

Ramona Duminicioiu from Ecoruralis , Romania, LVC

Why the right to food sovereignty is crucial for peasants in Europe and worldwide?

Please allow me first to respond to the declaration of the EU: Food Sovereignty is first and foremost a right, and secondly is a flexible framework, it can be adapted to national level, but using all the elements of the declaration. Food Sovereignty is a pre-condition to the other rights included in this declaration: the right to seeds, the right to land, the right to means of production and so on.

Food Sovereignty is increasingly part of national legislations in Europe and worldwide. The best example is Switzerland who is following a legislative process to introduce Food Sovereignty in their national legislation, recognizing the right to food sovereignty.

The Food Sovereignty movement is stronger than ever in Europe and worldwide. In November last year (**2016**) 700 delegates from 43 countries, from the Urals and Caucasus, and from the Arctic to the Mediterranean, as well as international representatives from diverse social movements and civil society organizations from across the world, representing over 300 civil society organizations of peasants [met in Cluj Napoca, Romania, my home country, for the Nyeleni Europe Food Sovereignty Forum]. The Right for Food Sovereignty was the heart and soul of our work [there].

In agreement with the declaration of the Dominican Republic, yes, food sovereignty cannot be replaced by Food Security. First because Food Security already exists, and secondly because they are different from each other, they don't mean the same thing, they are not addressed to the same rights. Food Security is about economic rights, and food sovereignty is about human rights. Peasants should have the right to define their own food and agriculture systems. Peasants should have the right to produce healthy and culturally appropriate food, through ecologically sound, socially just and sustainable methods. As we are aware of the concerns of governments about the relation between food sovereignty and the global market, this is the perfect opportunity for us to clarify one more time: food sovereignty is not against the global market. Food Sovereignty is a solution to rebuild local markets which have been deteriorated by the global market economy. Food security focused too much on the global economy, forgetting about the people from the ground. Forgetting the peasants which have always been in the front line, confronted directly with the effects of international trade, with surrealistic and inappropriate food policies, with unfair distribution of money and resources and so many others. Food security is an old, outdated

framework, based on fear, created in Europe and imposed worldwide, without a proper assessment or consultation.

So, again food sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable food production.

We need Food Sovereignty in Europe and worldwide! The existing human rights instruments do not defend us.

The existence of contemporary slavery, land grabbing and land concentration, the unfair distribution of resources are all violating peasants rights and have far reaching effects in our society. These abuses exist because we don't have the right to food sovereignty. I repeat, current human rights instruments do not protect peasants from any of the violations and abuses that I just mentioned, which, in our region affects especially the peasants from Eastern Europe.

We are of the opinion that it would be more suitable to include the Right to Food Sovereignty in the article 5 – because Food Sovereignty has a more holistic approach – more related to natural resources and development, but we are also satisfied with it being included in the article 15. We respect the work done so far by the members of the council and the states who participate in the process and we won't propose a structural change.

So, we feel that Food Sovereignty is the key to the future of agriculture in Eastern Europe, in the whole world. European institutions are aware of us, of the peasant farming; they pay lip service saying that small scale peasant family farming is the backbone of the European Farming. But when it came to policies, so far, EU ignores the peasants saying either that they don't exist anymore, either that they are a problem to be phased out and gotten rid of. We, the peasants are one of biggest strength of our society, we are not a liability which is dragging our countries down. A country can be a country of peasants and still be a modern European state.

From Eastern Europe we transmit strong support for this article, which we see as the heart of the declaration, as a pre-condition to the other rights – food, land, seeds. This IS the most important article: the Right to Food Sovereignty. It is the heart of the Peasants Rights Declaration. Don't be afraid. Let's work together!

Thank you!