and that helped us deepen the debate. We understand that our efforts in this Encounter are just an initial input or “detonator” to induce the continual enrichment of our vision in future LVC Encounters.

During our debates, which took place in the various spaces and moments in this Encounter, we identified two elements where we need to continue deepening our reflection and analysis, to achieve common principals and practices that permit us to advance together in the construction of a new society, and allow us the move ever closer to what we as La Via Campesina mean by “agroecology.” They are:

- Agroecology as an instrument of struggle for socialism. Every organization and people builds their own process according to their own reality and national context.
- The concept of scale in agroecological production.

WHAT WE DEFENDED	WHAT WE REJECT
The integration of humanity, in harmony and equilibrium, with nature.	Academicism and Technicism.
Instrument of struggle against capitalism and for a just society.	The certification of seeds and of the fruits of our labor
It is a way of conceiving the ancestral and emergent life of our peoples and communities.	The standardization of the diets of our peoples and junk food (McDonalds, etc)
It is a social and political process that struggles for the integral recovery of food sovereignty and genuine agrarian reform.	Commercialism.
Exchange and cooperation among peoples, and combating all forms of oppression and exploitation.	Agrochemicals.
Agrarian reform is needed to make agroecology viable.	Individual profit motive and economicism.
The integration of scientific advances with the traditional knowledge of our peoples.	The privatization of knowledge.
Agroecology is a dynamic process.	Large private estates (latifundio).
Energy, Hydrological, Genetic, Technological and Territorial Sovereignty.	Monoculture.
Builds new relations inside the family against Patriarchy.	Agribusiness.

WHAT WE DEFENDED	WHAT WE REJECT
A tool for the collective transformation of reality.	Ambition and egoism.
Respect for the Mother Earth and Nature.	Hegemony of Capitalism.
Builds autonomy.	Top-down verticalism.
Doesn't contaminate the environment.	Corruption.
Requires clean, non-polluted water.	Genetic manipulations (GMOs, hybrid seeds, etc.).
Restores the equilibrium of Nature.	Patents on Life.
The right and the obligation of our peoples.	Privatization and monopoly of education, health care, natural heritage and agroecosystems.
Is biodiversity.	Speculation (ie financial, hoarding, etc.).
Agroecology is Ideology .	Consumism (consumerist materialism).
Agroecology is science.	Patriarchy and other relations of exploitation.
Requires research carried out by the people and at the service of the people.	The appropriation of productive processes by transnational corporations.
Uses technologies that are socially accepted and adopted by peasant and indigenous peoples as tools for transformation.	The forced displacement of rural peoples.

WHAT WE DEFENDED	WHAT WE REJECT
Improve the quality of life and the working conditions for peasant farmers and farm workers	The separation of human beings from Nature.
Based on horizontal social processes.	Is not simple “organic farming”.
Values popular and traditional knowledge.	Is not “just an alternative”.
It is collective action based on principles of cooperation.	Capital doesn’t “farm” – it produces commodities, social relations of exploitation, and the destruction of nature.
It is planting the seed of a new society.	Input substitution.
Agroecology has cultural, political, social, technical, environmental, organizational and strategic dimensions.	“Ecological farming” that is limited to producing food.
Liberating.	Just a policy or a law
The defense of native seeds.	That the “educator,” “technician or agronomist,” or “leader” are the “protagonists”.
Requires struggles against landlords.	Isolated production.
Should be applied in urban spaces as well.	
Productive diversification to guarantee self-provisioning.	
Agroecology can and should feed the world.	



Should strengthen our collective identity that includes peasants, indigenous peoples, afrodescendientes, and other emergent social expressions.

WHAT WE DEFENDED	WHAT WE REJECT
Should strengthen our collective identity that includes peasants, indigenous peoples, afrodescendientes, and other emergent social expressions.	
The character of the relations between peoples, communities and organizations should be clear, including solidarity and cooperation.	
It should reaffirm our sense of belonging in agriculture.	
It is a process that permits ecological reconstruction while favoring radical change.	

*Position Asian Agroecology Encounter**



*La Vía Campesina,
Colombo, Sri Lanka,
18-22 May 2010

THE POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR AGROECOLOGY

Need for a Policy in Agroecology:

- The need for a Policy for Agroecology, at the national level, to regenerate our farming system which is environmentally and economically sustainable and socially & culturally acceptable and just.
- Which help to spread and propagate the sustainable agroecology farming system in order to unshackle the slavery of peasants and farmers from corporate agro-business, Debt traps and menace of Toxic chemicals, GMOs, Patents and inefficient use of water resources?

Aim of an Agroecology Policy:

- a. To save farmers and agriculture from the present agrarian crisis and bring in agrarian reform which is pro-people and not pro corporate, discourage and disconnect from all elements of commercialization of agriculture.
- b. To ensure the livelihoods of rural population and farming communities and make a positive contribution to the production and productivity in the agricultural sector.
- c. To ensure the use of local resources (like seeds, manures etc) without any monopolistic control of MNCs.
- d. To counter the present neo-liberal policies on land, water, seeds and market.
- e. To conserve the environmental resources base and traditional wisdom and sustain it for the coming generation.



Agroecology policy must ensure:

1. Food sovereignty.
2. Fundamental human right to access and/or produce food.
3. A diverse, family/community (with equal respect to men/women) based peasant agriculture system, in harmony with nature, and embodied in local cultures.
4. An agriculture system which caters to the people and NOT to the MARKET;
5. A agriculture system which support fair returns to farm labors and ensure their food security.
6. A democratic land reform to guarantee equitable access to land in order to bring people back on their fields.
7. Protection from technological interventions until proven safe under the local standards of safety, sustainability, health and environment.
8. Protection from the entry and use of hazardous technologies i.e. chemical fertilizers & pesticides and genetic engineering, which are harmful for the people, the environment, the field, the biodiversity, the animals and the water bodies.
9. Protection and conservation of agro-biodiversity, varietal diversity, forest diversity, animal diversity and birds diversity.
10. Protection and conservation of local indigenous knowledge about food and food production and its control in the hands of local communities.
11. Empowerment of the local communities to control their lives.
12. Protection of indigenous knowledge and resources from exploitation and commercial appropriation through patents and IPRs system.
13. Rights of the local communities over their food, seeds, land, water and natural resources.
14. Rights of local communities to form farmers cooperative/federation to voluntarily/collectively enter into sustainable and fair trade to market their SURPLUS produce, in the local and domestic market.
15. Rights of the farmers to receive 'fair' and 'remunerative' price for their produce which cover the cost of their land, their labor, the cost of production and a profit margin to allow them to live with dignity.
16. Protection from price manipulation, speculation, dumping and unnecessary imports and unfair rules of bilateral and multilateral trade agreements.
17. That the policy on agro-ecology is in concurrence with all laws and policies on land, water, seeds, food, biodiversity, bio safety etc. If any policy or laws which will be in conflict with the provisions of agro-ecology policy, in that case the agro-ecology policy will prevail.

*Recommendations for the Global Seed Campaign of La Vía Campesina**



*As discussed during the Forum, “Defending Peasant Seeds for Life and the Future of Humanity”

Bali, Indonesia, March 2011

From March 7 to 11, 2011 we held a meeting of almost 40 representatives from Vía Campesina member organizations from Indonesia, South Korea, India, Madagascar, France, Mexico, Brazil, Chile and El Salvador. It was the first international forum of Vía Campesina seed farmers, “Defending Peasant Seeds for Life and the Future of Humanity.”

The great majority of organizations within Vía Campesina already carry out activities related to the recovery of peasant seed systems. These include political campaigns against threats from the seed industry and against criminalization of seed farmers; the defense of these systems in the eyes of the public; and work against national and international legislation that permits and encourages the privatization of seeds. Most importantly, there is also a great deal of direct work with seeds themselves, a task in which peasant women are important protagonists: recovering local

varieties and knowledge about them, as well as re-valuing, conserving, reproducing, selecting, breeding, multiplying, exchanging and selling peasant seeds through our organizations.

Our communities show that our own peasant seeds are better in numerous ways than commercial seeds. Industry seeds demand immense quantities of chemical inputs, water and machinery that destroy our health and that of the environment. They are incapable of adapting to variations in climate. They push farmers towards debt, dependence, and towards abandoning their healthy crops for the benefit of industrial export crops. Peasant seeds are living systems. Selected and multiplied in the fields in which they are cultivated, they are capable of adapting to local conditions and changes in climate, without chemical poisons and without the use of industrial technology. They work well for the food needs of our peoples, and are in our hands, under our control and care. They remain a true alternative



to the hybrid seeds and GMOs of corporations. We realize that in order to achieve food sovereignty we must also accomplish seed sovereignty.

Despite all of the activities we already carry out with our own seeds, we see the need to strengthen Via Campesina's existing Global Seed Campaign, "Heritage of our Peoples at the Service of Humanity," so that it can deepen, expand and interconnect our present work through mutual support and exchange, training, education, and joint political activities. We propose that the Campaign be present at international, regional, national and local levels, and that it should be developed along two axes: 1) that of a political struggle to defend peasant and indigenous peoples' rights to produce and keep their seeds; and 2) the practical strengthening and promotion of peasant seed systems. In this work the Seed Campaign can link the work of at least three of the current international commissions of La Vía Campesina: Biodiversity and Genetic Resources; Sustainable Peasant Agriculture; Food Sovereignty.

We have therefore formulated some recommendations

to strengthen and re-organize the Seed Campaign:

General Principles and Directions of the Campaign

- The campaign must act simultaneously at **regional/international, national and local levels**; it should be developed both as a **political struggle** to defend peasant and indigenous seed systems and farmers' collective rights to these seeds; as well as via the **practical strengthening** and promotion of peasant seed systems, that is, through the production of seeds.
- At all times we should **link the direct relationship that peasant seeds have with other major areas of work within La Via Campesina**: sustainable peasant agriculture, agroecology, food sovereignty, the campaign against Monsanto, agrarian reform and the defense of land and territory, women, political formation and agroecological training, climate change, food crisis, public policy, and



We urgently need to debate internally about the language we use to describe our peasant seed systems. We think we should avoid using dominant vocabulary of the industry, like seed “banks” and “genetic resources.” We would be better off using phrases like “peasant seeds,” “peasant seed houses,” “seed barns,” “granaries,” etc.

Peasant Rights. In other words, we should politicize the issue of seeds in the context of the other struggles of La Vía Campesina. We must be aware that seeds are at the root of food sovereignty.

- The Campaign should value and make visible the **role of women** in working with seeds. More generally, it should contribute to **valuing and explaining peasant and indigenous seed culture** to the public.
- One dimension of the Campaign should be to facilitate **understanding seed laws** at various levels: International laws (e.g., UN Seed Treaty, UPOV, WTO-TRIPS and WIPO) and national laws (plant variety protection, patents, catalogues, certifications, industrial sanitary norms etc.). We must define and impose the recognition of collective farmers’ rights to use of their seeds in these spaces. We should work to abolish industrial property rights that allow the privatization of seeds. At the same time, the UN Seed Treaty should not be more than a small part of the Campaign. If in the future we see that the Treaty is no longer useful to us, we should abandon it. Rather our priority should be on peasant seed production as the first form of resistance and as our own system for accessing seeds, a system that the Treaty will never replace.
- We need to **clarify to whom we direct various dimensions of the Campaign**: governments, news media, our peasant membership, consumers, NGOs, etc., with distinct strategies for each. And at all times we must be sure

to elevate the visibility and direct work with peasant seeds.

- We should always **create spaces for cultural experiences and expressions related to seeds**. This is one of the most effective ways to mobilize both our own organizations as well as the rest of society. At the same time, we should make sure that the seed issue is seen as a political issue.
- We should analyze **whether or not the Campaign should be expanded to address peasant breeds of farm animals**. We should decide about this as soon as possible.
- We urgently need to **debate internally about the language we use to describe our peasant seed systems**. We think we should **avoid using dominant vocabulary of the industry**, like seed “banks” and “genetic resources.” We would be better off using phrases like “peasant seeds,” “peasant seed houses,” “seed barns,” “granaries,” etc.
- The best defense of peasant seeds is to go on the **offensive**: we should move more quickly to **denounce and stop the threats to all of society, not only to farmers**, that are posed by hybrid seeds, GMOs, genetic erosion, and the privatization and creation of seed monopolies in the hands of the industrial complex of seeds, agrochemicals, and genetic engineering. We must publicize the need of peasant seeds in a world facing climate change, the food crisis, and the need to better care for Mother Earth.
- We must also recognize that **we do not only have rights to seeds, but that we also have**

obligations and responsibilities. In this sense we suggest working on a protocol or charter of our “ethics” and “commitment” to seeds.

- We need to **identify potential additional allies** for the Campaign.

Defending our Seeds through Political Struggle

- We urgently need to publicize, denounce, and struggle **against the criminalization of peasants** who use and defend their seeds. We should bring local cases of such persecution to an international level, giving them more visibility. We must make the world understand that we are witnessing a “war for seeds,” that all of humanity will be affected by its outcome, and that we who maintain and use peasant seeds are in the first lines of battle in this war, defending the interests of all people. We are those who today face jail, arrest warrants and lawsuits for using and selecting our own seeds.
- At the same time we have to make clear to the public the **true irresponsibility and criminality of destroying and privatizing peasant seeds** and of favoring GMOs, hybrids and corporate monopolies.
- We need to **analyze policies and laws concerning seeds in each country.** It is likely that the work of allies such as GRAIN and ETC can help us with this type of inventory. The Campaign should **politicize legal issues and campaign against laws** at the local, national and international level that legalize the privatization of our seeds, permitting GMOs and other industrial techniques to manipulate seeds.
- We should carry out **educational campaigns** directed at public officials who may be sympathetic to the issue of peasant seeds. We must show the importance of peasant seeds, targeting **education and public opinion.**
- The campaign must work strongly **against GMOs, against hybrid seeds and against industrial technologies that manipulate seeds.** We must alert publicly regarding the hazard that all of these industrial technologies present to our peasant ecosystems. And we must organize to ban them from our fields.
- We must campaign to decriminalize **farmers’ seed exchanges**, but also their transport from one country to another, promoting their responsible exchange. **We should give a name to this kind of farmer-to-farmer transfer, because we do not refer to this as “free” trade or “free” exchange. This is because the industry has always taken advantage of this “freedom” to appropriate our seeds.** This is closely related to the reason that the Global Seed Campaign was called, “Heritage of our Peoples at the Service of Humanity”, (rather than a “common heritage of humanity”, which had been interpreted as “common heritage” by the seed industry, legitimating their confiscation of peasant’s collective resources and those of indigenous peoples.
- **We can no longer trust public and private seed collection and research centers,** because our seed diversity is endangered in these institutions. It is kept in a frozen state, without being reproduced sufficiently and is not practically accessible to most farmers. Today, the genetic sequences of seeds are increasingly being digitalized and stored as computer data. Through digitalization, industry tries to construct synthetic plants. In some cases this has led seed banks to throw out their living seed collections. Yet we know that only real seeds are capable of feeding humanity. **We must therefore campaign politically on many issues related to seed banks.**
- **We must also rescue the seeds being held hostage in these collections and banks,** where they are lost or lose viability from disuse and neglect, and are stolen and privatized by the seed industry. We ourselves have the responsibility to preserve these seeds in order to feed ourselves today as well as

for our children to do the same tomorrow.. Simple techniques exist for keeping seeds for many years in small seed barns close to the fields. These seed houses must be managed locally by farming communities. **We must publicize our successful cases of seeds that have been “liberated” and are now managed and improved by peasants**, such as the case of ANAP (Via Campesina-Cuba).

- In the best of cases, the UN Seed Treaty is still ambiguous for abandoning its enforcement of Farmers’ Rights to use, save, exchange and sell their seeds as a responsibility of national governments. The vast majority of governments privilege industrial property rights, and do not respect Farmers’ Rights. We must therefore **urgently demand the approval of the Peasant Rights Convention in the UN**, as an unambiguous instrument on this issue.



Defending Seeds through Peasant Seed-Production

- The first and most urgent task is to **link our living experiences with peasant seeds within Via Campesina through an internal network for the exchange of seeds, experiences, methods, obstacles and solutions, and to support each other mutually**. We should hold more peasant seed farmer forums.
- We should **organize practical, educational and technical support among our member families in every country to give preference to planting peasant seeds instead of commercial varieties**. This includes having peasant seeds in sufficient amounts.
- We need to **rescue, educate and develop our own farmer and peasant seed experts**. An important dimension of this is to rescue important knowledge about peasant seed varieties and seed selection.
- We need to **inventory the needs, in terms of peasant seeds, of the members of each organization**, and organize ourselves within our organizations to **multiply and distribute**

The first and most urgent task is to link our living experiences with peasant seeds within Via Campesina through an internal network for the exchange of seeds, experiences, methods, obstacles and solutions, and to support each other mutually. We should hold more peasant seed farmer forums.

- **seeds** in order to meet these needs.
- We can campaign in our countries, with our women and men peasant members, so that **each person or family commits to recovering and reproducing one seed variety that is in danger of extinction, and give people community recognition for doing this.**
- We urgently need to **begin the task of documenting and studying our diverse experiences inside Vía Campesina with peasant seeds, and share the lessons learned with our members in the form of popular education.** An idea is to create a film and written material that is easily accessible to everyone.
- We should **promote peasant seed fairs** and local seed markets. These fairs and local markets must be managed by farmers and respect their collective rights.
- We should also **promote local seed houses managed by peasant organizations themselves.**
- We should **share techniques/methods for selecting, caring for and developing our seed varieties in a decentralized manner.**

Finally, we must remember that peasant seeds represent both our past—the history of our peoples—as well as our present, and that they are the hope for the future of humanity facing a changing world and climate. It is our sacred responsibility, to society as a whole and to Mother Earth, to continue caring for, defending, developing and sharing our seeds.

*Shashe Declaration**



* 1st Encounter of Agroecology Trainers in Africa Region 1 of La Via Campesina, 12-20 June 2011.

We are 47 people from 22 organizations in 18 countries (Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Angola, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, South Africa, Central African Republic, Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia, Portugal, USA, France, and Germany). We are farmers and staff representing member organizations of La Via Campesina, along with allies from other farmer organizations and networks, NGOs, academics, researchers, interpreters and others.

We have been meeting at the Shashe Endogenous Development Training Centre in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe to plan how to promote agroecology in our Region (Southern, Eastern & Central Africa). Here we have been privileged to witness firsthand the successful combination of agrarian reform with organic farming and agroecology carried out by local small holder

farming families. In what were once large cattle ranches owned by three large farmers who owned 800 head of cattle and produced no grain or anything else, there are now more than 365 small holder peasant farming families with more than 3,400 head of cattle, who also produce a yearly average of 1 to 2 tonnes of grain per family plus vegetables and other products, in many cases using agroecological methods and local peasant seeds. This experience strengthens our commitment to and belief in agroecology and agrarian reform as fundamental pillars in the construction of Food Sovereignty.

Threats and Challenges to Small Holder Agriculture and Food Sovereignty

Our region of Africa is currently facing challenges and threats that together undermine the food security and well-being of our communities, displace small holder farmers and undercut their livelihoods, undermine our

While our soils, agroecosystems and forests are ever more degraded by industrial agriculture and plantations, and local seed biodiversity is lost, the costs of production under the conventional “Green Revolution” model are more expensive and out of the reach of small holder farmers. The price of chemical fertilizer on the world market, for example, has risen more than 300% in the last few years.

collective ability to feed our nations, and cause grave damage to the soil, the environment and the Mother Earth.

These include local and regional manifestations of the global food price crisis and the climate crisis that have been produced by runaway neoliberal policies and the greed and profit-taking of Transnational Corporations (TNCs). Cheap subsidized food imports brought by TNCs, made possible by misguided free trade agreements, lowers the prices we receive for our farm products, forcing families to abandon farming and migrate to cities, while undermining local and national food production. Foreign investors, invited in by some of our governments, grab the best farm land, displacing food producing local farmers, and redirecting that land toward environmentally devastating mining, agrofuel plantations that feed cars instead of people, and other export plantations that do nothing to build Food Sovereignty for our peoples, and only enrich a few.

At the same time, uncontrolled greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution from Developed Countries and from the global corporate food system based on long distance transport and industrial agriculture are changing the climate in ways that directly affect farmers. Our lands become more arid, with water ever more scarce, we face rising temperatures, and increased extreme weather conditions like severe storms, floods and droughts. The dates of the rainy season have become completely unpredictable, so that nobody knows when to plant anymore. The changing climate is also implicated in epidemics of communicable diseases of humans, crops and livestock. All of this hurts farming families and affects food production.

We face TNCs who want to force GMO seeds into our countries, whether or not we currently have GMO bans, and agencies like the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) who conspire with TNCs like Cargill and Monsanto and with our governments to buy off national research and seed systems in order to sell GMO seeds. These seeds threaten the integrity of our local varieties and the health of our consumers. The same companies even manipulate regional farmer organizations to push GMOs, and we call on such organizations to resist being used in such ways.

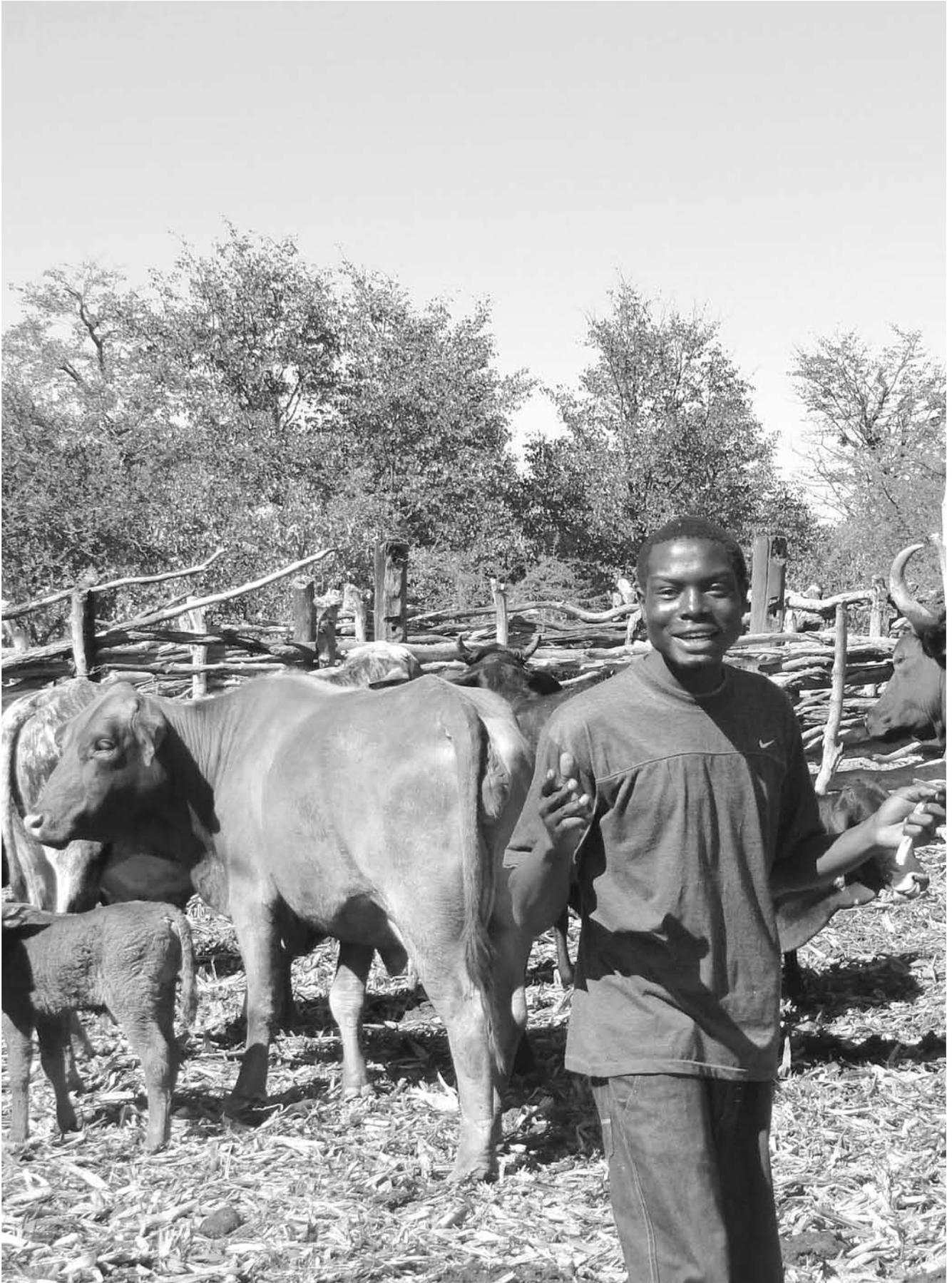
While our soils, agroecosystems and forests are ever more degraded by industrial agriculture and plantations, and local seed biodiversity is lost, the costs of production under the conventional “Green Revolution” model are more expensive and out of the reach of small holder farmers. The price of chemical fertilizer on the world market, for example, has risen more than 300% in the last few years.

Faced with this bleak situation for small holder agriculture and Food Sovereignty in our region, as members of organizations belonging to La Via Campesina we take the following positions:

Positions of La Via Campesina in Africa Region 1

We believe that...

- Agroecological farming as practiced by small holder farmers, and Food Sovereignty policies, offer the only reasonable and feasible solutions to these multiple challenges facing our Region.
- Only agroecological methods (also called sustainable agriculture, organic farming, ecological agriculture, etc.) can restore soils



Our national education and research systems are heavily biased toward the very industrial agriculture practices that are killing our planet and contributing to the failure of Africans to feed ourselves.

and agroecosystems that have been degraded by industrial agriculture. Even chemicals do not work after severe degradation, but with agroecology we can restore soil organic matter and fertility, along with functional agroecosystem processes and services like nutrient recycling, soil biology, natural pest control, etc. We have seen that small holder agroecological systems have much greater total productivity than industrial monocultures, with little or no purchased inputs, reducing the dependency and increasing the autonomy and well-being of rural families while producing abundant and healthy food for our peoples. Global research by La Via Campesina demonstrates that *Sustainable Peasant Agriculture Can Feed the World*, based on endogenous knowledge and agroecology.

- The global food system currently generates between 44 and 57% of global greenhouse gas emissions, almost all of which could be eliminated by transforming the food system based on the principles of agroecology, agrarian reform and Food Sovereignty. *Sustainable Peasant Agriculture Cools the Planet*, and this is our best solution to climate change.
- In order to adapt to a changing climate we need the greater resiliency of diversified agroecological systems (and water conservation and harvesting, watershed management, agroforestry, ground cover, etc.) and the genetic diversity of local



peasant seeds and peasant seed systems. We demand that our governments withdraw support from the corporate seed industry with its standardized and often genetically modified seeds, and instead support peasant seed systems based on recovering, saving, multiplying, storing, breeding and exchanging seeds at the local level.

- Our national education and research systems are heavily biased toward the very industrial agriculture practices that are killing our planet and contributing to the failure of Africans to feed ourselves. We demand the reorientation of research toward farmer-led methods and agroecology, and the transformation of curricula at primary and secondary schools levels, and in higher education, to focus on agroecology.
- We call for an end to trade liberalization and the renewed protection of domestic markets so that African farmers can receive the fair prices that will enable us to boost production and feed our peoples.
- We call on governments to create comprehensive programs to support agroecological farming by small holders and to rebuild Food Sovereignty, including genuine agrarian reform and the defense of peasant lands from land grabbing, the reorientation of government food procurement from agribusiness toward purchasing ecological food at fair prices from small holders to supply schools, hospitals, institutional cafeterias, etc., as a way to support farmers and to provide healthy food to children, sick people and government employees, and programs of production credit for small holders engaged in ecological farming instead of subsidies tied to chemical fertilizers and pesticides.
- At the COP-16 in Cancun, Mexico, the governments of the world (except Bolivia) met to conduct business with TNCs who traffic in false solutions to climate changes like agrofuels, GMOs, carbon markets, REDD+, etc., instead of meeting to seriously and effectively reverse



We will build organizational structures in La Via Campesina at the regional level to support our national member organizations in their work to promote agroecology among their member families. This includes regional training programs, exchange visits, the production and sharing of educational materials, and the identification and documentation of successful cases in the region.

global warming through real emission reductions by Developed Countries and the transformation of our global food, energy and transport systems. We demand that our governments behave more responsibly at COP-17 in Durban, South Africa, refusing to sign agreements imposed by the North and by TNCs, instead supporting the Cochabamba Principles on the Climate and the Rights of the Mother Earth.

Commitments of La Via Campesina

While we demand that our governments act in all the ways mentioned above, and will turn up the pressure on them to do so, we will not wait for them. Instead we pledge to continue to build agroecology and Food Sovereignty from below. We pledge to take the following practical steps:

- We will build organizational structures in La Via Campesina at the regional level to support our national member organizations in their work to promote agroecology among their member families. This includes regional training programs, exchange visits, the production and sharing of educational materials, and the identification and documentation of successful cases in the region so that all can learn the lessons they offer.
 - Among the structures we will build is a network of agroecology trainers and practitioners in La Via Campesina in our Region.
 - We will promote the creation of agroecology training programs and schools in our organizations, and farmer-to-farmer and community-to-community agroecology promotion programs.
 - Through our own organizations we will promote the creation and strengthening of local peasant seed systems.
 - We will document the experience in Zimbabwe of agrarian reform and organic farming by beneficiary families, as successful steps toward Food Sovereignty that we who are in other countries can learn from.
- We will work to “keep carbon in the ground and in trees” in the areas under our control, by promoting agroforestry, tree planting, agroecology, energy conservation, and by fighting land grabs for mining and industrial plantations.
 - We will engage and pressure governments at all levels (local, traditional provincial, national and regional) to adopt Public Policies that favor agroecology and Food Sovereignty.
 - We will build a powerful small holder farmer and peasant voice to be present with other sectors of civil society at COP-17 in Durban, and at Rio +20 in Brazil, with the message that we oppose false solutions to climate change and demand the adoption of the Cochabamba Principles. We will insist on Small Holder Sustainable Agriculture and Food Sovereignty as the most important true solutions to climate change.

Africans! We Can Feed Ourselves with Agroecology and Food Sovereignty!

Sustainable Agriculture by Small Holder Farmers Cools the Planet!

No to the Corporate Food System, GMOs and Land Grabbing!

Yes to Agrarian Reform and an Agroecological Food System!

Globalize Struggle! Globalize Hope!

Masvingo District, Zimbabwe, 20 June 2011.

*Final declaration of the Trainigng of Trainers on Agroecology **

La Vía Campesina. África. Region 2

 *From Techiman, september 10 2011.

We are more than thirty (30) small holder farming women and men, working on land and sea, coming from 7 farmer organizations of the Africa 2 region of la VIA CAMPESINA, representing millions of peasant families and Moza of bique, from Sri Lanka and Mexico. Hosted by ECASARD in Techiman in Ghana from September the 5th to 11th 2011 for a political training on agro-ecology, we have come together to re-state:

- Our commitment to defend the family farming based on agro-ecology and food sovereignty.
- Our right to keep up-holding our own identity, our cognitions and secular practices as farming men and women in

perfect harmony with our environment which is both natural and societal.

- Our conviction that the agro-ecology locally adopted practices, are applicable everywhere by respecting the eco-system and are the key to cool the planet and grant a future to the next generations. Our opposition to the « false solutions»: the agro-fuels, the GMO and any mutant plants, carbon credit, the REDD+ because agro-ecology is the only healthy and sustainable alternative.
- Our perseverance of fighting against the seizure of the multinationals over the living, their speculative willingness to develop only cash crops in our countries that is killing the family and crop

farming, and this, with most of the time in complicity with of our states, elites, donors , and some NGOs.

- Our force to stop any land grabbing and to engage in land reforms in favor of to the family farming.
- Our capacity already underway with millions of farming women and men through organizations of LA VIA CAMPESINA to put agro-ecology practices at human services.
- Our willingness to strengthen and develop an agro-ecological and food sovereignty network.

We, representatives of the African continents, we commit ourselves to acting at all the levels to promote agro-ecology , fundamental practice for our family farming, the one feeding and which will feed the generation to come.

That is why, we members of la VIA CAMPESINA, we are mobilizing from farm to farm , from neighbor to neighbor , from elected body to elected body, government after government , institution after institution, every where for, another world for today and tomorrow.

We commit ourselves to:

- No longer buying chemical products, commercial seeds... at any alienations that make us lose our autonomy, our know-how and our dignity.
- To cultivating produces that are both healthy to our nature and our body to feed our families rather than the markets.
- To collectively fighting so as to value our rights for both an equitable and fair world.

We do galvanize our governments and the sub-region decision institutions to put into place public farming policies:

- To put the family farming and agro-ecology at the heart of their concern and programs.
- To set up fair and equitable conditions for both the world farming men and women to access land, water, natural resources and that they be protected.
- To create a favorable frame to preserve , multiply and disseminate the local seeds varieties.
- To support and promote productions from agro-ecology by relocating them at the level of the production , processing and marketing.
- To support the raise of awareness, information and the training on agro-ecology by and for the farmers and particularly to give a future to the youth.
- To implement the international reforms such as IRCCARD, the right to food, the respect for human rights and farmers rights (TIPAAR).
- To support the FAO guidelines on the natural resources and land tenure as defended by the civil society and opposes to the responsible investments proposed by the investors themselves and supported by the World Bank.
- Not to let ourselves be deceived and corrupted by the false solutions proposed by different institutions such as the World Bank.
- To strongly protect agriculture at the frontiers' level and to take the farming away from the WTO.
- To comfort and strengthen the alliances.

To get out of the crises perpetrated by capitalism and the neo-liberalism system:

- Which is making the world population go hungry every day and particularly the farming communities.



- Which is polluting the soils, earth, air, water and making us sick.
- Which is, every day, grabbing our lands, natural resources, our know-how and cultures.
- Which is, every day, making only a handful of persons richer.
- Which is, every day, hampering our rights and fundamental freedom
- Which is every day, threatening our social cohesion, our sovereignties.

We member of La VIA CAMPESINA let 's gather our strengths, our capacities and our know-how to transform this society by practicing agro-ecology in the framework of food sovereignty, by mobilizing each farmer whose rights are neglected, behind each farming organization permanently shaken, by calling on the decision makers for other public policies targeting the farming communities, agro ecology, the relocation of productions, lands, water and natural resources redistribution. We, more than 200 millions of farmers la VIA CAMPESINA are a transformation moving force on the whole planet, rich in our know-how and cultures, and will be up and ready at anytime the need arises.

Our vigilance is constantly on alert and wherever we can act, make pressure; we will not fail to do so. We will constantly put into practice our ideas in order to strengthen and develop our network and always contribute to a better future for all.

Within the perspective of DURBAN meetings on climate change in December 2011, we do denounce the maneuvers of the World Bank desiring to fool the African leaders over « False solutions » on the carbons credit.

We, ECASARD-Ghana, CNOP-Mali, CTOPO-Togo, CNCR-Senegal, PFP-Niger, CNOP-Congo Brazzaville, - ROPPA - Bissau Guinea, UNAC-Mozambique,... farming organizations of la VIA CAMPESINA call

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upon all the African leaders not to sign « the false solutions » of the 17th Conference of Parties (COP 17) of the United Nations Frame on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that will be taking place in Durban in South Africa from November 28th to December 9th 2011.

This process initiated by the World Bank, the corrupted governments and elites, the multinationals, that are proposing development speculative strategies to fight the changing climate over the interest of the planet and the populations and particularly farming and indigenous communities.

Instead, we do call upon the African leaders to promote and develop agro-ecology, defended and practiced by la VIA CAMPESINA, at the heart of their concerns to feed and cool the planet in the interest of all. The practices of the ecology, agro-forestry favor and amplify the fight against the global warming, because agro-ecology is environmentally and economically sustainable and socially and culturally acceptable and fair.

La VIA CAMPESINA will be present and will have its say in DURBAN.

The world is not goods.

Agro-ecology is not for sale.

«Stop to land grabbing»

The farmers feed the world with agro-ecology and cool the planet.

***Let's globalize the fight, let's globalize hope.
Issued in Techiman on September 10th 2011.***

*Final Declaration of the 2nd Continental Encounter of Agroecology Trainers**



*Chimaltenango, Guatemala
Monday August 8, 2011.

The world is caught in a series of crises generated by the inherent greed of the capitalist system, characterized by control by Capital over natural resources. These include the food crisis and the climate crisis.

The fact that the number of hungry people in the world has risen from 800 million to one billion in recent years, coupled with the terrible famine in Somalia, shows us that the dominant corporate food system is unable to feed the world, while greenhouse gas emissions produced by the same agricultural model heat up the planet and threaten the Mother Earth.

Capital, represented by its transnational corporations, the media, formal education, landowning elites, and agribusiness, have now changed their discourse by appropriating terms and concepts constructed over generations by peoples' movements.

La Vía Campesina (LVC), on the other hand, defends peasant, indigenous and community-

based agroecological farming as a cornerstone in the construction of food sovereignty. This model of agriculture produces healthy food, based on crop diversification and on new relationships between men, women and nature, while eliminating the use of pesticides and GMOs reducing dependence on the capitalist system.

We must protect our traditional knowledge from corporations that try to transform everything into a commodity, we cannot let them steal our concepts and use them as private property at the service of a capitalist logic. Today we face a situation where the World Bank, bought off governments and transnational corporations want to steal the concept of agroecology through the COP-17 and Rio+20 processes. Their aim is to justify their deception of soil carbon markets. Faced with this threat, we say that *Agroecology is Ours and is Not For Sale*.

Peasant agriculture is part of the structural



transformation of our society as well part of the solutions to the current crisis of the system. In this context we reaffirm that indigenous, peasant and family farm agroecology *feed the world and cool the planet*.

La Via Campesina has organized several regional and continental meetings where we have had the opportunity to deepen our debates on how we view the world and on our different models and visions of agroecological farming.

In August 2009, the first Continental Encounter of Agroecology Trainers in LVC took place at the Paulo Freire Latin American Institute of Agroecology (IALA) in Barinas (Venezuela). Following this in May 2010, the Asian continent of LVC held a meeting on agroecology in Colombo (Sri Lanka). In the African continent, LVC agroecology trainers met in Masvingo (Zimbabwe) in June 2011.

Thus, we have developed a process for approaching the concept of agroecology, which has enabled us to strengthen the foundations that guide the organizations of La Via Campesina. We recall that the 1st. Continental Encounter of the Americas said that agroecology:

- *“Is necessary for ensuring food and energy sovereignty for human emancipation, in addition, agroecology is vital to peoples’ struggles toward building a society without private ownership over the means of production*

or natural recourses, a society without any kind of oppression or exploitation, whose final aim is not accumulation”.

- *“It should be massive and international, so that the knowledge accumulated by the people, contributes to the development of new productive forces of nature and human labour, so that we have time and resources to organize all the other dimensions of our life such as our struggles, communities, culture, education, and festivals, among other things”.*
- *“Includes the care and protection of life, of food production, of political consciousness, moving forward in strengthening cooperation and collective small-scale agroindustries, exchanging experiences and promoting a alliance between the people of the city and countryside”.*

This first meeting also noted that the second meeting should deepen our dialog in LVC between historical materialism and the indigenous and peasant cosmovisions, which we have done here.

In the II Continental Meeting Agroecology Trainers in LVC which took place from 28 July to 3 August of 2011 in Chimaltenango, Guatemala, we peasants, family farmers, farm workers, indigenous peoples and afro-descendents, representatives of 49 organizations in 20 countries, wish to reaffirm our commitment to the construction and defence of agroecology.

We denounce the capitalist system of production and



its domination through agribusiness and mining, its land-grabbing and re-concentration of resources, its displacement and criminalization of organized peasants and indigenous families and its over-exploitation of the workforce and nature. Additionally, this system imposes a production model based on monocultures, declining biodiversity, pesticide use, GMOs and the patenting of peoples' cultural heritage (seeds, ancestral knowledge, technologies and practices).

We defend genuine and comprehensive Land Reform as part of transformative Food Sovereignty policies, strengthening people's autonomy and self-determination. We defend the right to decide our own agricultural policies and to develop new relationships and values between men, women and nature.

We believe in agroecology as a tool in the construction of another way to produce and reproduce life. It is part of a socialist project, a partnership between workers and grassroots organizations, both rural and urban. It should promote the emancipation of workers, peasants, indigenous peoples and afro-descedents. True agroecology, however, cannot coexist in the context of the capitalist system.

We affirm that agroecology is based on ancestral knowledge and practices, building knowledge through dialogue and respect for different knowledges and processes, as well as the exchange of experiences and use of appropriate technologies to produce healthy foods that meet the needs of humankind and preserves harmony with *Pachamama* (the Mother Earth).

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We as La Via Campesina, a multicultural network of organizations and movements, will continue to recognize and strengthen the exchange of experiences and knowledge among peasants, family farmers, indigenous peoples and afro-descendants, spreading and multiplying our training and education programs “from Farmer-to-Farmer” (“campesino a campesino”), through both open, formal and informal education spaces as well as in community-based and territorial processes.

We recognize the fact that this meeting has been held on Mayan territory, where the campesino-to-campesino movement began, based on a process that builds unity, erases borders and creates horizontal and comprehensive exchanges of experiences and knowledge.

We understand that there are no standardized methods or recipes in Agroecology, but rather principles that unite us, such as organization, training and mobilization.

Our quest to understand our world in relation to time, to its creative energies and forces and to our historical memories (of agriculture and humanity) is complemented by a historical materialist and dialectical interpretation of reality. Together we seek to develop our political and ideological understanding through a dialog among our cosmovisions to achieve

structural change in Society, thus liberating us and achieving *buen vivir* (the indigenous concept of “living well” in harmony with the Mother Earth) for our peoples.

System Change, Not Climate Change!
The Mother Earth Cannot be Bought nor Sold, She Can be Recoverd and Defended!

Agroecology and Seeds are the Heritage of our Peoples Which We Place at the Service of Humanity!
Globalize Struggle! Globalize Hope!

CLOC-Vía Campesina, Chimaltenango,
Guatemala, August 2011.

*Proposal of position text on agroecology for the European Coordination Via Campesina**



We are working on the creation of resilient food systems that provide a safe and healthy food for all peoples of Europe, while preserving biodiversity, natural resources and animal welfare. For this, we need models of production and ecological fishery, and a multitude of small farmers, farmers, gardeners and fishermen who are the backbone of food production by producing a local food.
Declaration Nyeleni Europe 2011.

Throughout its history, the European ry has kept a balance in the relationship between humans and their environment, while ensuring the ability to produce food for all. Despite the attempts of hegemonic industrial agriculture, family and biological agriculture maintained and developed its own practices, including the mixed farming, permaculture, biodynamics, agroforestry, seed supply networks, etc.. In doing so it has demonstrated its ability to constantly reinvent and transmit innovative know-how in terms of cultural practices, economic and social.

The short-circuit development but also initiatives such as “participatory guarantee systems” have allowed this type of agriculture to maintain some autonomy, remaining at least partially autonomous circuits long and supermarkets. In denial of a relationship of exploitation of nature and humans, the farmers

and thus maintain a harmony, a respect for life and relations of solidarity. Both within the European members of Via Campesina and with our allies in Europe Nyeleni, there are a variety of alternative farming system of industrial agriculture, which share common principles. Agroecology is talk of a new approach highly complementary to our defense of agriculture and organic. As proponents of agroecology are the small farmers who have historically been able to maintain the sustainability of agroecosystems.

Agroecology, its principles and dimensions

As defined by the Declaration of Nyeleni 2007, “*Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy food, in respect of crops produced using sustainable methods and environmentally friendly, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems*”.

Agroecology as understood by social movements is complementary and inseparable from food sovereignty we want to build. Agroecology, multidimensional and holistic, is a tool for social transformation restoring its centrality to the ry. It is especially necessary in Europe as small farmers have become a minority in society. Agroecology is based on principles that are organized around three dimensions: agronomic, socioeconomic, and sociocultural and political finally.

Agricultural dimension

Agroecology provides no ready-made recipes. It is based on cultural practices rooted in the territories and based on knowledge and know-how. It aims to ensure the sustainability of ecosystems, food production and their inhabitants, which means the maintenance and enforcement of soil, water, animal and plant biodiversity. She is also a way to go towards technology and energy sovereignty.

Socio-economic dimension

Taking into account the whole food system, faced with impasses leads the global neoliberal system, agroecology made proposals which help to reconstruct the agricultural sector but also, more broadly, helping to promote complementary activities emmergence: processing,handicrafts,smalltrade,helpingpeople. And the emergence of new forms of distribution relocated.

Agroecology is much better taste in women for farm work. Where possible, they fled the farms of industrial agriculture stain repetitive, poorly paid, devalued or administrative. In agroecology, mechanization no longer a central place in the food production system, processing and completing and enhancing direct marketing production, as farmers can find the full meaning of their profession, and respect and dignity that come with it.

Agroecology creates conditions favoring a return to the land of youth and the emergence of another type of relationship between generations, between men and women. This approach allows finally to rethink the relationship between rural and urban areas.



In Europe, the use of “agroecology” by the scientific world, is often used to greener farming techniques destructive agribusiness model and give legitimacy to the economy so-called “green”. We oppose any form of green capitalism and any form of commodification of nature. But it is also necessary today as Via Campesina, which promotes worldwide agro-ecology, proposes a definition that will align our designs and will oppose attempts to reduce these practices to their purely agricultural.

Sociocultural and political dimension

Agroecology encourages the emergence and expression of cultural diversity. Agroecology is the bearer of dignity, social justice, solidarity. It restores the value of each and every one. The values of mutual replace the values of competition and competition.

Participatory methods undertaken by agroecology challenge the terms of decision making and promote forms of collective action. The questioning of political domination, economic, ideological and patriarchal, in connection with social movements, is integral to the project of agroecology. It contributes to the culture of peace

Research and Agroecology

Via Campesina is challenging the attempt to appropriate and recovery of agroecology by some scientists who empty the term of his social and political content. In Europe, the use of “agroecology” by the scientific world, is often used to greener farming techniques destructive agribusiness model and give legitimacy to the economy so-called “green”. We oppose any form of green capitalism and any form of commodification of nature. But it is also necessary today as Via Campesina, which promotes worldwide agro-ecology, proposes a definition that will align our designs and will oppose attempts to reduce these practices to their purely agricultural.

Knowledge and know-how farmers should be recognized alongside scientific knowledge. This implies a fundamental questioning of the methodology and objectives of current research. The objectives of the research should not be to meet the demands of agribusiness, but they should focus on the needs identified by people with a view to ensure food sovereignty. There are already many actions of participatory research conducted jointly by scientists and farmers. Only a public research, participatory and transdisciplinary will meet the holistic approach driven by agro-ecology.

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) now supports an agro-industrial model impossible to reform. It must therefore be rethought in its very foundations, and based on agroecology to achieve food sovereignty. The CAP must be focused on employment and the rights of workers, particularly with regard to migrant workers. In this context, agro-ecology in all its dimensions -agronomic, socio-cultural, socio-economic and political-must be promoted by agricultural policies, and pay special attention to women and youth, including as a priority right basic access to land and natural resources for everyone.

Agricultural policies and Agroecology

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Organizational challenges in the implementation of agroecology

We face two significant organizational challenges. The first concerns the communication on agroecology, even within our organizations. In the practice of agroecology, the second challenge concerns the relationship between farmers' organizations and the rest of society.

Work Plan

With food sovereignty, ECVC and La Vía Campesina implement fully a will of social transformation. Agroecology as defined above puts the farmer in the

heart of this transformation. This vision of agroecology must be understood as non-competing inculcated and family farming, organic, biodynamic and permaculture. As member organizations, we currently have different levels of understanding and experience that is necessary to share in order to have a more collective vision of agroecology and our willingness, our ability to bring and defend the momentum against those who want to divert it. This requires a deepening of our internal political work.

In this context, the most important work to be undertaken is at the level of organizations, locally: it is to educate members and activists about the outlook. To support this process at European level, and encourage the involvement of organizations, we suggest:

A) we focus primarily on an internal form of exchanges and deepen them common

1. By way of disseminating the text positioning and momentum of the debate in organizations.
2. By way a pooling of experience, knowledge as well as agricultural policies or educational.
3. The giving access to internal documents of our organization through our intranet.

B) To implement a training strategy (exchanges between farmers ...), and provide technical support to organizations who want to go a way towards sharing, especially for research of European funds.

C) Propose to the General Assembly to discuss a position paper on agroecology to ECVC.

D) Share this reflection on agroecology with allied organizations.

This work plan will evolve according to the relevance that organizations find to appropriate agroecology and they take initiatives in this direction. Many of them have already moved in this direction through practical training, directories, knowledge and know-how, etc.. It is desirable to pool training tools and information needs that we identify.



Surin Declaration

First Global Encounter on Agroecology and Peasant Seeds*



*November
6 -12, 2012, Surin,
Thailand.

La Via Campesina International delegates, representing our regional member organizations, are meeting in Surin province of Thailand in Asia to have the First Global Encounter on Agroecology and Seeds. The main objective is for La Vía Campesina to share experience and construct a strategy and vision on agroecology and seeds, in the holistic understanding that both are part of the struggle to achieve food sovereignty.

Thailand has been chosen as the place of the meeting because in this country there is a growing shift made by small-scale farmers to move from the green revolution based model of industrial farming into agroecology. The presence of international delegates will support the growth of the agroecological farmers movement in Thailand, who declare that “*the survival of small-scale farmers is the survival of society!*” The delegates as part of this encounter are learning much

from this experience as to strengthen peasant farmer agroecology.

After sharing the experience and thoughts of the delegates and debating on the challenges, we are convinced that agroecology is the corner stone of food sovereignty. We cannot achieve food sovereignty if agriculture is dependent of inputs controlled by corporations, if the impact of technology destroys Mother Earth, if we do not challenge the commodification and speculation of food and land, and if we do not make better livelihoods for those who make available healthy and accessible food to our communities.

There are countless names for agroecological farming all over the world and Via Campesina is not concerned with names or labels, whether agroecology, organic farming, natural farming, low external input sustainable agriculture, or others, but rather wants to specify the key ecological, social and political principles





that the movement defends. For Via Campesina, truly sustainable peasants agriculture comes from the recovery of traditional peasant farming methods, the innovation of new ecological practices, the control and defense of territories and seeds, and well as social and gender equity. And we welcome conventional farmers to come towards this movement.

We are clear that a feudal land holding cannot be considered agroecological even if it is chemically free. A farm that is controlled only by men without decision making power for women or if women's global workload is higher, it is not agroecological either. Organic farming which replaces expensive chemical inputs for expensive organic ones without touching the structure of monoculture is not agroecological, such as in the way neoliberal "organic" programs (such as "India Organics") do, and which we strongly reject.

The experience, the practice and the reflections of Via Campesina for at least the last four years, have shown that agroecology is a strategic part in the construction of food and popular sovereignty.

We understood that agroecology is an intrinsic part of the global answer to the main challenges and crises

we face as humanity.

On the first place, small scale farming can feed, and is feeding humanity and can tackle the food crisis through agroecology and diversity. Despite the common misconception that agribusiness systems are more productive, we now know that agroecological systems can produce much more food per hectare than any monoculture, all the while making food healthier, more nutritious, and available directly to the consumers.

Secondly, agroecology helps confront the environmental crisis. Peasant agriculture, coupled with agroecology and diversity, cools down the earth; keeping carbon in the soil and providing peasants and family farmers with the resources for resilience to climate change and the increasing natural disasters. Agroecology changes the oil dependant energy and agriculture matrix, a main part of the systemic changes needed to stop emissions.

Third, agroecology supports the common good and the collective. While it creates the conditions for better livelihoods for rural and urban people, agroecology, as a pillar of Food and Popular Sovereignty, establishes

that land, water, seeds and knowledge are reclaimed and remain as a patrimony of the peoples at the service of humanity.

Through agroecology we will transform the hegemonic food production model; permitting the recovery of the agricultural ecosystem, reestablishing the functioning of the nature-society metabolism, and harvesting products to feed humanity. As the Philippine farmers say “*Kabuhanan, Kalusugan, Kalikasan*” (for economy, for health, and for Nature).

For us, as peasant farmers and family farmers, agroecology is also an instrument to confront transnational agribusiness and the predominant agri-export model. We won't liberate farmers from the structure of oppression built up by the corporations unless we gain technological and economical autonomy from the current forms of agrarian and financial capital. Also, within the context of farm workers and other agricultural laborers as in the case of the U.S., if we do not recover this labor force that has been being enslaved by capital. Therefore, agroecology is an essential part of the construction of social justice in a new equal social system, not dominated by capital.

Agroecology is giving a new meaning to the struggle for agrarian reform to empower the people. The landless farmers who fought to reclaim back their land, and those who received land through land reform programs in Brazil and Zimbabwe, are implementing agroecology as a tool to defend and sustain their farming, not only for their families, but to provide healthier food for the community. Therefore, land reform, together with agroecology, has become the contribution of peasant and family farmers to give better and healthier food to our societies. In Argentina we stand behind this affirmation by saying “*somos tierra para alimentar a los pueblos*” (we are land, to feed the peoples).

Our colleague farmers from India shared that there have been more than two hundred and seventy five thousand farmer suicides since 1995 because of the trap of debt due to industrial input dependence. Fortunately, the new agroecology movement method has permitted farmers to find a light of hope among that darkness, encouraging thousands of families to stay in their villages and keep on growing food with

better livelihoods. This movement of Zero Budget Natural Farming has given life back to rural areas in India.

In Europe, the economic and financial crisis is also giving evidence of the potential of agroecology as a proposal of the peasant movement to the society by re-localizing markets and make food available with a much lower dependence on fossil fuel, giving a new dynamism to local economies, and creating jobs for the unemployed that are moving back to the countryside, as in the case of Eastern Europe. Agrarian reform and market regulation towards food sovereignty through agroecology is also a solution for European and U.S. farmers that suffer from low prices due to competing with cheap imports.

The peasants and small farmers from Mali, as in the rest of Africa, that have been for years under the attack of AGRA (Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa) to push the introduction of the green revolution are showing how their own indigenous agro-ecological models of production are sustaining the food and livelihoods of millions of people; and tackling the

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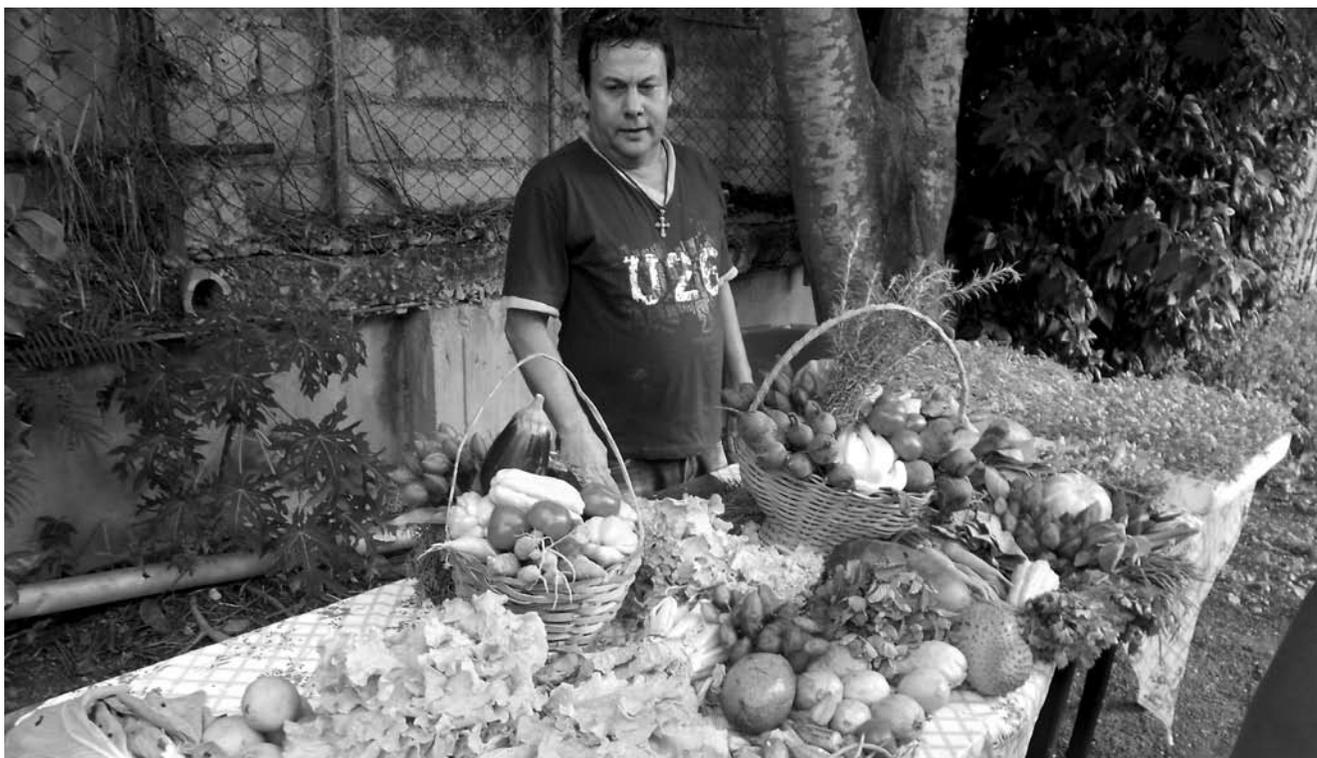
climate shifts without any external inputs, through the sovereign management and sharing of local agrobiodiversity and knowledge.

Agroecology is also an alternative for rural youth to stay in the countryside and have a dignified livelihood, as well to stay committed to food production and distribution for the community. These are who will feed future generations.

For 20 years la Via Campesina has fought strongly for land reform, and in this historical moment, it needs to reflect on its practice to qualify it. As Brazilian landless workers shout “*ocupar, resistir, produzir!*” (occupy, resist, produce!), peasants around the world are already fighting for land, resisting to defend it, and now, we define that agroecological farming will feed the people. It’s time to *produce*.

*Sustainable Peasant and Family Farm Agriculture Can Feed the World**

Documento de punto de vista de La Vía Campesina



*Jakarta,
september 2010.

The 2008 world food price crisis, and more recent price hikes this year, have focused attention on the ability of the world food system to “feed the world”. In La Vía Campesina, the global alliance of peasant and family farm organizations, we believe that agroecological food production by small farmers is the agricultural model best suited

to meeting future food needs.

The contemporary food crisis is not really a crisis of our ability to produce. It is more due to factors like the food speculation and hoarding that transnational food corporations and investment funds engage in, the global injustices that mean some eat too much while many others don’t have money to buy adequate food, and/or lack land on which to grow it, and misguided

policies like the promotion of agrofuels that devote farm land to feeding cars instead of feeding people. However, we cannot deny that our collective ability to grow enough food –including, crucially, how we grow it– is an important piece in the jigsaw puzzle of ending hunger. It is here where the corporate agribusiness model of large-scale industrial monocultures is failing us, and where peasant-based sustainable farming systems based on agroecology and Food Sovereignty offer so much hope (Altieri, 2009).

The Corporate Food System Cannot Feed the World

With an estimated 925 million hungry people in the world, and rampant illnesses caused by the food system –like malnutrition, obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer and swine flu– ravishing many of the rest of us, it is no exaggeration to say that the dominant corporate food system is already failing to provide us with adequate and healthy food. The fact is that under the rules of this system, food flows through the global economy from areas of poverty and hunger toward areas of wealth and abundance. And food is being homogenized into an unhealthy global diet consisting largely of processed fat, sugars, starch, and carcinogenic chemical residues, which is deficient in fiber, protein, vitamins, fruits and vegetables.

Principles of Sustainable Peasant Agriculture

We can find examples of sustainable peasant and family farm agriculture all over the planet, though the names we use vary greatly from one place to another, whether agroecology, organic farming, natural farming, low external input sustainable agriculture, or others. In La Via Campesina we do not want to say that one name is better than another, but rather we want to specify the key principles that we defend. Truly sustainable peasant agriculture comes from a combination of the recovery and revalorization of traditional peasant farming methods, and the innovation of new ecological practices.

Among the key principles are those of agroecology (Altieri, 2002):

1. Enhance recycling of biomass and optimize nutrient availability and balance nutrient flow.
2. Secure favorable soil conditions for plant growth, particularly by managing organic matter, ground

cover, and enhancing soil biotic activity.

3. Minimize losses of solar energy, air and water by way of microclimate management, water harvesting and soil management through increased soil cover.

4. Species and genetic diversification of the agroecosystem in time and space.

5. Enhance beneficial biological interactions and synergisms among agrobiodiversity components, to promote key ecological processes and services.

We do not believe that the mere substitution of “bad” inputs for “good” ones, without touching the structure of monoculture, is sustainable (Rosset and Altieri, 1997).

The application of these principles in the complex and diverse realities of peasant agriculture requires the active appropriation of farming systems by peasants ourselves, using our local

knowledge, ingenuity, and ability to innovate.

We are talking about relatively small farms managed by peasant families and communities. Small farms permit the development of functional biodiversity with diversified production and the integration of crops, trees and livestock. In this type of agriculture, there is less or no need for external inputs, as everything can be produced on the farm itself.

Finally, the production methods used to produce corporate food — monoculture, heavy machinery, excessive irrigation, chemical pesticides and fertilizers, GMOs, etc. — are rapidly degrading our planet’s best soils through compaction, salinization, sterilization, erosion and loss of above- and below-ground functional biodiversity. Yields which once rose every decade through the technologies of the so-called “Green Revolution” have now leveled off and in many regions are actually in decline, as can be seen in Figure 1 (Kundu et al., 2007; also see for example Radford et al., 2001; and Mulvaney et al., 2009).

There is no future for humanity or for the planet in this dominant food system. In fact, there is scarcely a present.

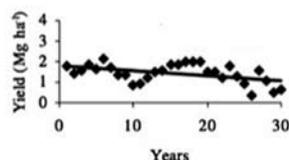


Figure 1. The long-term decline of yields under conventional management based on chemical fertilizers in India. *Source: Kundu et al., 2007.*

Peasants and Family-farmers Feed People Today

Despite the fact that agribusiness controls the majority of arable land –and especially of good quality land– in almost every country in the world, it is due largely to peasants and family farmers that we have the food that is available today. In country after country, small farmers control less than half of the farm land, yet produce the majority of the food that is consumed, as shown in Figure 2. A typical example comes from the most recent agricultural census in Brazil. Peasants and family farmers hold just 24.3% of farm land, though they make up 84.4% of all farms and gainfully employ three times as many people as does agribusiness (which in Brazil depends on starvation wages, with numerous recent cases of actual slavery

and indentured servitude).

On the one quarter of arable land that they farm, these small farmers produce 87% of all cassava, 70% of beans, 46% of maize, 34% of rice, 58% of milk, 50% of poultry, 59% of pork and 30% of beef, and 38% of coffee, among many other food products. Peasants have less than 25% of farm land, yet they generate 40% of all agricultural value. And Brazil is a country noted worldwide for the supposed productivity and efficiency of its national and transnational agribusinesses, and for its concentration of landholdings in the hands of a wealthy few. Yet it is still Brazilian peasants and family farmers that feed the Brazilian people, a pattern repeated around the world. Peasants and family farmers have a food producing vocation. Agribusiness has an export vocation. Brazilian agribusiness is more likely to feed cattle in Europe or produce ethanol for automobiles than it to feed a hungry child in Brazil.



To Feed Future Populations, We Must Nurture the Land

Peasants feed people today, but how will we feed people tomorrow? If we follow the path of “business as usual”, we will find ever more land in the hands of the agribusinesses that are failing to feed people well today, and that are destroying the productive capacity of the land for future generations. Corporations move their production around the world through global outsourcing, and they have no attachment to any given place. They have no incentive to conserve, restore and build soil fertility. Rather they extract the most they can as fast as they can, in the search for quick profits, and abandon a given area once production passes its peak and begins to drop through soil degradation.

They move on, outsource from somewhere else, and leave devastated agroecosystems and local economies in their wake.

Peasant and small farm families, on the other hand, are rooted in the place where they and their ancestors have farmed for generations, and where their children and grandchildren will farm in the future. This gives them reasons to nurture the productive capacity of the land and surrounding environment. It is precisely in peasant and family agriculture where we see both traditional sustainable farming practices and the rapidly growing field of agroecology.

Agroecology Conserves and Restores Soils and Agroecosystems

With so many degraded soils with falling productivity around the world, it is critical that we use restorative farming practices based on agroecology and traditional methods. Among the principles of agroecology are the incorporation of biomass and organic matter

into the soil, the protection of the soil from high temperatures and erosion through mulching, cover cropping, contour planting, etc., and the promotion of a healthy soil biology and biodiversity (Pretty, 1995; Altieri et al. 2000; Altieri, 2002). In Central America, tens of thousands of peasant farmers have recovered eroded hillsides and restored and boosted productivity through the farmer-to-farmer agroecology movement (Holt-Giménez, 2006). While industrial monoculture degrades soils and drives the loss of productivity, agroecology is restorative.

By restoring soils and agroecosystems, agroecology is also a reliable way to control the outbreak of pests. For instance, in East Africa the push-pull polyculture system is very effective for control of Lepidopteran stemborers. It uses other plants in the borders of maize fields, which act as trap crops attracting stemborer colonization away from maize (the pull) and other plants intercropped with maize that repel the stemborers (the push). Participating farmers in Kenya are reporting a 37% to 129% percent increase in maize yield, without chemical pesticides (Khan et al, 2008).

Philippines: Organic rice produces more and better

Research in the Philippines shows that rice yields in organic farms are 37.4% higher than in conventional farms during the dry season. The research shows that not only is the yield in tons per ha higher on organic farms, but the grains in the panicle are also heavier (Table 3). Filled grains per panicle were highest in the organic farms, while percent unfilled grains were comparable in organic and conventional farms (Mendoza, 2002).

Farm	Filled grain per panicle	Unfilled grain per panicle	% Unfilled Grain	Weight of 1000 grains (g)
Organic Farms	91.5	24.1	20.0	27.4
Conventional farms	70.8	19.5	22.0	25.7

Agroecology Can Produce More and Feed the World

Despite the common misconception that the industrial farming systems of agribusiness are the most productive, many studies have shown in recent years that: 1) small farms are more productive than large farms (Rosset, 1999), and 2) “agroecological”, “sustainable” and/or “organic” systems are as productive, and in many cases, more productive, than chemical-dependent monocultures (Badgley et al., 2007; Pretty and Hine, 2001; Pretty et al., 2003). The most productive systems per unit area are highly integrated agroecological systems on small farms.

Research shows that in developing countries organic farming systems on the average yield 2.7 times more per hectare than do non-organic systems. In developed countries they yield about the same, while on a global level they yield 1.3 times as much (Badgley et al, 2007).

In fact, there is no real argument in favor of industrial agriculture if we are truly concerned about feeding future populations at a global level.

In La Vía Campesina we have conducted our own research in various parts of the world. We observed that more agroecological farms are substantially more productive both per unit of area and per amount of labor. A more integrated farm is one that combines crops and livestock, intercrops and rotates crops, employs agroforestry, and generally exhibits a higher level of functional biodiversity (see example in Figure 4).

Such systems are not only more productive but have far lower costs, especially in terms of expensive farm chemicals and machinery (Machín Sosa et al., 2010). Many of the peasant and family farm families that belong to our member organizations in India, for example, are part of the *four million member* “Zero Budget Natural Farming” movement, where farmers buy no off-farm inputs whatsoever, relying instead on manuring, mulching, cover cropping and earthworms to farm successfully from both an economic and an environmental perspective.

Peasant agroecological systems benefit greatly from ready access to the traditional seed varieties that are increasingly under threat of extinction under the corporate- controlled commercial seed regime. For this reason our member organizations in Chile, Cuba,

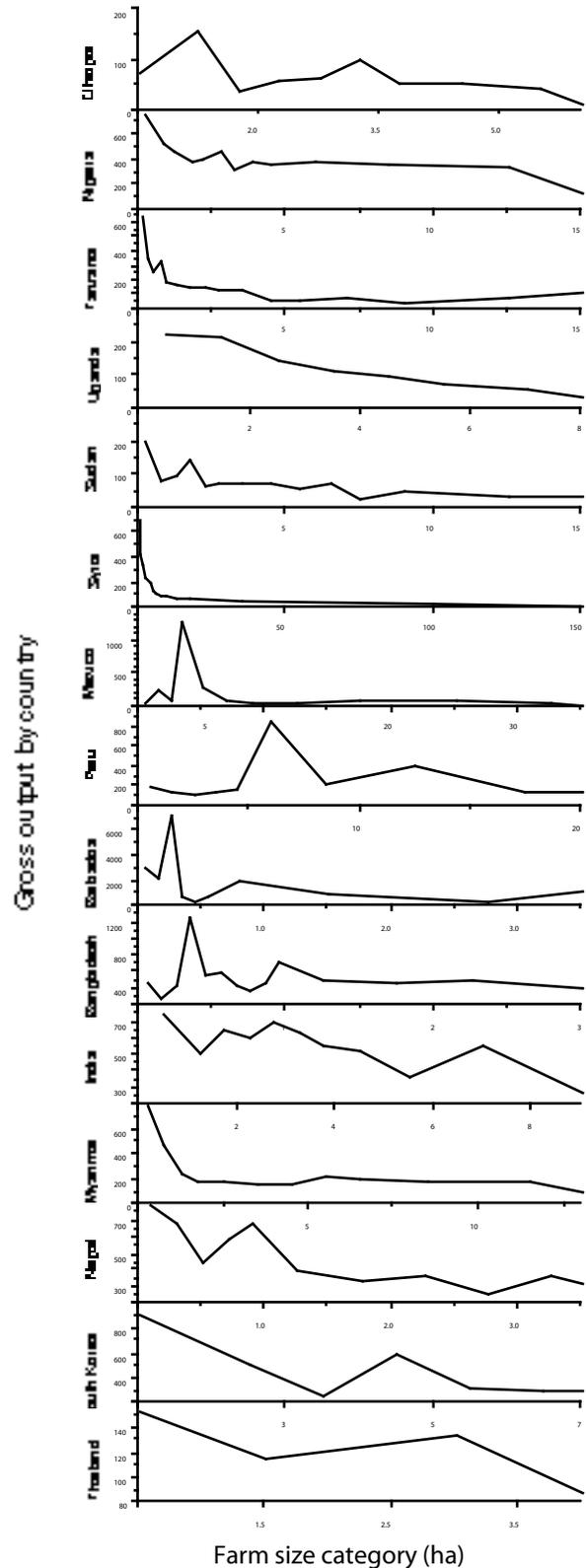


Figure 3 graphs the available data relating total production per unit area versus farm size for those countries for which such data is available. Although what constitutes “small” and what constitutes “large” may vary from country to country, in all cases smaller farms outperform larger farms by a wide margin (Rosset, 1999).

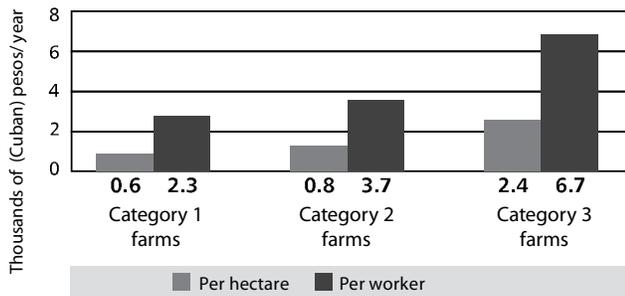


Figure 4. Farm productivity in Cuba from a lesser (Category 1) to a greater (Category 3) degree of agroecological integration (Machín Sosa et al., 2010; Rosset et al., 2011).

Brazil, Tanzania, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, France and elsewhere, are actively involved in conserving and multiplying peasant seed varieties.

Agroecology is More Resilient to Climate Change

By the same token, integrated agroecological farming systems are widely recognized to be more adaptive and resilient to climate change, including droughts, hurricanes, temperature changes, and shifting planting dates. The higher level of on-farm diversity under agroecology means that if one crop is negatively affected, another one is likely to compensate for it. Mulch and green manures that cover soils protect them from erosion, high temperatures and conserve moisture. A diversity of varieties, as well as greater within variety genetic diversity, make peasant farms more able to adapt to changing conditions than homogenous commercial agriculture (Borron, 2006; Altieri and Koohafkan, 2008; Altieri and Nicholls, 2008; Chappell and LaValle, 2009).

Our own research demonstrates the resilience of agroecological systems to the devastating impacts of hurricanes. In one case we compared multiple layer peasant agroecological systems to monoculture systems, and found that the complex systems suffered about 50% loss – mostly the taller layers – with the initial impact of the storm, while monocultures suffered losses of greater than 80%. After the initial losses, the multiple layer farms recovered their yield potential rapidly by compensatory growth from lower level crops, while monocultures did not, suffering near total losses (Machín Sosa et al., 2010; Rosset et

al., 2011). It was clear in the conclusions to our study that in countries and regions most likely to suffer severe climate events, agroecological systems are not an option but a necessity.

Agroecological Production Requires Farmer Organizations and Supportive Public Policies

If we can agree that small farm agroecological systems are more productive, conserve soils and restore the lost productivity of degraded systems, and are more resilient to climate change, then the key question is not whether we should, but how we can, promote the transition to such systems. The experience of Central America (Holt-Giménez, 2006) and Cuba (Machín Sosa et al., 2010), show us that conventional top-down research and extension systems, as well as the “project-based” methods of many governments and NGOs, fail to effectively support small farmers in the transition. Because agroecological systems require the mobilization of farmer ingenuity, the methods that work best are those in which farmers themselves become the protagonists in recovering, developing and sharing methods. This can only happen inside of farmer and peasant organizations, through farmer-to-farmer and community based methods, farmer training schools, etc. (Machín Sosa et al., 2010). However, farmer organizations are swimming against the tide when we cannot count on effective public policies. Such policies must include genuine agrarian reform to put farm land into the hands of peasants and family farmers, an end to open and hidden subsidies to industrial farming methods, including chemical inputs and GMOs, the reversal of the free trade policies that make farming unprofitable, and an overall shift from policies that are hostile to small farmers and their organizations to ones that support our own efforts to innovate and develop agroecological farming methods and share them horizontally. The time has come to act, to build true food sovereignty in each country, based on agroecological farming by peasants and family farmers in control of our own destinies.

We Demand Public Policies to Support Sustainable Peasant and Family Farm Agriculture:

- Implement genuine agrarian reform, put an end to “land grabbing,” and respect our land and territories.
- Reorient agriculture research and extension systems to support farmer-to-farmer agroecological innovation and sharing managed by farmer organizations as the keystone to up-scaling agroecology.
- Change the way agronomists are trained. Agroecology and social science must play a central role in curricula, which should emphasize respect for farmer knowledge and the importance of farmer organizations.
- Broad implementation of Food Sovereignty policies like the protection of national markets from dumping, hoarding and speculation by corporations, and systems to guarantee fair prices for peasant food production.
- Support peasant seed systems and repeal anti-peasant seed laws.
- Reorient public sector food procurement to give priority to ecological peasant production and fair prices.
- Support farm-to-city direct marketing of ecological production through farmers’ markets, linking rural and urban cooperatives, etc.
- End to subsidies for agrochemicals, and ban toxic pesticides and GMOs.
- Break-up and prohibit national and global corporate agrifood monopolies and oligopolies that capture and distort policies to their own profit-taking ends, at the expense of farmers and consumers alike.

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*Agroecological Peasant Agriculture: For Food Sovereignty and the Mother Earth**

Proposed new document for the VI Conference of La Via Campesina:
Analysis, Position and Work Plan of the Sustainable Peasant Agriculture
Commission of La Via Campesina



*Document developed by the Commission
and other delegates to the
First Global Encounter of Agroecology and
Peasant Seeds of La Via Campesina
November 6-12, 2012, Surin and Bangkok,
Thailand.

In the world today our food system and rural way of life are under attack by international financial capital and transnational corporations (TNCs) with the support of governments, trade agreements, and international financial institutions like the WTO, IMF and World Bank. Neoliberal restructuring, liberalization, privatization and deregulation have set the stage for a wave, driven by the recurrent crises of the capitalist system, of new investment and capitalization of agribusiness and other companies that exploit rural resources for agroexports, agrofuels, industrial plantations (“green deserts”), mining, dams and other infrastructure development, tourism, sale of agrotoxics and transgenics, etc. Capital has “rediscovered” rural areas on a scale not seen since the era of colonial conquest. This has triggered land grabbing on a massive scale, leaving

peasants, indigenous people and other rural peoples in a veritable war for land and territory with TNCs, capital, and governments, whose repressive forces are evicting and displacing rural people and criminalizing their movements, while the dominant media, owned by capital, stigmatizes social protest. When rural peoples lose their land and territories, these fall into the hands of agribusiness and other land grabbers.

Agribusiness promotes industrial monoculture that produces expensive, unhealthy food which makes people sick, destroys the social fabric of rural communities, driving mass migration, poisons the land with agrotoxics and transgenics, and is part of a corporate global food system that is one of the principle sources of the greenhouse gas emissions that are causing global warming.

As women, men, elders and youth, peasants,

indigenous people, landless laborers, pastoralists and other rural peoples, we are struggling to defend and to recover our land and territories to preserve our way of life, our communities, and our culture. We are also defending and recovering our territories because the agroecological peasant agriculture we will practice in them is a basic building block in the construction of *food sovereignty* and is the first line in our defense of the *Mother Earth*. We are committed to producing food for people; the people of our communities, peoples and nations, rather than biomass for cellulose or agrofuels or exports to other countries. The indigenous people among us, and all of our rural traditions and cultures, teach respect for the Mother Earth, and we commit to recovering our ancestral farming knowledge and appropriating elements of *agroecology* (which in fact is largely derived from our accumulated knowledge) so that we may produce in harmony with, and take good care of, our Mother Earth. Ours is the “model of life,” of farms with farmers, of rural communities with families, of countrysides with trees and forests, mountains, lakes, rivers and coasts, and it stands in stark opposition to the corporate “model of death,” of agriculture without farmers and families, of industrial monoculture, of rural areas without trees, of green deserts, and of wastelands poisoned with agrottoxics and transgenics. We are actively confronting capital and agribusiness, disputing land and territory with them.

When we control territory, we seek to practice *agroecological peasant agriculture* based on *peasant seed systems* in it, which is demonstrably better for the Mother Earth in that it helps to *Cool the Planet*, and it has been shown to be more productive per unit area than industrial monoculture, offering the potential to feed the world with safe and healthy, locally produced food, while guaranteeing a life with dignity for ourselves and future generations of rural peoples. Food sovereignty based on agroecological peasant

agriculture offers solutions to the food, climate, and other crises of capitalism that confront humanity.

2. What do we mean by *Agroecology*?

We have spent the past 5 years holding regional, continental and global internal consultations on agroecology. One of our tasks has been to come to a common understanding of what agroecology and agroecological peasant agriculture mean to us. This is particularly important now because agroecology itself is under dispute by corporations, governments and the World Bank, with the scientists and intellectuals who knowingly or unwittingly work for them. This neoliberal attempt to co-opt agroecology can be seen in government “organic agriculture” programs that promote monoculture-based organic exports for niche

markets, and subsidizing companies to produce organic inputs that are even more expensive than the agrottoxics whose costs led to the debt-trap so many rural families find themselves in. It can also be seen in the so-called “climate smart agriculture” of the World Bank that, similar to REDD for forests, would allow TNCs to become the owners of the soil carbon in peasant fields, dictating the production practices to be permitted, all as a pretext to allow large corporate polluters to keep polluting and heating the planet.

We believe that the origin of agroecology lies in the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of rural peoples, organized in a dialog among different kinds of knowledge (“diálogo de saberes”) to produce the “science,” movement, and practice of agroecology. Like seeds, then, agroecology is a heritage of rural peoples, and we place it at the service of humanity and Mother Earth, free of charge or patents. It is “ours,” and it is not for sale. And we intend to defend what we mean by agroecology, and by agroecological peasant agriculture, from all attempts at cooptation. For us, agroecology has both biological and social underpinnings. To emphasize the social and cultural

The agroecology itself is under dispute by corporations, governments and the World Bank, with the scientists and intellectuals who knowingly or unwittingly work for them.

elements that are inseparable from the whole, we refer to agroecological *peasant* agriculture.

We can find examples of this agroecological peasant agriculture all over the planet, though the names we use vary greatly from one place to another, whether agroecology, organic farming, natural farming, sustainable agriculture, or others. In La Via Campesina (LVC) we do not want to say that one name is better than another, but rather we want to specify the key principles that we defend.

Among the key biological principles are that underlie agroecological farming practices are:

1. Enhancing the recycling of biomass and optimizing nutrient availability and balancing nutrient flow.
2. Securing favorable soil conditions for plant growth, particularly by managing organic matter, ground cover, and by enhancing soil biotic activity.
3. Minimizing losses of solar energy, air and water by way of microclimate management, water harvesting and soil management through increased soil cover.
4. Species and genetic diversification of the agroecosystem in time and space.
5. Enhancing beneficial biological interactions and synergisms among agrobiodiversity components, to promote key ecological processes.

We do not believe that the mere substitution of “bad” inputs for “good” ones (as is done in government organic programs) without touching the structure of monoculture, is agroecological. We don’t believe that agroecology can be implement on a recipe basis, but rather that the principals must be applied differently in each distinct reality, based on the knowledge, creativity and protagonism of rural peoples. The

We don’t believe that agroecology can be implement on a recipe basis, but rather that the principals must be applied differently in each distinct reality, based on the knowledge, creativity and protagonism of rural peoples.

application of the biological principles in the complex and diverse realities of peasant agriculture requires the active appropriation of farming systems by peasants ourselves, using our local knowledge, ingenuity, and ability to innovate. We are talking about relatively small farms managed by peasant families and communities. Small farms permit the development of functional biodiversity with diversified production and the integration of crops, trees and livestock. In this type of agriculture, there is less or no need for external inputs, as everything can be produced on the farm itself.

To highlight the social and cultural principles that underlie our peasant view of agroecology, we put forth the following elements that we defend and reject:

We defend in agroecology

- The integration of humanity, in harmony and equilibrium with
- Nature
- Together with agrarian reform, and the defense of territory and national/local markets, it is a building block of food sovereignty
- It helps to build autonomy
- It starts with peasant and indigenous seeds
- It is a social, cultural and political process, and is a tool for the collective transformation of reality
- It is based on exchange, cooperation, and collective action among people
- It is based on horizontal dialog between peasant, indigenous and “scientific” knowledges
- It is holistic and respects Mother Earth
- Women play a key role and it helps build new relations inside the family against Patriarchy
- It offers new and important roles to youth
- It is liberating, and strengthens our collective identity as peasants, indigenous peoples, and other social and cultural rural expressions

- It should be directed at feeding people with healthy food produced in harmony with the
- Mother Earth
- Communitarian, anti-capitalist values

We reject as part of agroecology...

- Technocentrism, academicism, reductionism and top-down verticalism
 - Agrottoxics, transgenics and monoculture
 - Input substitution and neoliberal organic farming that leave monoculture intact
 - The external “certification” of seeds and the fruits of our labor
 - Agribusiness and commercialism
 - The privatization of knowledge
 - Intellectual property over life
 - Capitalism and neoliberalism
 - Payments for environmental services and the commodification of seeds, water, forests, biodiversity, carbon, and nature
 - Land grabbing and large private estates (latifundio)
 - Patriarchy and other forms of exploitation
- The separation of human beings from Nature

We see agroecology as an inextricable part of the territorial dispute with agribusiness and capital. The defense of the *peasant-based* model of agroecology is a basic issue for us. Peasant based production is not the “alternative.” It is the model of production through which the world has been fed for thousands of years, and it still is the dominant model of food production. More than half of the population of the world works in the peasant agriculture sector, and the vast majority of the world’s population depends on peasant based food production. Small-scale food producers today account of about 70% of all food consumed by humanity. This model, the peasant way (“*La Via Campesina*”), is the best way forward to feed the world in the future, to serve the needs of our people, to protect the environment and cool the Earth, and to maintain our natural assets or common goods. Peasant based agroecological is socially just, respects the identity and knowledge of communities, prioritizes local and



domestic markets, and strengthens the autonomy of people and communities.

3. What is *agroecological peasant agriculture*?

Peasant agriculture is not an “economic model of production”, it is a way of life, and thus it has complex aspects. The organization of production and consumption that LVC defends is characterized by the following aspects:

Peasants and small farmers are at the heart

It is diverse, based on family farming and peasant agriculture. Production is developed and renewed based on the cultural roots of peasants and family farmers, women and men, youth and elders. It is a model that can feed entire nations and guarantee the rural population the right to a dignified life, socially, culturally and economically, based on work on the land, as they have already practiced for many generations.

Basic rights are respected, and people should be at the center of all policies, rather than the market: we are speaking of a *just* rural society. This includes the protection of farmers, indigenous people and afrodescendent communities, their cultural and

human values. They are the basic human resources of food production. Without men and women to till the land, there can be no agriculture. Without agriculture, what will people eat?

Producing as autonomously as possible

With agroecology we build our autonomy from financial speculation, commodity markets, banks and other sources of credit, suppliers of commercial seeds, agrochemicals, machinery, irrigation equipment and other inputs, external technical assistance and imposed knowledge, etc. Recovering, defending, strengthening and expanding peasant and indigenous seed systems is key, as is the recovery, innovation and exchange of peasant farming knowledge of how to produce using our own local resources.

Cools the planet and is resilient to climate change

The relocalization and ecological production of food, through food sovereignty based on agroecological peasant agriculture, offers the best solution to global warming caused by greenhouse gas emissions. The genetic diversity of peasant seed systems and the resilience and resistance of agroecological farming practices to drought, hurricanes, and changes in temperature and rainfall, offer the only hope that humanity can survive climate change even as we struggle to cool the planet.

Women and men struggle together against Patriarchy and to stop violence against women

We are committed to confronting Patriarchy and violence against women in society, in our movement and organizations, and in our families. We have seen how the transition from monoculture dominated by men to diversified agroecological peasant farming diversifies the roles and opportunities for all members of the peasant family and community, reducing the concentration of power, income and decision-making in the hands of men. In our vision, women are treated equally to men and have full access to means of production. Women participate fully in the decisions taken by their families, communities and the organizations that represent them.



Youth have a place in the present and future

Whereas there is little place and virtually no future for youth in monoculture, agroecological diversification unleashes opportunities for creativity and a rewarding and interesting, dignified life for young people in rural areas, which permits the construction of a real future for rural youth. Without options that allow young people to remain in the countryside, there is no future for rural communities nor for our food system.

Access and control over the use of the means of production

Peasant, indigenous and other rural communities should have collective control over land and territory, including water and forests, and be able to (re)produce their own seeds. This allows them to leave to future generations a rich and fertile soil that produces multiple products in a diversified production system. The defense of territory and genuine and integral agrarian reform to recover and extend it, are crucial to put the land back in the hands of those who work it, and to create a dynamic peasant agriculture. The fight against the neoliberal laws that are criminalizing the exchange of peasant seeds and privatizing genetic resources is also critical to guarantee on-going access

to this essential means of production.

Local and domestic markets and economies have priority

Local and domestic needs are a priority and peasants and small-scale local producers should have first access to their own local and domestic markets. They should be able to control the commercialization and local processing of their products, in collaboration with their communities and with urban consumers, so that products can be sold at fair prices for both producers and consumers. This means relocalizing production, building shorter circuits between peasant and family farm producers and consumers, with fair prices for farmers and for city dwellers, especially the urban poor, through solidarity economies. Peasant agriculture gives employment to many people, not only those who work directly in farming. Peasant based agriculture is a pillar of the local economy and helps to keep villages and towns alive. It allows communities to strengthen their own culture and identity. An equitable, family farmer and peasant based rural economy provides the basis for strong national economic development.

The knowledge and cosmovision of peasant families and indigenous peoples is key

The knowledge and cosmovisions of peasants, indigenous people and family farmers are central to the development this model of production. It maintains local varieties and livestock breeds as well as biodiversity in the surroundings, as in community controlled and managed forests.

Promoting agroecological methods

Agroecological peasant agriculture requires the recovery, innovation and, above all, sharing of knowledge and practices through dialogs among knowledges. To that end, we are carrying out many diverse farmer-to-farmer, community-to-community, territorial, and organization-to-organization agroecology processes to facilitate the horizontal exchange of experiences and knowledge. We also have dozens of peasant agroecology and political formation schools, which serve both to prepare our youth to be agroecological farmers and leadership

cadre of our organizations, and to support our farmer-to-farmer and community-to-community processes. We are actively indentifying our best experiences with agroecological peasant agriculture and food sovereignty. We document and systematize them, in order to socialize the knowledge gained and organize exchange visits. We do our own agroecological research and seed and livestock breeding, and we also work together with the trusted researchers and scientists who are our allies.

Peasant agriculture is linked to a geographic space or territory

Peasant agriculture is linked to a specific geographic space, a territory. Peasants are rooted in the place were they have built their livelihoods for many generations. One cannot understand peasant agriculture without understanding the link of our peoples to our land and territories. We seek to keep our territories as peasant or indigenous territories, and/or transform them into such, by practicing agroecological peasant agriculture instead of chemical and commercial-seed dependent monoculture. While the latter amounts to bringing the products of our agribusiness enemies and the forces of exclusion into our own spaces, by recovering ancestral knowledge and practicing agroecology we defend those spaces.

The autonomous peasant organization is the base

Organization is the key to transformation. It strengthens the whole process of production and exchange of products and knowledge. The peasant organization is much stronger and is better able to promote and defend agroecological peasant agriculture to the extent that it is autonomous of influence by private companies, political parties, government officials, NGOs, etc.

Cooperation instead of competition and conflict

Solidarity and cooperation, and not competition, should be the basic principle of our organizations to resolve conflicts over the use of land and water. We must find solutions that are fair to all parties when there are conflicts between peasant farmers, farm workers, fisherfolk, forest, riverine and coastal people,

pastoralists, nomads and indigenous people.

4. Conclusion: We make demands on governments and commitments with ourselves

We demand that our governments and international institutions end the policy biases that facilitate land grabbing, trade liberalization, privatization, and the cutting of essential services while supporting and subsidizing agribusiness, agroexport elites, mining companies, false solutions to climate change like REDD and agrofuels, and private knowledge systems. We demand that instead they support local and farmers' markets, peasant seeds systems, agroecology promotion and education led by peasant organizations, public food procurement from agroecological peasant farmers, genuine and integral land reform, and the defense of markets from dumping and from corporate food hoarders and speculators. We demand that they ban transgenics and agrotoxics, while negotiating real solutions to climate change instead of trafficking in false solutions with TNCs.

While we demand that our governments and international institutions act in all the ways mentioned above, and will turn up the pressure on them to do so, we will not wait for them. Instead we commit to continue to build agroecological peasant agriculture and food sovereignty from below. We pledge to take the following practical steps:

- We will continue build organizational structures in La Via Campesina at the global, continental, regional level to support our national member organizations in their work to promote agroecology among their member families. This includes regional training programs, exchange visits, the production and sharing of educational materials, and the identification and documentation of successful cases in the region so that all can learn the lessons they offer.
- We will promote the creation of agroecology training programs and schools in our organizations, and farmer-to-farmer, community-to-community and territorial programs to promote agroecology.



While we demand that our governments and international institutions act in all the ways mentioned above, and will turn up the pressure on them to do so, we will not wait for them.

- Through our own organizations we will promote the defense and strengthening of local peasant seed systems.
- We will work to “keep carbon in the ground and in trees” in the areas under our control, by promoting agroforestry, tree planting, agroecology, energy conservation, and by fighting land grabs for mining and industrial plantations, while rejecting the stealth privatization and private appropriation of Nature inherent in payment for environmental services and REDD.
- We will engage and pressure governments at all levels (local, traditional provincial, national and regional) to adopt public policies that favor agroecology and food sovereignty, and we will develop and implement such policies in the territories under the control of our peoples.
- We will continue build a powerful peasant and indigenous voice to be present with other sectors of civil society in the on-going climate negotiation process, with the message that we oppose false solutions to climate change and demand the adoption of the Cochabamba Principles.

AGROECOLOGY IS OURS AS PEASANT AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AGROECOLOGY IS NOT FOR SALE

5. Proposed Work Plan of the Sustainable Peasant Agriculture Commission for 2013 and beyond

1. General points:

1. We propose to change the name of the Commission. The new proposed name is: “*Agroecological Peasant Agriculture*.”
2. We propose that agroecology and on-the-ground peasant seeds work be carried out together, and not artificially separated.
3. We need to do more, and more effective, campaigning to public opinion.
4. We need to be clear on what agroecology means to LVC, and defend it from other actors.

5. We need more work on alternate ways to market our products and strengthen rural-urban alliances.
6. The Commission needs an effective web site.

2. Transformation of Production Models

a. Network of Agroecology Schools inside of LVC

The more than 40 LVC agroecology schools should function as focal points for coordinating processes beyond the national level, by being networked with each other for the following purposes:

1. Mapping out and documenting (with allies) of agroecology and peasant seed experiences in their regions and countries.
2. Exchange of information and teaching/training materials.
3. Offer courses to people from other countries and regions
4. Help coordinate international and national exchange visits.
5. Create networks of allies (researchers, professors, NGOs, etc.) who can help us with specific needs in terms of mapping, research, documentation, training and materials.
6. The network can help socialize the very valuable documentation work being done as part of the student thesis and research projects in our LVC schools.

b. Support for Regional and Local Processes

We need to do fewer big meetings and do more direct support and advice to incipient and on-going processes in the regions and member countries, with cheaper, smaller and more targeted visits.

c. Exchanges of Experiences

All agree that all our international exchanges have been uniformly excellent and have helped to stimulate important processes in home countries. As we have learned from our experiences with “Farmer-to-Farmer” or “Campesino-to-Campesino” methods, direct exchanges of experiences (exchange visits) are the most effective tools for disseminating agroecological practices and sustainable peasant agriculture; it is a form of horizontal learning. We must continue to

We will carry out a process of research, analysis and synthesis of arguments and supporting data, in order to publish convincing reports and publicity/press materials on each one of these points. This will form the basis for a massive international public opinion campaign carried out with our allies.

identify outstanding cases in each continent, via the networks that we create, and organize exchange visits so others can learn from these experiences.

d. Documentation, Systematization, and Socialization (sharing) of Experiences of Agroecology and Peasant Seeds

We must continue to identify, map out, and document the most interesting local or national cases (in LVC), and continue to carry out studies (by ourselves, or with allies, or with our LVC communicators, or through the research of the students in the LVC schools). We should emphasize successes (and prove them with data) and lessons learned, which we will continue to publish in books, videos, news articles, and popular education pamphlets, to be socialized (shared) among LVC and our allies, as part of the horizontal learning process, and to support our campaigning to public opinion and policy-makers. This Commission will continue to publish a series or “library” of the best LVC successes, as study materials for our schools, and to help convince academics, public officials, and opinion-makers. We will make all of this available in a special section of the LVC web site.

3. Campaign to Amplify Agroecology and Peasant Seeds in Public Opinion, and to draw the Attention of Public Opinion to the Forces and Structures that Impede the Further Amplification of Agroecology and Peasant Seeds

La Via Campesina and allies must develop and back-up arguments about the virtues and benefits of this kind of farming, and about the forces that impede it. For example, we continue to develop and above all PUBLICIZE arguments that agroecological peasant agriculture based on

peasant seeds, as part of food sovereignty strategies:

- a. Actually is being implemented, works, and can feed the world with healthier food (the link to health is very important), and cool the planet*
- b. Although offers our best way out of our crisis, is being impeded by forces and structures that must be stopped*

We will carry out a process of research, analysis and synthesis of arguments and supporting data, in order to publish convincing reports and publicity/press materials on each one of these points. This will form the basis for a massive international public opinion campaign carried out with our allies.

We need to offer issue-training courses for our LVC communicators in the regions and countries to they can help us do the campaigning work. We need much closer coordination with them.

4. Strategy of Alliances

In the work of this Commission, especially on the topics mentioned above, we still need to identify our needs in terms of alliances, and potential allies for each of our issues/topics, and we should strengthen those alliances with the desired allies. These allies could include researchers, professors, NGOs, donors, journalists, other peasant and indigenous peoples’ organizations, and organizations from other sectors, like consumers, environmentalists, urban slum dwellers, etc. In particular, we see the need to strengthen alliances with consumers and with researchers. The good relationship of CLOC/LVC with the Latin American Scientific Society of Agroecology (SOCLA) is a model we should strengthen, and could extend to Asia, Africa and Europe.



5. Fundraising

We will have to operate with fewer resources in the next cycle. That means we should continue, and step up, our very successful fundraising to date for agroecology activities with regional staff. The regions can and should fundraise for exchange visits, for example.

It also means we need an “add-on” strategy where we add on agroecology and peasant seeds days to already-funded events in the regions. Also staff can travel to regions and countries to support local and regional processes on the ground at much lower cost than organizing large meetings.

6. National, regional and continental coordination

We should create regional commissions inside LVC to coordinate agroecology activities and schools, and

national and/or continental commissions as needed.

