

Press Release

It's time to choose solidarity - WTO out of agriculture

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La Via Campesina
International farmers movement
Movimiento campesino internacional
Mouvement paysan international

Secretaria operativa/operative secretariat:
Jin. Mampang Prapatan XIV no 5 Jakarta Selatan, Indonesia
Tel/fax: +62-21-7991890 Email: viacampesina@viacampesina.org

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The 10 of September is the International Day Against the WTO and Trade Liberalisation and for Peoples' Food Sovereignty°. La Via Campesina's analysis concludes that after 10 years of WTO rules today's global trade rules continue to increase the gap between the rich and the poor. A minority of 20% of the population mainly living in industrialized countries holds more than 80% of the world's wealth. After 10 years of WTO and neo-liberal policies 850 million people are suffering poverty and starvation. In the time that it takes for you to read this sentence, a child is starved to death. This is an unacceptable situation!

The right to food is a basic human right and all our governments are responsible for the realisation of this right. The implementation of food sovereignty principles is critical in the struggle to get rid of starvation. Every country must have the duty and the right to produce healthy food in a sustainable way to feed its own population. Local markets in the North and the South are most important as 90% of the food is produced and consumed in the local societies.

In the mass media, the "farmers of the North" are blamed for destroying the "development of the South". But communication among farmers is very good today and we do not believe this lie anymore! Peasants have exchanged experiences and they know who are to blame: the WTO, regional and bi-lateral free trade agreements, multinational companies, a minority of big producers in the North and the South, and the export subsidies that destroy local markets everywhere. The agri-food transnational corporations, the big retailers and a handful of big producers in the North and the South are the economic winners. Even if some regions have grown richer as a whole, misery persists in the same region. The gap is growing also inside the regions.

Today's trade rules have produced numerous victims. Apart from the tragedy of starvation, our environment is suffering terribly. The UN report on biodiversity that was released this year tells us

clearly that the poorest countries will be most affected by climate changes. Women in these countries will have to fight even harder to support their families. People from all continents need to act quickly to solve this environmental crises. We cannot fight starvation and poverty without dealing effectively with the environmental challenges.

La Via Campesina is challenging all people to do something about the gap between the rich and the poor - the shame of the modern world. We have to analyse and understand the demands of the poor and start acting! Knowledge and action are the only way to build a fairer future and to avoid the current situation in which thousands of people will die from misery and hunger every day.

The peasants of the world are producing food, not starvation! Even in Europe, US, and Canada peasants, farmers and farm workers are having a hard time. Because of decreasing prices for their products many farmers are forced to give up farming and leave the countryside. The displacement of farming families is a world wide problem that ruins cultural and community structures.

It is time to choose. We are choosing solidarity! All the millions of farmers in La Via Campesina are continuously working to get WTO out of agriculture. After 10 years of WTO countries like Korea, Indonesia, Japan and Thailand are being forced to import while global agribusiness is benefiting and family farming and local food production in these countries are being destroyed. Food and agriculture are far too important to leave to the WTO! La Via Campesina is fighting to get rid of the starvation in the world, to keep peasant-based, sustainable food production and organise trade in a fair way. We know that people in the world will not give away the power of food. Those who are in charge of the food, are in charge of power!

Food sovereignty is our answer to our common challenges. Too many people are suffering as a result of the WTO's policies. Now we need to develop food sovereignty as the new policy against hunger. We won the battle and derailed the WTO in Seattle and Cancun. We will win again in Hong Kong.

In memory of our friend Lee

Globalise the struggle, globalise the hope

10 years with WTO is enough

International Co-ordinating Commission of La Vía Campesina

Jakarta, 10th of September 2005

For more information, please contact:

Henry Saragih, international coordinator of Via Campesina
0062-21-799 1890 (office) 0062-8163144441 (cell phone) Email:
viacampesina viacampesina.org

Ingeborg Tangeraas, member International Co-ordinating Committee Via Campesina
gsm: 0047-95974242 Email: ingtang online.no

° Peoples' food sovereignty is the right of peoples and governments to define their agricultural and food policies as well as how to produce and consume their food, without dumping to third countries.

See also:

Peoples' Food Sovereignty http://www.viacampesina.org/art_eng...

What is food sovereignty? http://www.viacampesina.org/art_eng...

P.S.

* La Via Campesina is the international peasant movement with 116 member organisations from 54 countries.