

Reject the Economic Partnership Agreement EU-ACP!

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VIA CAMPESINA CARIBBEAN - VIA CAMPESINA AFRICA -

CPE European Farmers Coordination - COAG

Members of Via Campesina, international peasants movement

The member organizations of Via Campesina in Africa, in Europe and in the Caribbean consider that the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) between the European Union (EU) and the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) are a new threat for the peasants and small farmers in the four regions. We ask a definitive stop in the negotiations and the opening of a period of debate and analyses on the impacts of free-trade on our national agricultures. Alternatives based on the right to food sovereignty exist.

The Economic Partnership Agreements UE-ACP are free trade agreements. They are not, as the European Commission pretends, development agreements benefiting the ACP countries. At the time when WTO undergoes a crisis of legitimacy, the EPAs are a replacement tool to force the countries to open and liberalize their agricultural market, despite the growing popular opposition against these policies.

We consider that the proposal that is currently under negotiation will be prejudicial to the peasants and small farmers in the Caribbean, Africa, the Pacific and Europe for the following reasons:

- « Reciprocity » that the European Commission claims has no other meaning than the opening of the ACP markets for the European exportations.
- The peasants and small farmers in the Caribbean, the Pacific and in Africa will have to compete with food imports from the EU sold at artificially low prices.
- More export market access will not benefit the small scale producers in neither of the four regions, because the great majority of peasants and small farmers sell their products on the local, national or regional markets, not on the international market.
- The prices at which the producers of ACP countries will be able to export their products on the European market will decrease sharply, thus reducing the advantage that they had to export to the EU.
- The elimination of the import tariffs will lead to a sharp decrease in the ACP states revenues, while many of these states are very dependant of these revenues for their budget. This lost will have a very critical impact on the capacity of the sates to invest in health, education, agriculture and public infrastructure for their development.

Nothing compels neither the ACP countries nor the European Union to negotiate such agreements (They could get a new derogation to renew the Cotonou agreements). In spite of this, the European

Commission insists to terminate the negotiations before the 31st of December 2007.

The member organizations of Via Campesina in Africa, Europe and in the Caribbean thus call for the mobilization of peasants, small farmers and civil society in our regions to stop definitively the Economic Partnership Agreements.

We ask that the cooperation between the European Union and ACP countries be based on the following principles:

- Food sovereignty: the countries have the right to define their own agricultural policies, without dumping towards third countries.
- Priority should be given to the capacity of the countries to develop the production for their national and regional food necessity. This implies that all countries have the right to protect their agricultural production towards importations that threaten their internal markets.
- Regional integration should be the result of internal processes and not be imposed by external powers, as it is the case with the EPAs.
- The regional associations in Africa, Europe, the Pacific and the Caribbean have the right to have high level of regional preferences.
- The dumping of food products must stop. This implies that the European Union preserve or rebuild efficient supply management mechanisms in the sectors where it produces surpluses and stop using direct payments to reduce the agricultural prices.
- The results of Everything But Arms should be analysed before any other trade liberalization agreement is signed. Peasants and small farmers in the ACP countries that belong to the category of the least developed countries have not benefited from this agreement and EBA has not resulted in poverty reduction.
- The system of non reciprocal trade preferences set up between the EU and the ACP countries through the Cotonou agreement should be maintained, but should be bettered in order to allow the producers in the ACP countries to diversify their agriculture to be less dependent of their exports to the EU.
- Considering the raising energetic crisis, it is urgent to re-localize the food production and thus to strengthen the capacity of the farmers to produce food for their domestic markets in the three regions.

We call the governments of ACP countries to resist to the pressures made by the European Commission to terminate the negotiations. We call the social movements and civil society organizations in Africa, Europe, the Pacific and the Caribbean to mobilize to prevent the signature of the Economic Partnership Agreements.

Reject EPAS!

Food sovereignty, now!

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