

COMMON

December 2014

GROUND

Newsletter European Coordination Via Campesina

Here is the **ECVC newsletter** for this last term of 2014.

It's meant to be forwarded to your members especially those interested in European and international matters. There is a lot of information that were a little difficult to shorten; we hope you'll find it interesting to read.

At the end, you will find news from ECVC member organization. This newsletter is an open space to share information about your struggles and activities: please feel free to send us messages for our next newsletter in **April**. (ideal format 200-300 words)

You can also send some nice pictures (info@eurovia.org)

We will be happy to welcome all ECVC organizations to the General Assembly,

Till then, we wish you a very pleasant time for Christmas and a Happy New Year!

The Coordination committee





SUMMARY

ECVC'S ACTIVITIES	3
I. POLICY AND PRODUCTION	3
FAO.....	3
FAMILY FARMING.....	5
PAC AND INNOVATION	5
TRADE	6
PRODUCTION: MILK.....	7
II. PRODUCTION MODES AND ACCESS TO RESSOURCES	9
SEEDS.....	9
AGROECOLOGY.....	10
III. RIGHTS	10
FARMERS' RIGHTS.....	10
LAND.....	10
WOMEN.....	11
YOUTH.....	13
CALENDAR AND ECVC INTERNAL NEWS	14
CALENDAR	14
INTERNAL NEWS	15
Meeting with Olivier De Schutter	15
Meeting with Lidia Senra.....	17
MEMBERS' NEWS	18
Confederação Nacional da Agricultura (CNA).....	18
Ecoruralis.....	18
Ehne-Bizkaia	19
Mouvement d'Action Paysanne (MAP).....	19
Nyéléni Autriche	20
Sindicato Labrego Galego (SLG).....	21



ECVC'S ACTIVITIES

I. POLICY AND PRODUCTION

FAO

World Symposium on Agroecology

Last 17 and 18 September, the World Symposium on agroecology took place at the FAO (see Andrea's editorial on B@n of 09/19/2014).

It was not easy to organize a symposium of this kind with so many strong and powerful countries, like the USA, opposing it with all their strength (perhaps after losing so dramatically, Obama should ask himself questions on why he disappointed all those who believed he represented change...). France and Brazil resisted this pressure and allowed FAO to play its role: a neutral space where everything can be discussed.



The Symposium had a very academic content, but the presence of Via Campesina, the SOCLA (The Agroecology School of Altieri, a series of academics involved with the movements) and other social movements allowed us to center the debate on ecosystems and their interaction with farmers' knowledge, revolutionizing the very idea of research and technical assistance that views SCIENCE as the repository of all knowledge, and the poor farmer as just a mere executor of "recipes" conceived elsewhere. These are things many of us know, but that have been strongly disruptive within the FAO, known so far only or mainly for having promoted the green revolution, something that is still the cause of the suicide of thousands of Indian farmers. It's a radical change of paradigm that FAO has now introduced agroecology into its general program, and not just in an exemplary pilot project: in fact it is a small revolution.

Just five years ago in the FAO a similar Symposium on Organic Agriculture was organized. The excellent results of that symposium - where IFOAM played an important role (they were also active this time too, and helped clarifying the meaning of agroecology) - were hidden, denied and Organic farming remained completely marginal within the FAO despite the gigantic efforts made by a few motivated officials.

Now change is coming, but we must clearly remain vigilant, because there are many different interpretations behind the word agroecology. We like some of these interpretations, others not at all, especially when they just try to simply adjust the agro industrial model in an "environmental way" that would remain as unsustainable and unjust as it is today.

This is why La Via Campesina and all the other global organizations of food producers that agree with food sovereignty principles are planning a Global Forum on Agroecology in Mali from 24th- 27th February 2015 to agree on a shared definition and a joint strategy to make agroecology the model for feeding the world.



2015 is also the year when Italy will be hosting EXPO 2015; this will be a great challenge, and in thus the great initiative of civil society to organize, and to have its say in Milan on how to feed the planet will provide an additional opportunity for communicating the results of this Forum. The Peoples EXPO will be held in Milan from 2nd - 6th of June, and we will definitely be participating in this event.

Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

Immediately after the Symposium, the annual meeting of the Committee for Food Security took place. It was finally accredited by all world's States, as the place to establish global food security policies.



I remind you that the CFS is the only structure of the United Nations that allows the full participation of civil society with exactly the same rights and duties as Member States, apart from the fact that civil society doesn't vote on final documents because quite rightly, States, must assume their responsibilities. It is now an unquestionable fact, but I would like to stress that once again it's our world, that of an agricultural matrix, that leads innovation within the United Nations; this is to emphasize that the most interesting economic and social innovation phenomena originate in our world today.

During the annual assembly a very important document was approved: **Principles for responsible investment in agriculture**. It's the first time that we have forces States to confront us on how to make a policy on investment in agriculture, which is the basis of any agricultural policy. Clearly, the final document has many gaps and is far from our expectations, but it has some genuinely innovative elements of great value.

The first, and certainly the most important, is the recognition of the peasants, small producers, smallholders, as the first investors in agriculture. Therefore any public policy on investment should definitely this point take into account. The second item of interest is the recognition of the centrality of public investment. It seems trivial, but after years of inebriation on the wonderful virtues of free market and the substantial importance of private investment of large agro-industrial groups, this is a 180 degree turn. The third element: the respect for workers' rights and decent wage levels as a central issue of any investment in agriculture; this is also absolutely revolutionary.

The document also refers explicitly to the Right to food and the fundamental human rights. It is certainly disappointing to see that trade agreements established by the WTO still maintain a central role that clearly reduces the scope of many positive considerations of the document. A clear and definitive statement against land grabbing is still missing. Many pay lip service to the fight against land grabbing, but finally withdraw their support when they have to put it down in black and white.

It is therefore a document that although it can be interpreted positively in some respects, it should absolutely not be promoted, because as a whole, it is still very far from our expectations.

Nevertheless, we must take into account that this is the time needed for international negotiations: we have won on some points, and we have lost on many others; but there is no doubt that we have started a process of change that can no longer be stopped. Even this would have been absolutely unimaginable a few years ago.



FAMILY FARMING

Global dialogue on the International Year of Family Farming

The week after the CFS was held in Rome at the FAO, the closing event of the International Year of Family Farming (that we celebrated during *Primavera Bio* and *Biodomenica*) took place. This event brought together more than 300 participants from the five continents with an extraordinary participation of the real actors, farmers, fishers, and pastoralists: they are the mainstay of family farming on whom the vast majority of humanity depends for being fed. Worldwide there are 570 million farms, of which 500 million are family farms of which more than 470 million are small and very small.

In two days of talks and discussions, never before have so many peasants spoken from a platform of a hall of FAO. Here, too, you might ask what's really new about that, but the truth is that it had never happened!

Today no one says that that world can be fed without family farming and, we like to add *family* and *peasant* farming.

Just four years ago, if you said something like that you were considered to be an incurable grassroots political activist with no grasp of reality!

Finally we have the real data: it was published in the FAO's SOFA 2014 report, and now no one will dare not to place family farming at the center of any food security policy; even the European Union now claims it is of strategic importance.

Clearly this is related to what we said previously on the Principles for responsible investment in Agriculture that recognizes small-scale producers and their 470 million companies around the world as early investors in agriculture.

All these elements lead to a totally new vision of agricultural policies and agroecology plays a central role, because clearly this agriculture can best express itself when fundamental rights are guaranteed, namely food sovereignty, and put into practice through the multipurpose and multiple job-creating aspects of agroecology.



PAC AND INNOVATION

Brussels, October 29th, Seminar "small farms and Innovation" and Urban farm event

Farmers innovate every day in the way they take up farming, produce and create new distribution circuits with consumers. Public policy and research should take this more into account: this was the message of the seminar organized in Brussels within the project "Envie de paysans" led by Confédération Paysanne and other ECVC organizations. We know that small and medium-sized farms predominate in Europe and contribute to food, employment and the quality of the environment. Unfortunately the new CAP reform does not aim to support sustainable small-scale farming.



European Coordination Via Campesina Newsletter



COMMON GROUND

December 2015

So we have to show and prove that the agriculture we defend is good for the planet and for society, in order to plan better policies in the future. A good participation of citizens and representatives of the European Commission showed that the theme of innovation on small farms is of interest. Unfortunately, it rained during the entire afternoon "Urban farm" event, organized with MAP and FUGEA!

TRADE

TAFTA Negotiations

It is difficult to get a clear picture of these very secret negotiations, even if the Commission finally released the "leaked" mandate last year, as a sign of good will. On the question of agriculture, many questions remain. In France, the ministry has laid out non-negotiable "red lines" (rejection of GMO crops and of meat with hormones), but is careful in not stating that the 28 countries of the European Union must share these objectives.

European ambitions are focused on the regulation of dairy products (Grade A) which make access to the US market very difficult. As if America needed European milk! As if the supply created demand! As if food habits would change overnight! As if farmers would inevitably benefit from the industry's profits! ... On the North American side (Canada, the USA), the aim is to significantly increase beef export quotas to Europe.



No figures exist on what the Commission means by "acceptable" volumes. Knowing that it is currently forbidden in the WTO to maintain preferential ties with a nation, import quotas allowed for the USA will necessarily apply to all partners (including MERCOSUR), meaning European livestock is directly threatened by "dumping". Although the French government is repeating its refusal to open up to meat that includes hormones, nothing is being said about other growth promoters that are used. No information is given on other sectors of livestock (pigs, poultry). And we also have no further information on the terms of an (up-down) "harmonization" on the use of pesticides. The difficult issue of information on the origin of products will be discussed at the end of the negotiations, which is not reassuring.

In Europe, social mobilization against the clause on the resolution of dispute between private investors and local legislation (which will always rule in favor of the private sector with heavy fines having to be paid to them) has proved successful. Germany and the Commission declare today that they want to review the issue without giving further details on its content. Many local authorities (regions, municipalities,...) are called upon by the citizens to discuss this. In France, Confédération Paysanne has motions being voted at the Chamber of Agriculture of each department. The first results are encouraging, as the majority trade union affiliated to COPA-COGECA, faithfully followed the positions of industry (Food and Drink) without worrying about its historical roots.



When the FTA between the European Union and Canada was signed (24 September), Confédération Paysanne occupied Cargill's office in France and succeeded in getting a meeting with the ministries concerned: agriculture, finance and trade. They all blame one another and ask rather than reply to questions, trying to convince people that the Commission is the only competent body responsible for these issues.

This agreement is "too big to fail", the Liberals are seeking by all means to avoid a rejection that would undermine everything. Negotiators are already planning not to submit the agreement to the national parliaments, who will have no opportunity to amend the text. The other trick is to write an agreement at the lowest possible level, which could be dealt with in depth and further clarified without control of parliaments of the Member States as stated by the Article 41 of the negotiating mandate. For the same reasons, the ratification of the agreement with Canada, which is similar in all respects to TAFTA, has been postponed: the rejection by a single country would deal a fatal blow to TAFTA.

In conclusion, once again it is unfortunately unrealistic to believe that a process of this kind, even if it were democratized, can change anything in a definitely liberal dominant ideology. Only the ratio of power and social struggle, farmers' mobilizations in Brussels, in our countries, in our own lands near our elected officials can stop this criminal plan.



A meeting of the working group on FTA took place on the 9th and 10th of December. It was an opportunity to attend a conference on agriculture and TTIP organized with allies and hosted by green MPs. The next step for ECVC will be the international day of peasant struggles which will be the day of struggles against trade agreements on the 17th April 2016.

PRODUCTION: MILK

ECVC denounces the European Commission and EU governments for still not having created mechanisms to ensure decent prices for milk

Three representatives of the European Coordination Via Campesina - Isabel Vilalba, Nico Filippini and Philippe Collin participated to the Civil Dialogue Group on Milk, organized by the European Commission in Brussels on 19th November.

This session, that was much shorter than usual was marked by the nomination of the new president and vice president "to keep things going as before," said Vilalba, Filippini and Collin. In this regard, they clarified that "Presidency and Vice Presidency are still occupied by representatives of trade and industry, and the industrial sector is the one that is mainly represented in this advisory group to safeguard their own interests, that are usually opposed to those of farmers and civil society. And the same goes for the new European Commission, with governments and the two major political parties that have agreed on its composition. They all work in collusion to maintain the current status of things in which industries and distributors exert a position of abuse and domination in the supply chain. "

Thus, data from the sector were communicated during the Civil Dialogue Group that confirmed what we all know: all EU countries- except Greece- are exceeding the milk quota they were assigned (5.6% more in total); the super-fee is certainly going to be applied in accordance with the current law; the trade sanctions applied to Russia are affecting 1.5% of European milk production or the fact that markets such as China continue to collapse, so there is no prospect that overproduction will be absorbed as long as it's not explicitly requested. Serious imbalances between



supply and demand are already taking place, with a gradual collapse of the price of milk since beginning of this year that is leaving most of the farms with prices below production costs.

Despite the seriousness of the situation, which will worsen from April 2015 with the end of the quota system, the European Commission still hasn't taken any effective measures, and is not driving any legislative action to solve this serious problem that threatens a strategic sector for rural areas throughout the EU, and the various national and regional governments aren't doing anything about it either.



"This problem seems not to be worrying the new European Commission or the governments and political parties that have agreed to its composition" stated the representatives of ECVC, "the sole purpose of these people is to maintain current conditions intended to ensure cheap raw materials for industry for its business, irrespective of the fact that this may involve the destruction of thousands of jobs or the dismantling of the socio-economic fabric in large rural areas of the European Union".

On behalf of the European Coordination Via Campesina, Isabel Vilalba, Nico Filippini and Philippe Collin expressed this criticism and disapproval of the European Commission's suicidal attitude toward the dairy sector, which is the reason why they abstained from voting during the new appointments.



II. PRODUCTION MODES AND ACCESS TO RESSOURCES

SEEDS

ECVC and the seed-marketing-legislations

In March 2014, following massive civil society resistance, the proposal for a new European seed-marketing-regulation was rejected by the European Parliament. Hereupon the EU-Commission started an informal consultation process in order to find out the needs of different stakeholders concerning new marketing legislation on seeds.

The decision on adopting a common position on the seed regulation turned out to be a difficult one within ECVC. In the end, this was reflected in the official ECVC statement to the commission as follows: on the one hand the preamble brings forward long term approaches, which are however concretized in the second technical part, which is strongly oriented towards the new regulation proposal. On December 16th the new Commissioner for Health and Food safety, V. Andriukaitis, will present his working program. Presumably it will also show his considerations regarding seed marketing legislation. At the moment three scenarios are possible:

- the rejected proposal will be “resuscitated”.
- a standstill, there will be no initiatives for a new seed marketing legislation, the present directives would stay in force
- a long term process – including stakeholder participation - for a totally new seed legislation (central regulation or different directives) will be started

Thus, the situation remains exciting.

But no matter which scenario the Commissioner will opt for, there is a lot of important work waiting for the ECVC seeds working group. It’s an ongoing challenge to understand how the national implementations of EU laws differ from each other.

In order to strengthen our work, we need to highlight the confusing, unsatisfactory and biodiversity-hostile legislation in many EU-countries. We need to make the different systems oppressing peasant seeds visible, and thus give a decisive push for the long overdue changes.

In order to achieve this, we as ECVC, need to refocus on the diverse needs of peasants as seed users, breeders, savers, producers etc! We need to discuss our goals on a concrete practical level in order to motivate many practitioners to participate. Furthermore, we need to take care, that neither demagogic nor ideologized arguments, expert language nor scaremongering stories will divert us from our actual goals. Only then can political demands be formulated in solidarity with each other.

Please take part in this process, the seed industry is not sleeping!



AGROECOLOGY

The third agroecology meeting of the Grundtvig program was held in Galicia at the end of September. The theme was: «*How to reach consumers: short circuits and access to the market*». You will soon receive the conclusions of the meeting, but a big thank you can already be sent to our comrades in Galicia for the great meeting they organized.

The next meeting will be between 4th and 7th of March in the Belgian Ardennes, and the topic is «*The factors of agroecology development and the transmission of knowledge and know how related to agroecology*». As the GA will be in the same week, we hope to see a great participation at this meeting.

III. RIGHTS

FARMERS' RIGHTS

The first informal consultation was held in Geneva on 12 November by the Ambassador of Bolivia. Several European participants joined the delegation of Via Campesina for this occasion. Good preparation, which combined internal meetings, contacts with allies as well as with several experts allowed the statements and positions presented during these days of discussion to be fine-tuned. The hearing lasted only half a day, because beyond a position based on principles, State officials had no instructions from their capitals on how to engage in content. This will be the task of the Intergovernmental Working Group scheduled to take place in Geneva from 2 to 6 February.

Via Campesina defended the right to biodiversity and a healthy environment, land use, production and exchange of farmers' seeds as well as the right to a decent income for farmers and all those whose living depends on access to productive resources.

Some States have renewed their commitment to farmers' organizations, others, like the European Union or France reiterated their reluctance to create new rights for rural people, as this implied "going against universal rights."

Thus, if the fight goes on, the battle may be long.

LAND

Land in the spotlight

Last November and the beginning of December ECVC, AIAB and Terre de Liens proposed a petition to the European Parliament on farmland to other partners at European level. The title of the petition is *Preserving and managing European farmland as our commonwealth: A CSO Call for a sustainable and fair EU governance of farmland*. This petition calls upon the European Parliament to adopt a position on sustainable and fair EU governance of agricultural land. In the petition ECVC encourage the EU institutions to take different institutional actions. For ECVC this is the starting point of process toward a Directive on fair and sustainable access to farmland. But in general, access to land and land issues will be at the center of ECVC's work in the next months.

For instance 2 Workshops on the implementation of *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests* (VGGT) in Europe and Central Asia will be organized by ECVC. The first in Rome (26-28 January) and the second one in Brussels (13-15 April). These voluntary guidelines are a tool that LVC is using in



different countries to fight against land grabbing and that might be interested to see how we can use it in Europe at local, national and European level.



Within the European Social and Economic Committee (CESE) a document on land grabbing in the EU is now under discussion. ECVC showed the interest of working on this document that might be used in the future by other EU institutions to develop new legislation.

Additionally The ECVC youth also decided to mainly focus their work on land and access to land.

If any of the ECVC members are interested in knowing more about those processes or want to participate, please contact Ivan, the staff member following this issue.

WOMEN

On the 24th, 25th and 26th of November 2014, the International Women's Meeting of la Via Campesina was held in Porto (Portugal) where besides the sisters of the European Coordination Via Campesina, from countries like Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Galicia, the Basque Country and Andalusia, colleagues from South America, Central America, Caribbean, North America, Nepal, Korea, Mozambique, Thailand, and Angola also attended.

At this meeting activists appreciated the work done in both their organizations and the international movement on the theme of women's rights since the VI Conference of Via Campesina in Jakarta. The action plan for this axis was also defined and planned both for the organizational level and for the implementation of campaigns, highlighting the continuity of the campaign "End violence against Women now!", to continue denouncing structural violence that affects women every day and has been systematically silenced and made invisible by a capitalist and patriarchal society.

At this meeting, the theme "Challenges and struggles of women from La Via Campesina around the world" made challenges for countrywomen and rural workers throughout the world visible, although there are specific difficulties in each region or on every continent. No solutions to such challenges and problems will be found if we don't organize ourselves and if we don't fight for them.

Women of La Via Campesina believe that the main challenges we face are:

1) Construction of Food Sovereignty (Agroecology):

Peasant women have always been the caretaker and guardians of seeds. Rural women have to deal with the advance of multinational corporations seeking to legitimize the patenting and privatization of seeds at the expense of small-scale farming.

There is no food sovereignty without healthy food and without food that is not contaminated, which means reshaping production towards agroecology, in order to realize food sovereignty.



2) Construction of the concept: RURAL AND WORKING-CLASS FEMINISM

We, peasant women, have considered the construction of this concept as necessary, recognizing the diversity of the women who are part of the Via Campesina.

3) Prioritize the campaign "End Violence against Women now!"

The continuation and strengthening of this campaign is considered necessary. The women of La Vía Campesina, consider it to be one of the most important campaigns of La Vía Campesina. The development of this campaign should take place at all levels, with the development of actions that would show how neoliberal adjustment measures have deepened the conditions of oppression, discrimination and increased situations of violence against women.

At the meeting we listened to reports from sisters who are suffering the drama of femicide in their communities and countries, mothers living in constant fear that their girls will be raped, kidnapped or murdered, women who suffer from all kinds of violence .. We also discussed the need to create bonds of solidarity, to create support networks for women in these communities who are fighting to change this situation, contributing to its public denunciation, even in front of International Human Rights Institutions.



4) Struggle and concrete actions:

We want to fight for land, against oppressive governments, against multinationals. We women have to organize ourselves to have a more important role within the working class.

5) Build new values such as solidarity, generosity among young companions, giving them space and support them in this path they are starting.

6) Women's participation in organizations and in their decision-making bodies:

We work hard on the topic of our own articulation as peasant women, it is crucial that we women are represented and present in our organizations, so we must have our own spaces, accompanied by political, ideological and technical training, to reach an empowering process both on an individual and collective level, which will allow both social and political changes.

"Seed sowers of struggle and hope, for feminism and food Sovereignty!"

GLOBALISE STRUGGLE, GLOBALIZE HOPE !!!



YOUTH

At the end of October a LVC delegation was in Rome to attend the Global Dialogue on the International Year of Family Farming in the headquarters of the FAO. Some young representatives from ECVC were part of this delegation and used the opportunity to organize an articulation meeting of the European youth.

AIAB hosted us in the *Cittá dell'altra Economia* and we held a one-day meeting with the participation of nine representatives from six ECVC member organizations (AbL, AIAB, MAP, MJARC, ÖBV, SOC). It was a small meeting, but a very important one to relaunch the youth dynamic within ECVC.

After an opening *Mistica*, we began with an overview on the history of the youth processes in Europe. Then we went into the Youth Declaration from Jakarta and through the five-year plan of action, and had a short reflexion about its meaning for the European context. In the afternoon slot we began to reorganize and structure the ECVC-Youth-Group. Three sub-groups have been created: organization, communication, finances.



Furthermore we defined that the two coordinating organizations are responsible to assure the fluidity of work inside the group. Besides that we decided that two European youth meetings may take place every year: one directly before the General Assembly and one in autumn. Finally we realized that it would be important to define an issue to be worked on each year. So we would be able to focus our work, provide training and organize actions together. For 2015 we defined to work on the issue of «Land». Now we are working to finalize a report of the meeting, which might be distributed to all ECVC-Organizations.

On the following days the ECVC's youth integrated into the LVC's delegation on the Global Dialogue in the FAO. In front of representatives from several non-governmental organizations, from FAO, scientists and state representatives, LVC defended its model of family farming focusing on the importance of the youth in this process. Unlike the message of the World Farmers Organization (WFO) we managed to say, that we are not looking for high-tech and newer seeds, but instead we need access to land and other resources.

Finally, the last day in Rome was dedicated to an internal meeting between FAO and LVC. On this occasion we briefly presented the five-year plan of action of the LVC-Youth, giving concrete examples of projects and actions, which have been developed in the different regions.

Those days in Rome have been a great opportunity not just to relaunch the European youth processes, but also to learn and observe a lot in the rooms of political decisions.

Last but not least we would like to thanks Ivan for the great support in making this meeting possible!



CALENDAR AND ECVC INTERNAL NEWS

CALENDAR

December 2014

8-10	ECVC Meetings Internal WG (Fin and GA) and TTIP	Brussels
10	TTIP Conf in EP	Brussels
1-12	COP20 UNFCCC	Lima, Peru
18	International Migrants' day	
19	European summit blockade	Brussels
?	FAO Land meeting in Brussels on directive	

January 2015

17	Demonstration "We have had enough"	Berlin
21-22	CC meeting	Brussels
26-28	ECVC Land Workshop-FAO project	Rome, Italia
29	Communication on CAP meeting	Brussels
31-1.2	Preparation meeting on intergovernmental working group on farmers' rights	Geneva

February 2015

2-6	Intergovernmental WG on farmers' rights	Geneva
24-27	International Forum on Agroecology LVC	Centre Nyeleni, Selingué, Mali

March 2015

28.2 – 1	Youth Assembly ECVC	Belgium
2 – 3	ECVC General Assembly	
4	Public Conference Brussels	
5– 7	Agroecology Meeting on Farmers knowledge sharing	
4-5	Seminar on short circuits – dg agri project	France
24-28	World Social Forum	Tunisia
25-27	AE CAWR Project Kick-off meeting	St Ulrich – Germany

April 2015

10 - 17	Congress of the CLOC	Buenos Aires, Argentina
13-15	ECVC Land Workshop-FAO project	Brussels
17 ?	TTIP S2B Event + ECVC Brussels meeting?	Brussels
tbc	<i>ICC meeting (before or after CLOC congress)</i>	<i>Argentina</i>

Next **newsletter** foreseen for
April 2015

INTRANET

For access to the records of the Coordination Committees and other working documents, ask your ECVC member organization for the **code**.

STAGE

The office in Brussels is continuously looking for one or two intern(s). It can be an internship on our thematic axis as well as an interpretation-translation internship. Feel free to spread the word!

EUROPEAN COORDINATION VIA CAMPESINA



Like us on
Facebook



INTERNAL NEWS

Meeting with Olivier De Schutter, Brussels, 31st July 2014

Olivier de Schutter, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food completed his term in April. He accepted ECVC's invitation to ECVC for a meeting and discussion with CC members at Brussels' office.

Is there a common path with Via Campesina ?

Conclusion of 6 years working for the UN: surprisingly, there are conclusions that many governments have come to share. Contrary to 2008, in 2014 these ideas are welcomed by the majority. We are winning our battle from a theoretical point of view; the people defending the industrial food chain are now in the minority.

Our goal is to promote a change towards sustainable agriculture, localize the food system.

There are 6 reasons why the ideas are still not winning in practice:

1. The way we measure progress works against the alternatives we defend. We measure success only from an economical point of view (like the GDP), so obviously as the agro-industry creates a bigger turnover, they are considered more efficient.
2. The kind of technology and infrastructure in which we invest have been shaped for agro-industry and it is difficult to change this pattern.
3. Our economy shaped our minds making us consider only the price as a crucial factor. This works against local food systems and small farmers. As the main point is to produce cheap food, agro-industry, that does not integrate social and environmental costs, has a crucial advantage.
4. There is real difficulty in making the transition work, because the food system is suited to what people have become used to (no time to cook, to eat...) the fast food economy suits the contemporary life style.
5. There is a problem on how decisions are adopted in this area. As we don't have food policies, we produce food without looking at health and social impacts. Decisions are made on the basis of lobbies, but there is no food democracy. The democratization of the food system is an important challenge.
6. The priority of international trade is completely incompatible with small-scale rural and local production.



There are two options for changing the food system:

1. We need to revolutionize the existing dominant food system (I wish it could be possible)
2. Support ALTERNATIVE FOOD SYSTEM. If we look at slow food, agroecology, etc. We see lots of alternatives that could develop. We need to examine the legislation that make them difficult to implement and try to advocate to change it.



At present, Olivier de Schutter is involved in an “IPCC” type Working Group: OdS has set up a group of experts chosen trying to respect a balance of nationalities, disciplines, gender. These experts will work together to provide regular reports to the governments about how to change the food system. In the long run it could be institutionalized. One of the first subjects will be how to organize relationships with stake-holders (like CFS - Committee on World Food Security).

He will also be involved on different work concerning human rights, including peasants’ rights and the right to land.

Some comments

- It is more effective to use different language (i.e. the official language of UN) than an “activist” language, to speak their language to reach people that normally are not interested in change.
- It is a good idea to try to train other farmers' organizations that now realize more and more that the system is not sustainable. We should convince them by preparing a sort of guidance.
- WTO: the real problems are not the rules but the message that the organization sends: exports are the answer. WTO is about shaping minds: export = success. They don't question themselves about dependence, soil health etc...Agriculture should be removed from the WTO.
- FAO: there is no single document or single voice of FAO. In many cases FAO projects are funded by governments that influence them a lot.
- Food sovereignty has been taken up by urban producers and citizens and that makes the topic more universal. We need to promote food policy councils in Europe (such as now growing in the USA).

European Coordination Via Campesina Newsletter



COMMON GROUND

December 2015

Meeting with Lidia Senra - Santiago de Compostela, September 2014

Lidia Senra has been elected as Spanish MEP for GUE group (European United Left). Lidia has been a member of ECVC Coordination Committee for many years.

In the last elections of the European Parliament (EP), the novelty is that, although few, GUE group exceeds the Greens. Lidia Senra is a member of the Agriculture Committee (Comagri) of the European Parliament and Coordinator of the GUE for Agriculture.

EP majority groups remain the EPP and S&D. That means it will be difficult to win on the themes dear to ECVC, except for some exceptions.



Themes of interest for ECVC that are currently discussed at the EP:

- Regulation on new foods: it focuses on nanomaterials
- Agroecology: there is a EC proposal on the issue, including processing and distribution.
- A document on vineyards by the EC
- An EC Communication on Forests
- An EC Communication on the food chain and distribution power
- There is a Council project on GMOs, which is being discussed further within the Envi Commission and Comagri.
- Milk policy is a topic of concern for Comagri.

More specifically, Lidia Senra will be following food safety issues (antibiotics, hormones, GMOs, irradiation...). For GUE, TTIP and GMO will be a priority.

Concerning the TTIP theme, there is a network of MEPs against TTIP.

We must remember that there are many other agreements under negotiation (FTA) such as the one with West Africa, Mercosur, Japan, Moldova, etc...



MEMBERS' NEWS

Confederação Nacional da Agricultura (CNA)

The 7th Congress of the CNA joined Via Campesina International and two thousand Portuguese farmers. The CNA (National Confederation of Agriculture) held its 7th Congress with the participation of nearly two thousand farmers/delegates on 23 November in Penafiel- Portugal.



This Congress, held during the International Year of Family Farming declared by the United Nations and after the CNA celebrated its 35 years of existence, was characterized by the participation of La Via Campesina International, in particular the International Coordinating Committee, which, among other meetings and events stayed in Portugal between 18 and 29 November.

The participation of La Via Campesina at the CNA Congress was experienced by all with great symbolism and intensity, and was an important moment of resistance, solidarity and hope among the International Peasant Movement.

ECVC greetings were delivered to the 7th Congress of the CNA, by Javier Sanchez, a member of ECVC Coordinating Committee and COAG director.

Ecoruralis

Raise funding for our Community Garden

Donate to help Eco Ruralis build a COMMUNITY GARDEN! On our land located 1 km outside of Cluj-Napoca, we plan to provide garden plots to local city residents who will work together to grow their own food, save traditional heirloom seeds and help distribute them to other food producers across the country. Our indiegogo crowdfunding campaign lasts from December 1, 2014 to January 16, 2015 so please donate soon. Let's make seed saving and growing food a community effort! You can check out our project here:

<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/eco-ruralis-community-garden/>

To make a successful campaign, WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT.

We ask everybody to share or « like » this campaign on Facebook or Twitter and to email this to your friends.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ecoruralis

Website: <http://www.ecoruralis.ro/web/en>

Thank you !



European Coordination Via Campesina Newsletter



COMMON GROUND

December 2015

Ehne-Bizkaia

Activities carried out during October and November 2014:

- *Delegación de VIA CAMPESINA de observación y monitoreo de derechos campesinos en Palestina*
(see the declaration submitted this week to the CCI meeting and approved, as well as photos taken during the delegation. A summary of the delegation is also included)
See also the link on our website: <http://elikaherria.eu/delegacion-derechos-campesinxs-en-palestina/>
- *III Encuentros Jóvenes Baserritarras. Por la defensa de los bienes Comunes. Construyendo Soberanía Alimentaria*
– on the 17, 18 of October, a seminar of Young Basque, Spanish and European farmers took place in Guernica to discuss about commonwealth and strategies to develop collective management.
See more at:
<http://elikaherria.eu/todo/bienes-comunes-ondasun-kolektiboak/#sthash.e7KgMSbp.dpuf>
See a short video of the meeting: <http://vimeo.com/112073003>,
- We have also organized the European meeting on “*Alimentacion y consumo, instrumentos para el cambio social*” during the 2nd, and 3rd of October in Aramaio, with the collaboration of European NGOs. – This meeting is included in the activities of the DG AGRI Project coordinated by Conf. Paysanne
See the link to our monthly magazine:
http://issuu.com/elikaherriaelikaduraburujabetza/docs/58_baserri_bizia?
Including an interview with one of the guest speakers at the meeting. The magazine includes a review of the meeting.
And the link to the short summary sent to VIA CAMPEISNA website <http://elikaherria.eu/encuentro-de-experiencias-elikadura-eta-kontsumoa-iraultzarako-bideak-la-soberania-alimentaria-y-el-consumo-herramientas-para-la-transformacion-social/>

Mouvement d'Action Paysanne (MAP)

Saturday, November 29th : Saint-Eloi Council



Each year, around December 1st, MAP organizes its Board of St. Eloi. This is an opportunity to get together with activists and supporters of the movement to address the issues that matter most to us:

How to facilitate the essential agro-ecological transition, how to allow the return of farmers, how to help the many individual or collective installation projects, how to form a common Walloon farmers' front?

European Coordination Via Campesina Newsletter



COMMON GROUND

December 2015

And specifically this year, we asked ourselves the question of how to work together? For access to land, rights and freedom of farmers, towards a common political union advocacy...

Many of us (including the assets of the Support Network for Family Agriculture (ResAP) have participated to the board of St Eloi on the 29/11. This day allowed clarifying work and goals and confirmed the importance of organizing a longer day of collective work in January 2015. Farmers unions, academics, other French-speaking and Dutch-speaking networks, North-South NGOs, environmentalists, activists, non-profit association of consum'actors will all be invited ... to decide what should be done together in 2015 and later on. The idea is to start from a common determination of what RESAP is today, in other words: a semi-formal mixed social movement (not the only one), mainly French, supporting the struggles and initiatives in the name of family farming and food sovereignty in a context where, fortunately, in Wallonia, Flanders and Brussels, many other initiatives are emerging.

Nyélení Autriche

The movement is growing!

After the successful and inspiring Nyélení Austria Forum in April, the Austrian Nyélení movement met again in the end of November. More than 80 people from all over Austria – old stagers and newcomers, young and not that young - gathered in Vienna for the “Nyélení autumn talks”.



Working groups in the morning covered themes like “What I always wanted to know about politics and didn’t dare to ask”, “strategies against land grabbing”, “food sovereignty – basics” and “update from the ideas of action which evolved from the Forum”. In the afternoon the plenary discussed and decided about structural questions (“How to support and develop regional groups?”; “structure and composition of the Nyélení Austria Coordination committee”; “how to guarantee communication?”...).

In order to facilitate the involvement and inclusion of newcomers the plenary decided to motivate people who are already experienced to become “Regional counselors for Food Sovereignty”. Since some of the 25 project ideas which were one of the outcomes of the Forum in spring seem to be in a waiting line, ideas were collected on how to get back on track. We agreed to develop “pools of competence” in order to collect available know-how and to organize a seminar about project management. A next meeting was planned for spring 2015, focusing on the development and improvement of grassroots democracy within our movement.

Altogether, the “Nyélení autumn talks” were a next and important step on our way to broaden and strengthen the Austrian food sovereignty movement. We will continue to struggle for food sovereignty in Austria but also together with our close and far partners and neighbours. Nyélení Germany and Nyélení Slovenia will be the next occasions to build up the Central European movement!



Sindicato Labrego Galego (SLG)

Petition by Margarida Prieto Ledo: Farmers from Galicia struggling against landgrabbing to the hands of the mining industry

Our comrades of the Sindicato Labrego Galego (SLG, Galician organization part of La Via Campesina) remain firm in their fight against land grabbing perpetrated by the mining industries with the support of the Popular Party, which holds power in this Northwestern country of the Iberian Peninsula. As this is a problem affecting all citizens, the Sindicato Labrego Galego is part of a civic front in which organizations from various fields and sensitivities stand up against unlicensed mining under the name contraMINAcción.

contraMINAcción made headlines again in November by organizing the Second Meeting on Mining Impacts in Galicia, where it became clear that all Galician territory is threatened by the proliferation of mining projects requesting the granting of permits, exploration etc..in addition to mineral holdings that are already active.



Many mining companies not only carry out their activities bypassing the law and destroying areas of protected farm land, reserves of *Biosfera* or *Red Natura*; but in the case of Cementos Cosmos (now part of the Brazilian multinational Votorantim), they also carried out repression of the activists who were denouncing these illegalities. That was the case of our colleague Mark Celeiro, president of the Cultural Association *El Iribio*, from Triacastela (Lugo), who denounced this company for developing its activity without the required permits and licenses and found himself with a court case claiming damages by the Cement Company of 45,000euros plus the costs for legal prosecution for "damage to its reputation".

Since the II Meeting on Mining Impacts in Galicia, all organizations and groups that are part of the contraMINAcción Platform show solidarity with Marcos and other Iribio activists who are threatened. Faced by Cementos Cosmos attitude, contraMINAcción sends a clear and unambiguous message to the mining management: neither this nor any other attempt to gag us will prevent us from denouncing the illegalities committed nor the fact that, with the complicity of the Xunta government, they intend to take over our territory for personal gain and at the expense of destroying and poisoning our environment and threatening productive sectors vital to our economy such as agriculture, livestock and fisheries.

This last fact was a common denominator of the various analyses that were made at the meeting on mining projects like those *Erimsa* intends to develop on the Terra Chá or in Edgewater in Bergantiños, or exploitations such as the Cementos Cosmos ones in Triacastela. These examples make it clear that their reparable destruction of our heritage and jobs caused by unlicensed mining turns out to be infinitely more expensive for the Galician society than the private profits that the shareholders of these companies, mostly foreigners, get from such exploitation.

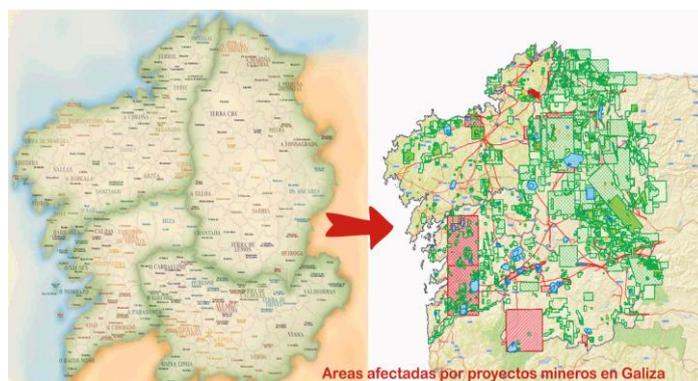
4,500 jobs in the mining industry in Galicia versus more than 60,000 people affiliated to the Agrarian Social Security.



The Sindicato Labrego Galego played an important role in this meeting. Thus, Margarida Prieto Ledo recalled struggle against Erimisa mining projects (now part of the Norwegian holding ELKEM) that aims to extract quartz from 1,700 hectares of agricultural land in Terra Chá, or 8,000 hectares in the districts of Santiago and Ordes on lands protected for their agricultural, forestry and natural value.

The general secretary of SLG, Isabel Vilalba Seivane intervened to denounce the global dynamics of land grabbing that also affect Galicia: "In recent years," said Isabel, "more than 45 million hectares of land in the hands of farmers have been monopolized by various financial and business projects for purposes such as monocultures for energy, industrial food production, mining or simple investment of capital funds".

Emphasizing the situation in Galicia, Isabel Vilalba recalled some of the mining projects that threaten us and the hectares they will affect: 6,000 hectares on Terra Chá, 8,000 hectares in the regions of Ordes and Santiago, 400 hectares in Alimia, etc. The general secretary of SLG compared these amounts to the average territorial base of Galician farms that, in 2010, was less than 8 hectares, with 62-68% of farms being less than 5 hectares.



Another fact provided by Isabel Vilalba was the situation of employment. While mining in Galicia employs about 4,500 people, there are 61,484 contributors to the Agricultural Social Security, number that does not take into account a significant percentage of the population having part-time agricultural jobs for additional income; nor thousands of women who, although they work on the family farm, do not pay social contributions and aren't land holders; nor the indirect jobs in the sector: production and sale of agricultural supplies and machinery, food distribution, etc. For the Sindicato Labrego Galego it is unacceptable that the Xunta legislate in favor of an activity that generates so little wealth and is as destructive as mining, at the expense of depriving a profession like the agriculture that structures and manages the entire territory and generates sustainable wealth that is infinitely superior to the mining industry, of its rights and territorial base,.

Video about the large demonstration organized by contraMINAcción the June 2, 2013

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cevLnTDSAec>

