Unity Among Peasants, landless, Women Farmers and Rural Youth

La Via Campesina is the international movement which brings together millions of peasants, small and medium-size farmers, landless people, women farmers, indigenous people, migrants and agricultural workers from around the world. It defends small-scale sustainable agriculture as a way to promote social justice and dignity. It strongly opposes corporate driven agriculture and transnational companies that are destroying people and nature.

La Via Campesina comprises about 150 local and national organizations in 70 countries from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. Altogether, it represents about 200 million farmers. It is an autonomous, pluralist and multicultural movement, independent from any political, economic or other type of affiliation.

A movement born in 1993

A group of farmers’ representatives – women and men- from the four continents founded La Via Campesina in 1993 in Mons, Belgium. At that time, agricultural policies and the agribusiness were becoming globalized and small farmers needed to develop and struggle for a common vision. Small-scale farmers’ organizations also wanted to have their voice heard and to participate directly in the decisions that were affecting their lives.

La Via Campesina is now recognised as a main actor in the food and agricultural debates. It is heard by institutions such as the FAO and the UN Human Rights Council, and is broadly recognized among other social movements from local to global level.

Globalizing hope, globalizing the struggle!

La Via Campesina is built on a strong sense of unity and solidarity between small and medium-scale agricultural producers from the North and South. The main goal of the movement is to realize food sovereignty and stop the destructive neoliberal process. It is based on the conviction that small farmers, including peasant fisher-folk, pastoralists and indigenous people, who make up almost half the world’s people, are capable of producing food for their communities and feeding the world in a sustainable and healthy way.

Women play a crucial role in the Via Campesina work. According to the FAO, women produce 70% of the food on earth but they are marginalized and oppressed by neoliberalism and patriarchy. The movement defends women rights and gender equality at all levels. It struggles against all forms of violence against women.

Defending Food Sovereignty

Via Campesina launched the idea of “Food Sovereignty” at the World Food Summit in 1996. This idea has now grown into a global people’s movement carried by a large diversity of social sectors such as the urban poor, environmental and consumer groups, women associations, fisher-folks, pastoralists and many others. It is also recognized by several institutions and governments.

Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It develops a model of small scale sustainable production benefiting communities and their environment. It puts the aspirations, needs and livelihoods of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations.

Food sovereignty prioritizes local food production and consumption. It gives a country the right to protect its local producers from cheap imports and to control production. It ensures that the rights to use and
manage lands, territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food and not of the corporate sector. Therefore the implementation of genuine agrarian reform is one of the top priorities of the farmer’s movement.

Food sovereignty now appears as one of the most powerful response to the current food, poverty and climate crises.

A decentralized structure

Via Campesina is a grassroots mass movement whose vitality and legitimacy comes from farmers’ organizations at local and national level. The movement is based on the decentralization of power between 9 regions. The coordination among the regions is taken up by the International Coordinating Committee which is composed of one woman and one man for every region, elected by the member organizations in the respective regions. The international secretariat rotates according to the collective decision made every four years by the International Conference. It was first in Belgium (1993-1996), then in Honduras (1997-2004) and it is currently based in Indonesia until 2013.

The movement is funded by the contributions of its members, by private donations and by the financial support of some NGOs, foundations and local and national authorities.

Join the action!

- **8 March: International Women Day**
  La Via Campesina joins women movements and social movements from around the world to demand equal rights for women.

- **17 April: International Day of Peasant's struggle**
  Hundreds of direct actions, cultural activities, conferences, film screenings, community debates and rallies are organized by a wide variety of groups, communities or organizations.

- **10 September: International Struggle Day against the WTO**
  Commemoration of the sacrifice of Mr. Lee Kun Hae, a Korean farmer who stabbed himself to death during a mass protest against the WTO in Cancun, Mexico in 2003. He was holding a banner saying "WTO Kills Farmers"

Visit our website, subscribe to our news updates, watch our videos and make