



STATEMENT

Stop the food crisis! Build Food sovereignty, NOW!

La Via Campesina | Bagnolet | 03 June 2022

Globalize the struggle, Globalize the Hope, has been our unifying slogan in the 30-year history of La Via Campesina. It has guided us in the relentless struggle against World Trade Organization (WTO) intervention, against the commercialization of food at the service of the big capitalist corporations, which have transformed food into commodities, and in the struggle for food sovereignty. But today, new challenges are presented. Hunger crises are bursting in several countries. In this context, La Via Campesina wishes to share its analysis of the situation and its demands for an urgent and radical shift in international and national policies.

We are faced with a simultaneous crisis.

Today, we live amid simultaneous, intense and prolonged crises, with very rapid changes in the correlation of forces and the political struggle. We face a severe and structural economic problem that affects the countries of the capitalist centre and the poor and developing countries. We call this crisis structural because it is the result of the mode of organization of the system, and it is not possible to overcome it without confronting the bases of capitalism itself. This crisis appears and deepens in terms of the economy, social inequalities, the limits of bourgeois democracy, the inoperability of the state, the unsustainable burden of public debt, the attack on the sovereignty of peoples, and a real crisis of civilizing values. In various regions of the planet, barbarism emerges in the form of hate, violence, wars, and fascist preaching.

Environmental crisis

We live an environmental crisis that is part of this structural crisis. It is aggravated because it is the consequence of capitalists' daily aggressions against nature. They do this by privatizing the commons, especially by appropriating ores, water, forests, and biodiversity to transform them into merchandise and obtain an extraordinary income that they would not have in factories, commerce or even financial speculation.

The COP26 - called to discuss the climate crisis - is deemed a failure because the capitalists do not want to give up their profits to save nature and the planet. On the contrary, they only want to create mechanisms of carbon credits that allow them to share the ill-gains obtained by exploiting nature among the bourgeoisie classes. Our planet is already in a state of alarm because many species are

disappearing due to increased global temperature and the share of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Humans are now facing an existential risk too.

The Pandemic

Add to the structural crisis of capitalism, the outbreak of Covid-19 created massive disorganization and increased inequalities worldwide.

People with low incomes have been the most vulnerable to COVID-19 because most governments have not provided sufficient means for people to stay at home. So the poorer people had to keep working and were confronted with the virus. Huge inequalities in access to healthcare services, and protection devices like masks, sanitizers and vaccines compounded the crises. This inequality was both within countries and at the international level. The big medical and pharmaceutical industries follow the logic of profit alone and not of saving lives, and they destined the medicines only for the rich countries.

And so the crisis has deepened in all its economic, social and environmental dimensions. Instead of addressing structural and systemic issues, capitalists have accelerated the destruction of nature to produce more goods and transfer the burden of the crisis to working men and women by taking away rights, increasing exploitation and repression, flattening salaries, etc.

Wars and geopolitical tensions

Added to all this, we are in the midst of several raging wars in Yemen, Palestine, Syria, Libya, Ukraine and many other countries and regions. The bursting of the war in Ukraine creates significant geopolitical threats, both in Europe and worldwide.

The most important thing in times of war for La Via campesina is to defend the principles that politically have led us to this day and are decisive and fundamental for our position. These principles are embodied in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas. The first is the uncompromising defence of life and peace. The second is the defence of the sovereignty of peoples, or nations, against wars and the destruction of social structures.

The main consequence of these wars is the loss of many human lives, taken for reasons almost always alien to their daily lives. Millions of people are mutilated by the war, both physically and psychologically, traumatized by the loss of relatives and friends. The destruction of homes, the fear and frustration at having abandoned their land with nothing, leaving behind everything they have built up to flee the war and try to save their lives and families.

The world will suffer the consequences of these wars at various levels. It has worsened and intensified the economic crisis, which we have been experiencing since 2008. All this will certainly have direct and indirect consequences in many areas, especially in food production. Supply crises, rising food prices, increased inflation and a possible rise in the dollar's value. The tendency is for the economic crisis to spread to all countries as the war becomes more severe and prolonged. As is often said, "we know when a war starts, but we cannot predict when and how it will end".

... all of this leads to a global food and socio-economic crisis!

It is still too early to predict the consequences or unfolding of the war in and beyond Europe will be in politics, the economy, geopolitical disputes, and agriculture.

Yet, these various crises have grave consequences on food systems worldwide. Governments, TNCs and international institutions have prioritized the import and export of food and agricultural produce instead of supporting stable local and national food systems to produce healthy food for the people. This has created a dependency on international markets.

Still, today, over 85% of agricultural production is not traded internationally. We experience a crisis of the globalized and industrialized capitalist food system, while local peasant food systems are showing their resilience.

Currently, the food crisis is not linked with food shortage at the global level but with speculative prices. Countries that have been transformed into food import-dependent countries are now unable to pay the sky-rocking prices at which grain is currently being sold on international markets. The lust for capital leads us to a crisis in the distribution of food globally, resulting in increased hunger, especially in countries that are already suffering from famine.

Agriculture in the world produces enough to support a longer period of crises. So the problem is not a lack of food, but the fact that the big capitalist companies that dominate the world financial and distribution market have transformed food and agricultural trade into a highly speculative market. Most of the "commodities" traded internationally are subject to futures trading in stock markets. The price at which these products are finally sold to countries to feed their people has no relation to the actual production costs or the importing countries' buying capacity.

Furthermore, in a cynical attempt to take advantage of the war in Ukraine, the US, Canada, and the EU are now calling for an unprecedented increase in grain production. This call is not so much to feed people in food-importing countries but to grab new markets that used to be supplied by Russia or Ukraine.

Policies that can address these crises (natural disaster, pandemics, wars or international conflicts,...) such as strategic public stockpiling and storage, regulatory stock control, market regulation or other necessary public policies, have been progressively dismantled over the last decade through the pressure of IMF, World Bank, WTO and bilateral free-trade agreements. The strategy to secure food supply, a constitutive part of strategic procedures to defend national sovereignty, has always been the task of States. However, neoliberalism, as a model of capitalist development, implemented in most nations in the 1980s and 1990s, promoted, in the name of economic globalization the total opening of borders for the free circulation of merchandise controlled by large capitalist corporations and the privatization of the structures and logistics of storage and stock control.

As a result of this process, most nations have become hostages of the market and the interests of large transnational cooperations, which control the production, storage, industrialization, financing and distribution of the world food market. The task of strategic storage and control of food stock now belongs to the market, at the service of capital; therefore, it is our challenge to resume in all countries the building of stocks from peasant agriculture, as well as the commercialization of food between countries, which must be carried out with new parameters and regulations.

While agribusiness is moving towards the digitalization of agriculture, we have won the approval in 2018 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other people working in rural areas. This historical moment presents itself as an opportunity to denounce the exhaustion of the production model based on the technological package and present the peasantry as the alternative for the present and the future. Produce healthy food, protect nature and produce new social relations in the countryside, dignified life and food sovereignty and sovereignty of peoples. We must bear in mind that new technologies lead to unemployment and the emptying of the countryside of people, of peasants, promoting forced migration and misery.

La Via Campesina proposals to face the current food crisis and move towards food sovereignty

Faced with this dramatic context, La Via Campesina voices strong demands and proposals to address the crises, both in the short and the longer term.

We demand immediate action to:

- end of speculation on food and the suspension of trading food products on stock markets. Future contracts on agricultural products should be immediately forbidden. The price of food traded internationally should be linked with the costs of production and follow the principles of fair trade, both for producers and for consumers;
- End of the WTO's control of food trade and keep agriculture out of free trade agreements. In particular, WTO's criminal rules that prevent countries from developing public food stockpiling and market and price regulation should be immediately removed, so that countries can develop the necessary public policy to support small-scale food producers in this challenging context ;
- call an emergency meeting of the Committee on Food Security and the creation of a new international body to conduct transparent negotiations on commodity agreements between exporting and importing countries so that countries which have become dependent on food imports can have access to food at an accessible price;
- Forbid the use of agricultural products to produce agrofuel or energy. Food should be an absolute priority over fuel.
- Bring a global moratorium on the payment of the public debt by the most vulnerable countries. In the current context, pressuring some very vulnerable countries to pay the debt is highly irresponsible and leads to socio, economic, and food crises. Put an end to IMF's pressures to dismantle national public policies and public services. We call for the cancellation of the illegitimate external public debt in developing countries.

We demand radical changes in international, regional and national policies to re-build food sovereignty through:

- A radical change in international trade order. WTO should be dismantled. A new global framework for trade and agriculture, based on food sovereignty, should open the way for strengthening local and national peasant agriculture, to ensure a stable basis for a relocalized food production, the support for local and national peasant-led markets, as well as to provide a fair international trading system based on cooperation and solidarity rather than competition and speculation;
- The implementation of popular and integral Agrarian Reform, to stop the grabbing by TNCs of water, seeds and land, and ensure small-scale producers fair rights over productive resources; We protest against the privatization and grabbing of territories and commons by corporate interests under the pretext of nature protection, through carbon markets or other biodiversity off-sets programs, without consideration to the people who are living on these territories and who have been taking care of the commons for generations;
- A radical shift towards agroecology to produce healthy food in quantity and quality for the whole population. We must bear in mind that the climate and environmental crisis will be

our great challenge in this current context. We must face the challenge of producing enough quality food while reviving biodiversity and drastically reducing GHG emissions.

- effective regulation of the market of inputs (such as credits, fertilizers, pesticides, seeds, fuel) to support peasants' capacity to produce food, but also to ensure a fair and well-planned transition toward more agroecological farming practices ;
 - A food governance based on the people, not on Transnational Corporations (TNCs). At the global, regional, national and local levels, the capture of food governance by TNCs should be stopped, and people's interests should be put at the centre. Small producers should be given a vital role in all bodies dealing with food governance;
 - The transformation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants into a legally binding instrument for the defence of rural peoples.
 - The development in every country of public stockpiling capacities. The strategy of food stockpiling should be held both at the national level but also through the creation and public support to food reserves at the community level with locally produced food coming from agroecological farming practices;
 - A global moratorium on dangerous technologies that threatens humanity, such as geoengineering, GMOs or cellular meat. The promotion of low-cost techniques that increase peasant autonomy and of peasant's seeds.
 - the development of public policies to ensure new relationships between those who produce food and those who consume, those who live in rural areas and those who live in urban areas, guaranteeing fair prices defined based on the cost of production, allowing a decent income for all those who produce in the countryside and a fair access to healthy food for the consumers;
 - The promotion of new gender relations based on equality and respect, both for people living in the countryside and among the urban working class. The violence against women must stop now.
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